

Together to #ENDviolence

Global Policy Briefing

Key Messages

Enable parents and caregivers
to keep children safe

2030 Policy Objectives

Enable parents and caregivers to keep children safe at home, online and within the community by scaling up evidence-based parenting support.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Evidence shows that programmes to support parents and caregivers enhance early child development outcomes; improve nutrition outcomes; enhance mothers' and children's mental health; and reduce violence against children.
2. Investing in better parenting is a proven way to deliver multiple wins across the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. Despite their effectiveness, parenting support approaches have failed to reach scale, even in wealthy countries.
4. This briefing calls upon governments and donors to scale-up evidence-based parenting programmes, including home visitations, and parenting resources to protect children at home, in communities and online.

KEY STATISTICS

WHO's Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children (2020), shows that:

- Around four in five children between the ages of 2 and 14 are subjected to some kind of violent discipline in the home.¹
- Only 26% of governments say they are reaching all parents who need parental support
- National-level support for parent and caregivers is greater in the European and Americas regions where 78% and 60% of countries respectively reported national support mechanisms, compared with 56% of countries in the African region, and well under half of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions.
- Home visiting and centre-based parent support approaches received high reach ratings from 39% and 48% of high-income countries respectively, compared to 10% to 17% of low- and lower-middle-income countries.

WHY NOW?

Research shows that evidence-based parenting interventions can prevent abuse and maximize children's development². They help increase attendance at routine health visits and improve nutrition outcomes; enhance mothers' and children's mental health; interrupt the cycle of violence, including perpetration of future violence; promote gender equality and positive social norms about social structures in protecting and nurturing children. As the world wrestles with the expanded threats brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, parenting interventions are a cost-effective way to deliver multiple wins against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and help build back better.

Over 100 randomized trials on parenting interventions have found that a variety of low-cost, light-touch behavioural support programmes can optimize the decisions parents make in several key areas of life, including decisions about health, financial savings and parental decision-making.

¹UNICEF (2014), Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children, NY: UNICEF

²Redfern A, Cluver LD, Casale M, Steinert JI. Cost and cost-effectiveness of a parenting programme to prevent violence against adolescents in South Africa. *BMJ Glob Health* 2019; 4(3): e001147.

These have lifelong benefits for parents and children and play a critical role interrupting the intergenerational cycle of violence, especially against women and girls, due to the strong interplay between violence against children and intimate partner violence. Such programmes can also accelerate progress in the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including education (SDG 4.1), mental health (SDG 3.4), income (SDG 8.5), social emotional skills (SDG 4.7), gender equality (SDG 5) and violence perpetration (SDG 16.1).

Support programmes to enable parents and caregivers to keep children safe and prevent violence in the home are needed now more than ever before. The COVID-19 pandemic and societal responses aimed at preventing transmission of the virus have had negative side effects on children, including increases in child maltreatment and intimate partner violence. School closures have impacted some 1.5 billion children, while movement restrictions, loss of income, isolation, and overcrowding have heightened levels of stress and anxiety in parents, caregivers and children. Stay-at-home measures have limited the usual sources of support for families and individuals – be they friends, extended family, or professionals – further eroding their ability to successfully cope with crises and the new routines of daily life.

HOW?

It is now time to act on the overwhelming evidence, and scale-up policies and programmes to enhance:

- **Positive parenting** to creating safe home environments and build a foundation of support and care for children through affection, quality time, praise, and healthy methods of dealing with difficult behaviour.
- **Nurturing parenting** to help children develop healthy social and emotional behaviours, and teaching life skills and promoting well-being by modelling healthy ways to solve problems and communicate feelings.

Specific actions that governments can take to enable caregivers to keep children safe:

- All governments should scale up parenting/caregiver support programmes, including home visitation and centre-based support.
- All governments should establish policy frameworks and plans to scale-up parenting and caregiver support programmes.
- All governments should scale-up the use of the evidence-based positive parenting resources, including those that help protect children from violence at home, in communities and online.
- All governments should adapt, utilise and refine human-digital parenting strategies, including online support groups, parenting applications and population-level messaging to ensure parents are supported in contexts of reduced child-related services and increased parental responsibilities.
- All governments should establish economic strengthening measures as a part of the social protection interventions to support families in crisis.
- All governments should provide focused support to the most vulnerable children, especially those living with disabilities, refugees and children on the move, as well as children cared for by single parents and caregivers or adolescent parents.

Support and Resources available

[Family and Parenting Support: Policy and Provision in a Global Context](#), UNICEF Office of Research, Florence. Daly, M., R. Bray, Z. Bruckauf, J. Byrne, A. Margaria, N. Pec´nik, and M. Samms-Vaughan (2015).

[Parenting for Lifelong Health \(PLH\)](#) is a suite of open access, non-commercialised parenting programmes to prevent violence in low-resource settings.

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