

SCALING UP A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PARENTING PROGRAMME: A CASE STUDY FROM INVESTING IN CHILDREN AND THEIR SOCIETIES (ICS-SP), KENYA

OVERVIEW

This brief summarises how Investing in Children and their Societies (ICS-SP) integrated a gender-transformative approach to address both Violence Against Women (VAW) and Violence Against Children (VAC) into its ‘Skilful Parenting’ programme and scaled it nationally in Kenya.¹

KEY STEPS

1

Identify the Need for Change and Adaptation

2016-2018

Evaluations of the Skilful Parenting approach demonstrated a number of positive impacts on children and their families. They also highlighted that the programme was less effective for families where violence was already occurring. This led to an organisational decision to make this strategic shift to intentionally address gender norms and VAW/VAC intersections.

“We knew we had a good programme, with great potential, but also that we could increase the impact. Evidence on the intersections of VAC and VAW was just starting to come into the fore, but it was not really documented in our context.”

Beatrice Ogutu, Director, ICS-SP

2

Build Effective and Supportive Partnerships

October 2019 - February 2021

Prevention Collaborative and ICS-SP partnered on integrating a gender transformative approach. The teams built trust, learned about each other’s work, explored concepts about gender, power, socialisation and violence, and looked at examples of methodologies and evidence from other contexts. Experiential exercises were used to unpack beliefs and norms in a way that supported personal reflection and change.

3

Co-create and Test New Content

March 2020 - January 2022

The teams reviewed the original curriculum to identify integration opportunities and added a new module on VAW prevention. The team tested potential new activities together and then with communities and frontline workers. At this stage, the team faced a lot of decisions about what to keep and what to let go of to make room for the new content.

“There was a lot of deliberation! We had just evaluated the curriculum and we had confirmed it was working – so what does it mean to now start changing it? We were not yet completely convinced about these new topics, but we knew that what we had worked! We didn’t realise how painful and how difficult it was going to be! We had to make those decisions slowly” - Moureen Ochieng, Programmes Coordinator, ICS-SP

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4

Implement and Learn from the New Content

August 2021 - Present

The rollout of the new integrated curriculum required intentionality, patience, regular monitoring, refresher trainings and ongoing monthly support meetings where facilitators discussed the issues they faced and reflected on their own attitudes and beliefs around gender.

5

Work with Diverse Stakeholders to Design a Scale-Up Approach

October 2020 - 2021

The multisectoral technical working group for the National Positive Parenting Programme (NPPP), including representation from government, faith actors, academia and NGOs, highlighted the Skilful Parenting curriculum as an evidence-based approach already being delivered within Kenya. The gender-transformative integrated Skilful Parenting curriculum became foundational material for the NPPP. At the same time, some of the same gender norms and power dynamics unpacked within the curriculum were being worked out within the group.

7

Supporting Effective Implementation

May 2023 - Present

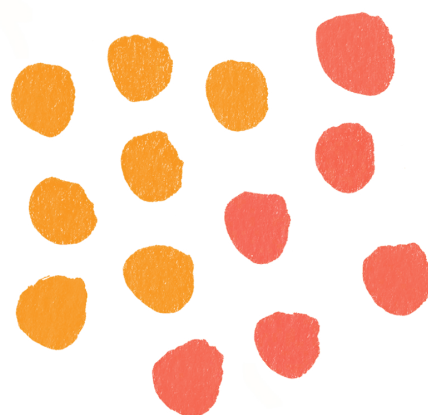
Following the official launch of the programme, ICS-SP continued to work alongside the government to support effective implementation and roll out. Over 80 'master trainers' from government, NGOs, and faith-based institutions have been trained by the ICS-SP team. ICS-SP has been providing bilateral support to ensure quality implementation and provide space for reflections on practice.

6

Pre-test, Pilot and Launch

February 2022 - May 2023

The draft NPPP curriculum was pre-tested in five counties to assess the materials. Overall, feedback from parents and caregivers was very positive, including for sessions that initially faced pushback. This feedback helped build a case for retaining some gender-specific content, and the pilot became an important opportunity to build trust in that content. As an official government programme, the validation of each programme document was required, a process that took time and involved some challenging conversations and processes.



KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Adapting to a Gender-Transformative Approach

- ▶ **Find a Common Vision and a Common Ground between VAC and VAW Approaches** –This vision can serve as an anchor when disagreements arise over how to get there.
- ▶ **Ensure Sufficient Commitment and Resources:** Integrating a gender-transformative approach requires time, patience and flexibility from everyone involved.
- ▶ **Support and Invest in Skilled and Diverse Facilitators:** the quality of facilitation has a significant impact on the programme's success.
- ▶ **Don't Underestimate the Importance of Getting the Language Right:** Some terms might not be easily understood or could create misunderstanding. Choose simple and effective language to get the overall message across.
- ▶ **Make Referrals with Other Services and Leverage Existing Programmes:** Map the services and support available in the local area, and ensure facilitators are trained on how to effectively refer parents and caregivers to these services and support.
- ▶ **It Takes Sustained and Flexible Funding:** Flexible support and understanding from funders to see the project through and accommodate unexpected changes are essential.

Planning for Scale

- ▶ **Establish a Context-Specific Evidence Base:** to help build a compelling case for scaling the programme.
- ▶ **Support Stakeholders' Understanding:** Building a shared understanding of key concepts and evidence and being prepared to keep answering questions are important parts of the process.
- ▶ **Prepare for Power Dynamics and Dealing with Backlash:** Think about how to support teams through this by building networks of supportive and like-minded allies, taking breaks when needed, and staying focused on the end goal.
- ▶ **Consider the Available Workforce and Invest in Ongoing Training and Support:** Think about which platforms can provide access to a large workforce, what their limitations might be, and what training and support they would need to deliver the programme effectively. Ensure careful monitoring so emerging issues can be addressed.
- ▶ **Look for Opportunities to Integrate and Collaborate with Other Sectors:** For example, the health sector has integrated the NPPP in Community Health Workers' day-to-day work.
- ▶ **Funding for Scaling Needs to be Flexible and Long-Term:** Donors and strategic partners wishing to support scaling-up must be ready to invest in a long-term approach.

A CALL TO ACTION

VAW and VAC are preventable, but to do this at scale, we must commit, collaborate and invest across diverse sectors and stakeholders.

"One takeaway message I want to share is that tackling the root causes of violence against women and violence against children is a smart investment - and gender- transformative parenting is one pathway to do this in a context where resources are limited. We need to be advocating for these approaches across research, funding, programming and policy - working together to scale up the approaches that we know are having an impact."

Beatrice Ogutu, Director, ICS-SP

NOTES

1. For more information, please refer to the [extended brief](#) and the [accompanying video](#).



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