

# Summary of parent-support activities and achievements in **Uganda** as a result of Japanese Government Humanitarian support

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## CONTEXT

In Uganda, as in all other countries in the world, the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges in preventing violence against children. Within the context of this humanitarian crisis, support from the Government of Japan sought to prevent the soaring prevalence of different forms of violence against children by scaling evidence-based parenting programmes – as cost effective interventions to protect children.

With support from the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and UNICEF Country Offices in Uganda, financial support from the Government of Japan galvanized the abilities of the government in Uganda to capitalize on existing in-country parent-support strategies. In less than 2 years, Uganda was able to build or reinforce coordinating systems and assemble the technical bodies to facilitate consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders in order to then establish guidelines and content for national parenting programmes. Parenting programmes and associated training materials were then piloted in different areas in order to ensure effectiveness and cultural acceptability. Uganda is now positioned to deliver parent-support programmes at a national scale, extending what remains much-needed protection for children and their families.

## ACHIEVEMENTS IN UGANDA

### **Building leadership and multisectoral coordination to ensure widespread and sustained parenting support**

Existing national and regional government coordination and leadership were initially strengthened in order to build sustainable, multi-sectoral support to parenting initiatives in Uganda. The Child Health Development Centre (CHDC) at Makerere University led the establishment of a national parenting consortium that included academic and civil society organizations and under the leadership of the Family and Culture Department, the Ministry of Gender Labour Social Development (MGLSD) coordinated a national parenting agenda comprised of diverse stakeholders. Most of the stakeholders in qualitative interviews highlighted the strong leadership, commitment and coordinating role of the MGLSD.

The MGLSD in collaboration with CHDC and UNICEF also led the extensive multi-sectoral consultation processes in developing the National Parenting Standards and Manuals. In the process they built successful partnerships with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Sports. These partnerships are essential in scaling-up community-based parenting programmes because they provide efficient delivery through multiple channels such as local health centres and schools.

### **Using a bottom-up approach to creating consensus for an evidence-based parenting standard and manual**

The National Parenting Standard is an evidence-informed tool for supervising and providing feedback on parenting interventions in Uganda. It was developed after an extensive consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders, including parents and children in different regions and thus provides an important model for a 'bottom-up', participatory approach. The Standard provides benchmarks for the implementation of comprehensive parenting programmes in the country, including guidance on the ideal design, content, delivery, and the structure of parenting programmes. It also includes evidence-based strategies on how



to start, strengthen and expand extant parenting programmes. The strategies outlined in the Standard are valuable to the many operational parenting programmes that were identified through the Parenting Agenda Initiative within the MGLSD and have provided a clear consensus that implementation partners can use to assess and revise existing parenting programme interventions. The Parenting Manual and facilitation guidelines were developed by the MGLSD in collaboration with CHDC and the National Parenting Consortium. The process of development included national level consultations with over 75 multisectoral stakeholders in order to build consensus around key contents including NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, faith-based organisations, and cultural organisations.

### **Building capacity and a sense of local ownership**

A Training of Trainers (ToT) was held in September 2022 for 56 master trainers from eight pilot districts. Probation Officers and Community Development Officers were identified and selected as master trainers, and will play a key role in training community-based facilitators and monitoring the roll-out of the parenting programme to parents. By involving local leadership and their structures at sub-county and community levels, the process of building facilitation capacity has successfully created a sense of community ownership for the parenting programme.

### **Programme acceptability**

Results from the pilot show parents acceptance of the programme, and confirm the relevance, usability and cultural appropriateness the programme. The pilot results are positive and encouraging, and information, education communication (IEC) materials are already available to bolster and reinforce messages about positive parenting nationwide.

For more, [hear directly from Aggrey David Kibenge, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Government of Uganda.](#)

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Uganda was able to circumnavigate several challenges in this process, most notably by building coordination mechanisms that are able to support a diversity of agendas in order to build culturally acceptable, evidence-informed parenting tools through consultation, consensus-building, and pre-testing in culturally and linguistically diverse regions.

While its achievements are unique to their particular infrastructures and contexts, the approach in Uganda reflects a meaningful engagement with current evidence that underlines the importance of standardized manuals and training in order to ensure programme fidelity and high-quality implementation.

Going forward, additional financial and technical support are required to enable the government in Uganda to sustain the implementation of parenting programme and thus of its national violence against children prevention strategies. The positive outcomes stand to reach beyond families and communities in Uganda: The lessons learned have stimulated cross-country discussions, and also stand to inform other countries about to begin the process of identifying and scaling-up national parenting support programmes.



