

COVID-19 PLAYFUL PARENTING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Reaching 1.3 billion families with immediate parenting support

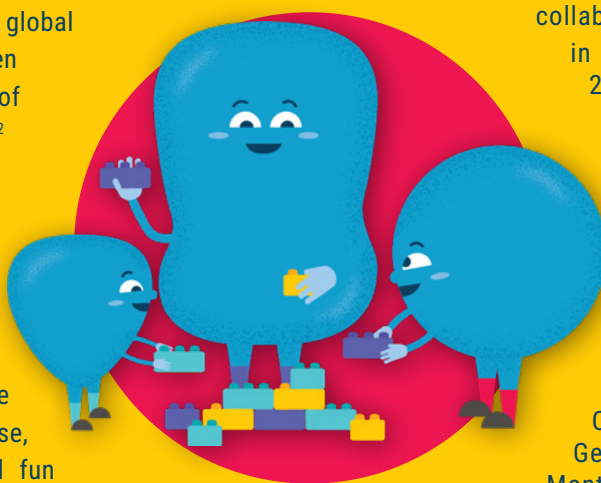
Partners: University of Oxford, Parenting for Lifelong Health, Clowns Without Borders South Africa, UNICEF, World Health Organization, Global Partnership to End Violence, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID, UNODC, World Without Orphans, World Childhood Foundation, LEGO Foundation

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Evidence-Based Playful Parenting Can Prevent Child Abuse in Lockdown

1.3 billion children are now out of school or childcare across 186 countries due to COVID-19.¹ Parents and caregivers must provide 24/7 care, alongside increased stress, illness and financial insecurity. UNICEF reports global escalation in child abuse, as seen during school shutdowns of other health emergencies,² with severe and lasting health and economic impacts.³⁻⁷ WHO anticipates successive periods of lockdown over the next 12-24 months, especially in low-resource areas. But we have an opportunity to use evidence to reduce risks of abuse, through playful, nurturing, and fun interactions that support positive parent-child relationships.

In late March as schools closed globally, the University of Oxford and Parenting for Lifelong Health brought together a coalition consisting of the WHO, UNICEF, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, USAID and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (UNODC, World Without Orphans, and World Childhood Foundation have now also joined).



We developed a set of **open-source COVID-19 parenting resource sheets**, condensing evidence from our multiple RCTs of parenting programmes in Africa, Asia and Europe.⁸⁻²⁶ These focused on building positive relationships through parent-child play, reinforcing positive and managing difficult behaviours, creating routines and opportunities for free and structured play during lockdown, talking about COVID-19 with children and making games out of preventative actions such as handwashing, and reducing parent and caregiver stress. They were reviewed and endorsed by all collaborating agencies, and released in a letter published in **The Lancet** on 25.3.2020.²⁷

In a month, our resources have reached at least 34 million families in 174 countries. They are on the **WHO** and **UNICEF** COVID-19 websites, translated into **81 languages**, and disseminated by governments including Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, France, Germany, Iceland, Malaysia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Philippines, Thailand, Uganda, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.

They have been distributed by UNICEF, USAID, WHO and UNODC country offices, faith-based agencies, and written about by **Angelina Jolie in Time Magazine**. With our collaborating partners and based on feedback from families, we have developed a further set of 6 resources that address learning through play, internet safety, crowded communities, family violence, anger management, and playful approaches to family budgeting and reducing financial stress during COVID-19.

But this is only a tiny fraction of the global need...



The COVID-19 Playful Parenting Emergency Response is supported by the LEGO Foundation, the philanthropic donors to the University of Oxford's COVID-19 Research Response Fund, and the UKRI GCRF Accelerating Achievement for Africa's Adolescents (Accelerate) Hub. Research on Parenting for Lifelong Health is supported by the UKRI GCRF Accelerate Hub, the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme and the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, UNICEF, WHO, Oxford University Innovation GCRF Sustainable Impact Fund, the Leverhulme Trust, the Economic and Social Research Council, CIDA, the National Research Foundation of South Africa, Ilifa Labantwana, the John Fell Fund, the Evaluation Fund, the UBS Optimus Foundation, USAID-PEPFAR, the Wellcome Trust, Grand Challenges Canada and WellSpring Advisors.



COVID-19 Playful Parenting Emergency Response

1

Develop playful, fun, and interactive ways of engaging parents globally in these effective parenting resources;

2

Increase the accessibility for marginalised and vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities;

3

Rapidly scale-up the resources on a global level; and

4

Test the implementation and effectiveness of different mechanisms to engage parents in playful prevention.

1 Playful Content Development

We are working with **Clowns Without Borders South Africa** – a humanitarian NGO with extensive experience providing laughter and play to families affected by crisis – to develop playful, fun, and interactive ways of engaging parents and children in the COVID-19 parenting resources. This includes (i) Adapting content into illustrated comics, sketches, radio dramas, visual memes, and recorded stories that are relatable to parents and children and can be easily transported across cultures and contexts; and (ii) expanding the Learning through Play and One-on-One Time tip sheets to provide parents with fun activities they can do with their children in order to increase cognitive stimulation, prosocial behaviour, emotional wellbeing, and positive relationship building across the development spectrum. Playful content is being developed in close collaboration with artists in multiple countries who have extensive experience working with vulnerable populations in emergency and crisis situations, and in consultation with play experts in the public and private sector, such as the World Bank's ECD team and the LEGO Group.

2 Increasing Accessibility through Play

We aim to increase the accessibility and engagement of the resources both online and offline: (i) with WHO and UNICEF, create and disseminate a playful, interactive text message delivery system using **RapidPro**, an open-source application serving low-income communities without smartphone access, and also through social media messaging platforms such as Telegram, WhatsApp, and Facebook messenger; (ii) with USAID and UNICEF, develop and implement public service announcements, comic sketches, fun audio dramas that can be shared via community loudspeakers and bush radio for rural populations with low cellphone access; (iii) with USAID, UNICEF, and World Bank, develop user-friendly guides for caseworkers, community health workers, and early childhood educators to support families through phone calls, call-in/online parenting hotlines, and home visits where possible; (iv) with UNICEF, develop accessible versions to allow playful learning for children and families with disabilities and scale through global disability networks; and (v) with UNODC and UNICEF country offices,



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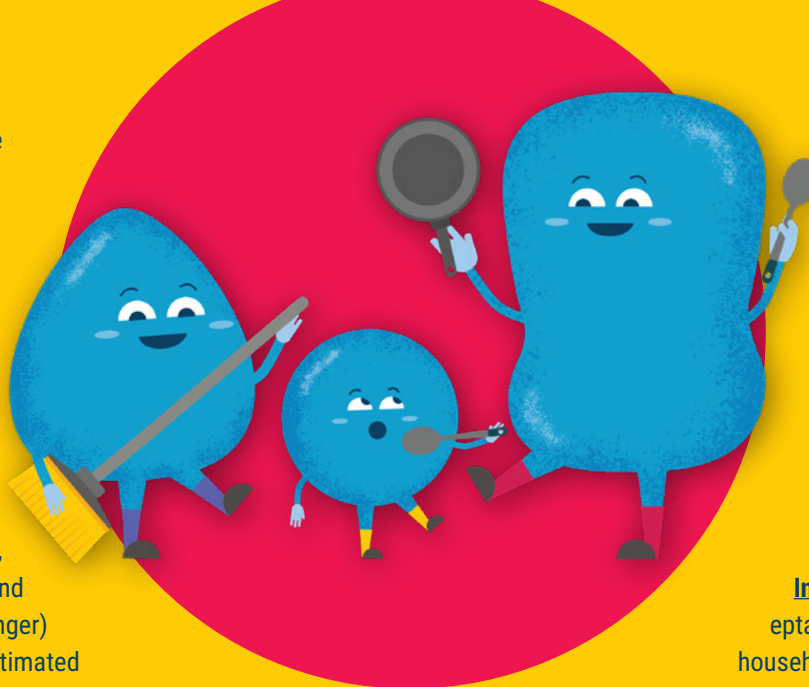
adapt content for use in refugee camps and emergency settings, where playful parenting needs to be adapted for safety and very low access to resources.

Text message and free social media messaging services (such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, and Facebook messenger) have reach to an estimated 70% of the world population, including those with basic handsets and no internet access.

We will develop a playful, structured parenting support programme using the open source mobile application, RapidPro, that allows regular contact with caregivers to receive skills building that builds positive relationships through play ('Try 20 minutes of play with your child today – make music with some pots and spoon!', reminders ('Remember - 20 minutes of play with your child will increase their brain development') and responses ('You did it! Well done - you are a star!'). It will also allow for user-directed engagement, in which parents and caregivers self-select content that is most relevant to their context and developmental stage of their children, as well as two-way interaction and feedback.

3 Global Scale Up – Reaching Every Family through Play

We will work closely with partners including WHO, UNICEF, CDC, USAID, World Bank, and the Global Partnership to End Violence to (i) rapidly scale up global dissemination through UNICEF's Internet of Good Things by offering free digital access in 63 countries for more than 32 million users; (ii) promote the content through UNICEF's 190 country offices in a shared media campaign; (iii) Disseminate to worldwide faith-based organisations and networks such as the Inter Faith network; and (iv) support and share innovative government dissemination strategies to promote playful family relationships across



complex contexts – for example the Philippines Government are delivering the resources in 10 million food parcels, community networks in Kyrgyzstan are leaving copies at food store checkouts, and the United Arab Emirates have developed

Instagram versions acceptable for religious Islamic households. Scale-up will be coordinated on a global and regional level with UNICEF (i.e., Middle East and

North Africa, East Asia and Pacific, Americas and Caribbean, Europe, and Central Asia, East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, and South Asia).

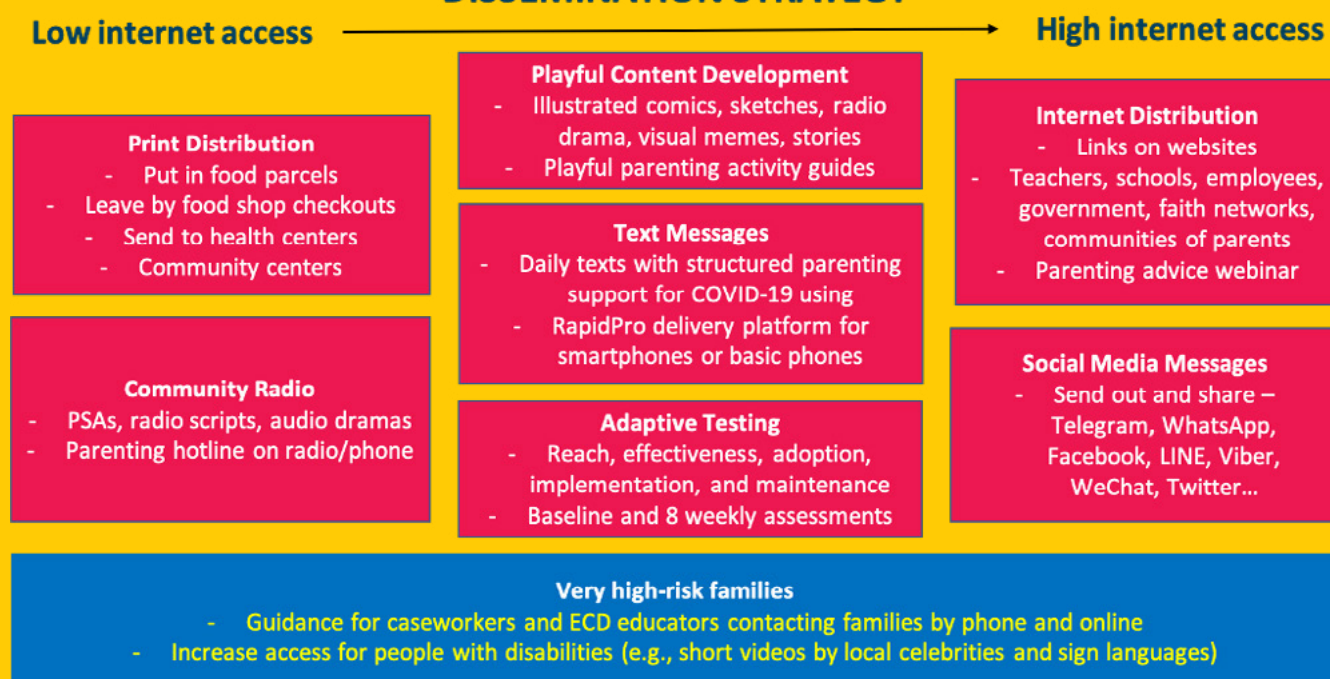
4 Monitoring and Testing of Playful Parenting Delivery Mechanisms

We will build monitoring and evaluation into scale-up, in order to allow adaptive improvement of playful parenting resources and build an evidence-base for future pandemics. This will include (i) Monitoring reach and implementation through number, proportion, and characteristics of adopting governments and NGOs; social media metrics (clicks, shares, likes); Google analytics (number and duration of visits, downloads, location); and direct distribution (number and method of leaflet distribution); (ii) Tracking integration with other COVID-19-related interventions and the adaptation of messages and communication strategies;²⁸ (iii) Assessing acceptability amongst low-income users in 65 countries through a brief embedded survey on UNICEF's Internet of Good Things. (iv) Analysing the RapidPro text message delivery system effects on child abuse, positive parenting, and parenting stress using latent growth curve modelling of longitudinal data from micro-assessments at baseline and 8 weekly intervals; and (v) Assessing economic costs and benefits of programme at scale by combining costs of activities with micro-assessment outcomes.



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COVID-19 PLAYFUL PARENTING EMERGENCY RESPONSE DISSEMINATION STRATEGY



Expected Results

- Increased understanding on the most effective, play-focused mechanisms to reach and sustain interest of families;
- Delivery of effective and playful child abuse prevention messages for 50 million families within 4 weeks;
- Increased access for children and parents with disabilities and populations without cellphone or Internet access in low-resource settings within 8 weeks;
- Uptake of RapidPro text message delivery system with UNICEF Internet of Good Things in 15 countries within 8 weeks;
- Increased playful parenting and learning through play, and reduction in risks of violence against children for families affected by COVID-19;
- Preparation and planning for swift and effective response to the next phases of lockdown periods within COVID-19.

74% of children globally are in lockdown with stress on families and risks to children increasing daily. They need a playful, supportive emergency response.

An immediate response is essential to provide billions of families with playful, fun, and interactive evidence-based positive parenting content. Through partnership with leading international agencies and national governments, and our team's record of impact, this project will be a core component of the global COVID-19 response.

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WVO
World Vision

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