



WHAT'S WORKING?

Evidence review of parenting programmes by the Prevention Collaborative



SUMMARY

This reader is based on a review of the evidence analyzed by the Prevention Collaborative, of parenting programmes, majorly in the Global South, to assess their impact on prevention of violence against children (VAC). It explored interventions for parenting curriculum content, delivery, and formats, while highlighting the interrelation between gender equality, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and VAC. The Prevention Collaborative seeks to build the body of evidence in the Global South for better parenting programmes to prevent VAC.

Keywords: Parenting programmes, curriculum content, relationship skills, VAC, IPV

Why good parenting?

As violence against children (VAC) continues to be a major social concern, spurring a negative cycle of physical, emotional and psychological distress, parenting programmes have gained global prominence as a strategy for VAC prevention.

The Prevention Collaborative emphasizes the importance of good family relationships as research has shown that children experiencing or witnessing violence in childhood are more likely to continue the cycle of violence either as perpetrators or victims, thus there has been an increased focus on good parenting as a first step to VAC prevention.

Do parenting programmes work?

Out of 14 programmes the Prevention Collaboration evaluated, 11 were from the Global South with significant reductions in VAC including the use of physical punishment and some reduction in IPV.

Promising programmes reviewed include: *Bandebereho*, *For Baby's Sake*, *Triple P*, *Program P*, and *REAL Fathers*. Most programmes focused on families of toddlers and pre-school children. This is mostly driven by evidence that families have an important window of opportunity during early childhood development to promote good parenting and non-violent interventions.

Box 1: Why combine interventions for VAC with IPV?

- Evidence shows that **IPV and VAC co-occur** both causing and being reinforced by the other leading to dysfunctional family relationships, and a cycle of physical and psychological abuse in the home. In Colombia, for example, IPV was present in 46% of child abuse cases.
- Child abuse and IPV share **similar risk factors**: marital conflict, poverty, substance and alcohol abuse, unequal gender relations, and social norms that uphold family reputation above the victim's well-being (supporting a culture of silence).
- IPV **undermines positive parenting** by affecting the physical and mental health of caregivers especially women as they are prevented from seeking health care and inducing aggressive behaviour towards children.
- Prevention of IPV can **curtail intergenerational violence** later in adult life by providing children positive childhood familial experiences.

Promising parenting programme approaches

Key elements of successful parenting programmes

Curriculum Content	Approach, Delivery Methods and Format
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting nurturing and caring relationships between parents and children, e.g. <i>REAL Fathers</i> (Uganda) strengthened relationships between male caregivers and children – engaged fatherhood as an entry point • Building skills in managing children’s behaviour through positive reinforcement and non-violent discipline • Parental emotional awareness and self-regulation to manage anger, anxiety and other difficulties by diversion (mindful breathing, stepping away from the situation) • Promote gender-equitable relationships which encourage shared decision-making, joint problem-solving, and communication skills which can lead to a shift in attitudes and address negative gender norms • Engaging fathers in caregiving and household responsibility in their safe spaces through conversations about conflict resolution, children, and household support to their partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling behaviour and interactive exercises based on sharing experiences and questioning gender norms and practicing non-violent behaviour with peers in a comfortable space • Group learning formats reduce anxiety, show common challenges and encourage shared solutions which drives adoption of healthier behaviour • Individual sessions are helpful when interventions need to be customized for specific couple contexts or cultural settings • Programme duration average was 10-15 sessions as social norms change is a lengthy process that requires regular and extended reinforcement • Universal approach vs a targeted intervention: The universal approach was mostly used, focusing on a group meeting specific criteria e.g. age range rather than specifically targeting families where violence is known to be present. This increased likelihood of attendance of sessions. • Tailored approaches to deliver programmes to men and women or families should depend on risk factors identified e.g. increased risk of conflict between partners; topic suitability for single gender or mixed sessions; comfort of participants

Recommendations for strengthening parenting programmes

- Knowledge sharing and networking with peers to exchange information about lessons learned and good practices for parenting programmes
- Address gender inequality and power imbalances in families as a pathway to social norms change that can address VAC and IPV
- Build parent and caregiver skills to manage children’s behaviour using non-violent techniques

- Build skills to enhance good communication between parents and children
- Design interventions that allow families to learn from observations and safe spaces to practice new skills set
- Encourage children to learn multiple skills through a range of gender-neutral learning opportunities
- Address other shared risk factors e.g. alcohol and substance abuse
- Combine group formats with personalized individual sessions
- Develop specific strategies to reach fathers in safe spaces
- Identify barriers to effective participation and adherence of parents and caregivers to parenting programmes
- Train facilitators to recognize and respond compassionately to violence as well as build networks with support services

Further Reading

WHO. (2018). *INSPIRE Handbook: Action for Implementing the Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.

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Box 2: Further research areas

- Evidence on the know-how for replication especially around curriculum content, design and delivery format
- Additional evidence for effectiveness of integrated interventions for IPV and VAC
- Developing standardized indicators for VAC and IPV beyond self-reporting
- Parenting programmes that focus on older children and adolescents
- Effective strategies to engage fathers and male caregivers
- Strategies to identify families experiencing violence