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PLAYGROUPS FOR INCLUSION

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ADVANCE EARLY EDUCATION REFORM
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Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships



National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004). *Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships: Working Paper No. 1*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu

PLAYGROUPS FOR INCLUSION: WHY?

- In Portugal, 85,7% of children 3 to 6 enrolled in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC); but only 37,2% under 3 years old are enrolled in licensed ECEC services (Conselho Nacional de Educação, 2012).
- Employment rates for mothers with children under 3 are stable at 70.8% (OECD, 2012).
- Accessing quality services is particularly difficult for disadvantaged communities.

PLAYGROUPS FOR INCLUSION: WHAT ARE THEY?

- Grupos Aprender, Brincar, Crescer or ABC groups (learn, play and grow)
- Two-generation informal sessions for children and parents providing diverse opportunities and materials for play, learning, cooperation and sharing.
- 2x/wk, 2hrs/day for 45 weeks
- Cover a predefined set of topics customized to the community of parents.
- Happen in a caring, safe and relational environment.

PLAYGROUPS FOR INCLUSION: HOW AND WHERE?

- Coverage: approximately 500 children aged 0-4 and their caregivers in 5 districts, 10 groups per district
- ABC will empower approximately 50 “community facilitators” from deprived communities nationwide to act as group monitors
- Sessions will be held in diverse community settings (schools, libraries, shops, malls, gyms, among others)



PLAYGROUPS FOR INCLUSION: EXPECTED BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

In **P**laygroups, all children **L**earn, **P**lay, and **G**row

(Nos **G**rupos todas as crianças **A**prendem, **B**rinçam e **C**rescem)

- **Playgroups are a widespread service** (UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Belgium; US; New Zealand and Australia); **with some documented benefits for children, such as:**
 - **Higher learning competence** (Hancock et al., 2012);
 - **Higher achievement in reading, writing, number, science** (Daniels, 1995);
 - **Higher social and emotional functioning** (Layzer, et al., 2001; McArthur, et al., 2010), **for girls only** (Hancock et al., 2012)
- **BUT**
 - **Children likely to gain the most benefit from attending a playgroup were those who were less likely to access these services** (Daniels, 1995; Hancock et al., 2012)

PLAYGROUPS FOR INCLUSION: EXPECTED BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES

In **P**laygroups, all adults **L**earn, **P**lay, and **G**row
(Nos **G**rupos, todos os adultos **A**prendem, **B**rinca e **C**rescem)

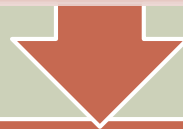
- **Benefits for participating adults (parents and carers) are strong:**
 - Increased opportunity to socialize with other parents, higher social capital, positive relationship building, friendships, reduced isolation (Berthelsen, et al., 2012; Gibson, 2012; Jackson, 2011, 2013; McArthur et al., 2010; McFarland-Piazza et al., 2012; Strange et al., 2014); particularly for migrant families (Strange et al., 2014)
 - Increased opportunities to learn about parenting through modelling and knowledge exchange with and between parents (Jackson, 2011, 2013; Strange et al., 2014; Warr et al., 2013); and increased sense of confidence in parenting (Jackson, 2011; McArthur et al., 2010)
 - Improved access to services (Berthelsen, et al., 2012)
 - More access to diversity (McFarland-Piazza et al., 2012)

- **But also:**
 - Some Playgroup experiences were dysfunctional and negative (Gibson, 2012);
 - Tensions sometimes arose among playgroup participants (Jackson, 2011);
 - Low attendance, high dropout (Berthelsen, et al., 2012; McArthur et al., 2010).

GOALS FOR PLAYGROUPS FOR INCLUSION

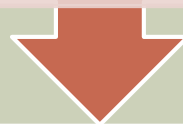
Adapt

Adapt a new educational service – playgroups or *grupos ABC* – to the 5 districts in Portugal



Monitor and Evaluate

Evaluate impact through random assignment of families to conditions; and monitor fidelity of implementation



Disseminate

Scale up new revised service to all interested districts

ADAPT

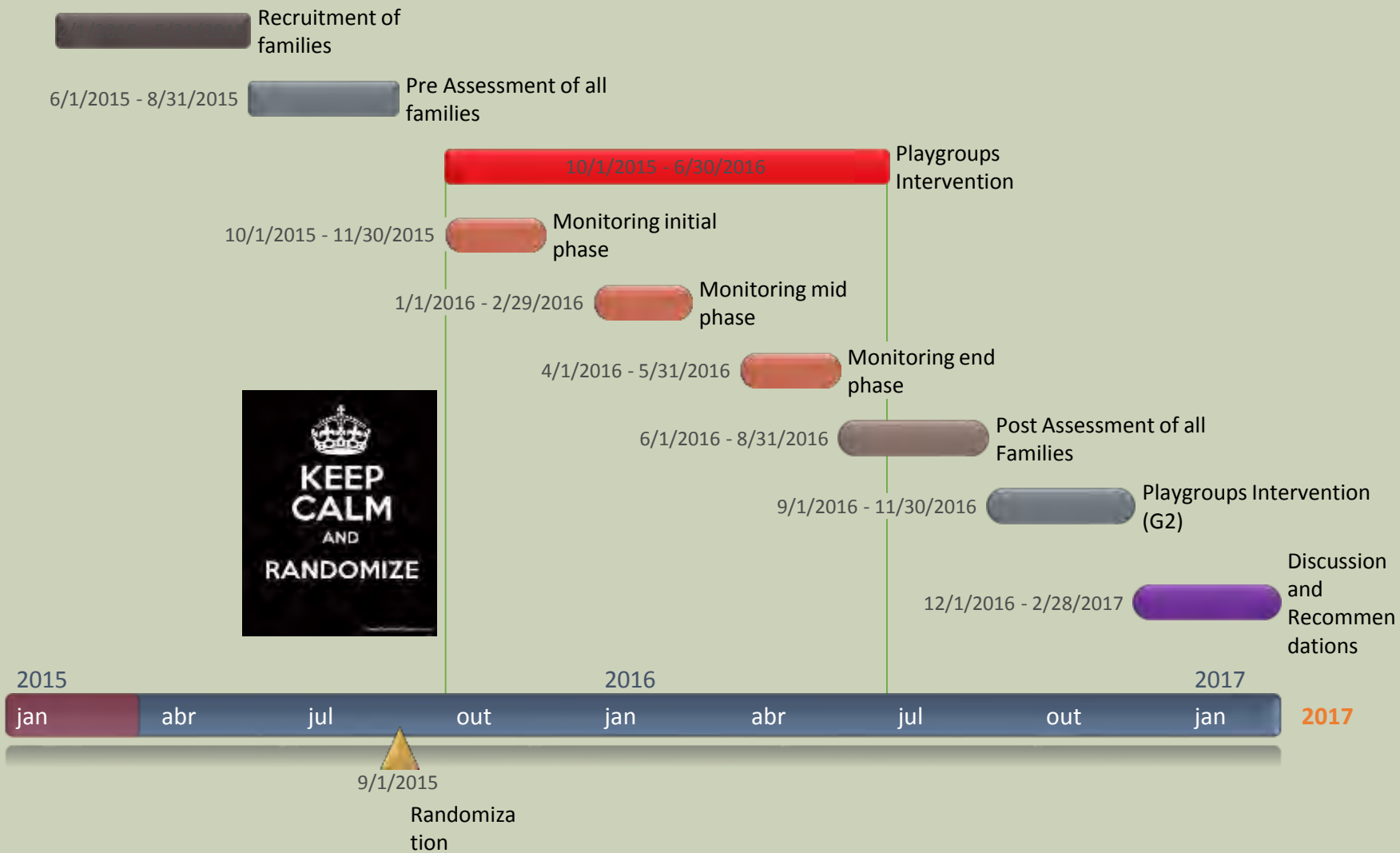
- Selection and training group monitors and supervisors.
- Implementation and continuous improvement of playgroups.

MONITOR AND EVALUATE

- All interested families are recruited through local entities to participate in the experimental trial (pretest, RA, posttest).
- Half of the families are randomly assigned to playgroups the upcoming school year, half are assigned to a short intervention next year.
- In each district, a subsample of subgroups sessions are monitored three times during the school year.

DISSEMINATE

- Revise playgroups intervention depending on outcomes.
- Distribution of materials and methods for implementation of playgroups throughout the country.
- Regional dissemination seminars.



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THANK YOU!
GRACIAS!
OBRIGADA!

Playgroups for Inclusion



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Q&A

