

The design and formative evaluation of a parenting programme in Uganda for early prevention of gender based violence.

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Background

Gender based violence (GBV) is a major cause of morbidity and mortality throughout the world. Many factors contribute to GBV some of which originate in the early years of a child's life.

Goal

Our goal is to develop a community based parenting programme for the early prevention of gender based violence (GBV), by addressing causal factors originating in the early years:

- poor parental bonding and child attachment
- harsh parenting
- differential socialisation by gender
- parental conflict

Development of

Parenting for Good Behaviour and Respectability

1. Design and drafting
2. Formative evaluation with six groups in two stages in semi-rural Uganda
3. Large scale pilot with before and after outcome evaluation.

Stages 1 and 2 are currently underway.

1. Design and drafting

Underlying principles are to harness parents' existing motivation, skills and experience. Parents in east Africa are particularly concerned about children's good behaviour and respect. This programme emphasises that responsive, non harsh parenting improves child development without undermining behaviour.

Team developed **themes and learning objectives** for **21 session community-based programme**.

Experienced facilitator recruited to find existing, or develop new, exercises to achieve these learning objectives.

Sessions facilitated by two parents who receive 1-2 weeks' training

- first 10 sessions for mothers and fathers separately
- sessions 11-21 mixed sex: encouraged to address conflicting gendered perceptions of parenting.



Boy respectfully greeting his mother and being given household chore.

Photo: Senfuma Joel

2. Formative evaluation

Acceptability

- Widespread endorsement of the programme by village leaders and parents
 - want whole village to participate.
- Fathers especially keen to achieve children's good behaviour.

Community engagement

- Engaging local development professionals as important as local authority officials and village leaders: have wealth of experience.
 - Awareness raising must not be rushed.
- Villagers recommend delivery through new, rather than pre-existing, groups to ensure good coverage.

Lessons learnt

- Fidelity improved by providing facilitators with posters to talk through the activities.
- Fathers discuss issues at much greater length than mothers, requiring far more time.
- Importance of language:
 - English skills poorer among facilitators than expected
 - translating materials, especially key words, improves fidelity
 - facilitator should share language of participants.

Challenges

- **Achieving a delivery system replicable on wide scale** means optimising quality and low cost.
- **Selection and training of facilitators** undermined by limited education or relevant experience. Likely solution:
 - train 6 and select 2 best on basis of delivery
 - recruit as many opinion leaders as possible?
 - need enough facilitators to support each other
 - more intensive facilitator training needed
 - facilitators have to experience whole programme themselves before training others
 - top up training probably necessary.
- **Time constraints:** sessions had to be greatly simplified and reduced to one main activity.
- **Wider dissemination:** need support structure for participants to share learning and challenge norms with relatives, friends and neighbours.
- **Material incentives:** some participants likely to drop out without it, but programme is voluntary to maximise sustainability.

3. Large scale pilot

- deliver programme to 10 groups
- observe 10% sessions to assess fidelity
- qualitative research with participants and facilitators
- before and after intermediate outcome evaluation.

Conclusion

- Programme promises to improve social norms and skills around parenting and spousal relationships
- However, necessary to explore mechanisms for wider dissemination to relevant social networks
- As with many novel interventions, considerable modifications required when first tried.

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