

CONFERENCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
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METHODS OF BUILDING COMMUNITY-BASED ECD PROGRAMS

Importance of ECD

- Impressionable/formative years (conception-6 years)
- Highly vulnerable to environmental and other influences - attachment, care, nutrition, and health
- Brain development most rapid (80% by 2 years and 90% by 6 yrs)
- Windows of opportunity open during this period (formation of values and habits, learning, language, vision, maths and logic)
- Identification of disabilities

Hence, importance of early interventions e.g. parent educational empowerment programs, health and ECD centers, home-based care, home visiting etc. to meet the needs of children and families

Challenges in Parenting

- Disintegration of family systems/extended family structure has almost collapsed
- Changing values. No clearly defined values due to social changes
- Changing roles of women. Most women have multiple roles - breadwinners/mothers/caregivers etc.
- Increasing single parenthood - mainly single mothers.
- Teenage motherhood - young girls too young to care for children
- Child-headed families, especially due to HIV/AIDS scourge and in some cases wars (Sudan)
- Changing roles of grandparents (multiple roles)
 - Primary caregivers

- Emotional trauma due to experiences of death of their own children and the fact that they are expected to care for children's well being and worry over the future of their grandchildren
- Poverty
- Poor health
- Bread winners again
- Parenting skills - traditional versus modern views
- Lack of appropriate information e.g. causes and prevention of HIV/AIDS, psychosocial needs of children
- Poverty - increasing poverty levels in Kenya
- Lack of sufficient targeted support from governments, community, NGOs and other agencies for:
 - Grandparents
 - Orphans
 - Single parents
 - The poor/disadvantaged families

Strategies on How to Build Capacities of Parents and Communities

Principles

- Rights-based (emphasis on rights and needs of children)
- Building on people's strengths e.g. skills/knowledge, attitudes (aspirations), structures and materials that exist in the communities
- Building on the culture e.g. traditional folklore, values
- Participation/involvement of the people to ensure feeling of ownership and hence, sustainability
- Holistic approach e.g. health, nutrition, care, recreation, income generation etc.
- Providing new skills, knowledge and information on a continuous and reflective way
- Networking and partnership building

Approaches

- Information, advocacy and mobilization e.g. churches, schools, existing leadership structures. Personalizing the message. Meeting the people.
- Formation of structures or building on existing structures to be able to reach parents and communities e.g. village child committees, health committees, self-help women/youth groups.
- Planning and implementing activities/projects focused on improving the lives of their children and families
- Monitoring and evaluation of projects/activities. Regular review of activities

Case Study of Integrated Child Development Project

- Meeting leaders from district to community level
- Baseline data and quick situational analysis involving the people to identify needs and challenges, resources, strengths, opportunities and threats
- Mobilization and awareness creation
- Formation of committees and groups e.g.
 - Child and youth development committees (village, sub-location levels)
 - Health committees
 - Young mothers
 - Youth
 - Community health workers
 - Pre-school teachers
 - Primary school guidance and counseling teachers, guardians and community motivators
- Training on such issues as group and committee management, income generation, child and adolescent development, leadership, team building, esteem building, conflict resolutions and communication etc.
- Activities of groups and committees
 - Community pharmacy to provide service and income generation
 - Merry-go-round
 - Chicken rearing

- Tie and dye
- Soap making
- Small businesses e.g. selling of commodities
- Growing of vegetables
- Care of orphans and other vulnerable children e.g. giving support for uniforms and medical care
- Home-based care for HIV/AIDS infected and affected parents, children and families