



Child Health and Development
Centre (CHDC), Makerere University

QUARTERLY Newsletter

January - March 2025

FAMILIES, PARENTING AND CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMME



A father and mother sharing a precious moment with their child, Tororo district.



Message

From Programme Leader



Dear Readers,

We are excited to bring you this edition of the Families, Parenting, and Child Health Programme Quarterly Newsletter.

Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC) is a multidisciplinary unit and its mission is to promote the wellbeing of children and women in Uganda through research, training, and partnerships with communities, government, and other stakeholders

This research Program is under CHDC Makerere University School of Medicine College of Health Sciences.

Our Program is strategically positioned to prevent violence against children and improve early childhood development and strengthening families by promoting positive relationships.

Our guiding philosophy is that the health needs of children and women extend beyond biomedicine. They include the broader social context—families, communities, institutions of care, and public policy. CHDC's long-term vision is to become a leading institution capable of generating high-quality research, fostering innovation, and supporting policymakers and practitioners in developing and scaling up interventions that optimize child development and wellbeing outcomes.

Currently, we are implementing ten projects;

- Parenting for Respectability Cluster Trial,
- Digital delivery of the Parenting for Respectability Trial,
- Scaling up of Parenting for Respectability,
- Parenting Agenda - Consensus building,
- ECD Trial in Tororo
- Disability Inclusive Parenting Interventions
- Parenting and Nurturing Care in Climate Adversities Project,
- Digital delivery of the parenting for Respectability Trial
- Parenting data hub - Repository at the ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD).
- Radio and Billboard delivery of Parenting for Respectability

We express gratitude to our estimated funders, collaborators and partners, especially the MGLSD for the commitment and support rendered to us as we deliver interventions and research to improve family wellbeing and child health.

In this Newsletter we bring you highlights of activities and lessons learnt from different projects over the past three months. We hope you find this edition informative and inspiring as we continue to work together.

Dr Godfrey Siu Programme Leader Mak-CHDC.

30 Graduate in the science of Evidence Based parenting Intervention

On 19th February, thirty participants successfully graduated with Certificates in the Science of Designing, Adaptation, and Scaling Up of Evidence-Based Parenting Interventions.

The course undertaken by CHDC in collaboration with MGLSD is part of the ongoing efforts to standardize parenting work in the country by bringing scientific rigor and insights at the heart of the design of evidence -based parenting interventions.

This initiative contributes to one of the Government of Uganda's pledges in Bogota, November 2025, to end violence against children by strengthening parenting support.

The three-month course targeted programme developers, planners and implementers working in NGOs, CBO's, practitioners in national and local governments as well as higher level officials in government such as policy officers, commissioners and donor agencies

who are involved in supervision and monitoring of parenting initiatives in the country.

In total seven modules are covered. The core focus of the training is to skill practitioners and policy implementers on how to design an intervention and embed evidence generation in it.

The award ceremony of the first cohort was officiated by the Permanent Secretary MGLSD, Mr. Aggrey David Kibenge, as the Chief Guest. The event was attended by other dignitaries, including the Commissioner for Families and Culture, the Deputy Principal of the College of Health Sciences, the Director of CHDC, and CSOs.

In his speech, the PS underscored the pivotal role of the family in national development. He said " the state depends on the functionality of the family. Neglecting the family is compared to a farmer who neglects his garden, and at the time of harvesting he fights with weeds

and can hardly achieve a good harvest" In this case challenges faced by different communities are as a result of neglecting children and the family institution.

He added that raising children at home is crucial for their healthy development as it provides a stable and secure environment where they can build strong bonds with their parents, fostering a sense of belonging , and laying a foundation for their emotional, social and cognitive growth

He pledged government continued support to building strong interventions that aim at translating research into community support programs. He also requested for some of the proposals written by participants to be shared with his office for consideration with a possibility of getting them funded.



Mr Aggrey David Kibenge (Centre) Permanent Secretary Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, Juliana Naumo (5th from the right), Commissioner for Culture and Family Affairs, Prof. Richard Idro (4th from the right), Deputy Principal of the College of Health Sciences Makerere University and pioneer participants displaying their certificates.

Monitoring PfR Implementation Activities



A facilitator and participants engaging in an activity in Amuru.

During the reporting period we conducted monitoring and support supervision of PfR implementation in four districts including Tororo, Amuru, Nakasongola and Busia. This was a joint activity executed by CHDC, District Local Government with support from MGLSD. The primary aim of monitoring the delivery of parental sessions in the four districts was to advance a key programme objective: to establish systems and models that support scale-up, and ensure the sustainability of parenting programs in the selected districts. Our objective was to provide back-stopping to the CDOs and facilitators who are at the frontline of session delivery. We verified attendance registers and responded to implementation challenges.

During the monitoring visits, notable progress was observed in advancing the PfR programme's goals. Community members highlighted several key factors that contributed to the programme's success, particularly increasing male caregiver involvement. These included effective mobilization by local leaders, peer-led door-to-door sensitization, holding sessions in central and easily accessible locations, and the active participation of local leadership. As a result, there was a strong turnout of parents at the sessions.

Additionally, families were visited, and shared inspiring stories. These stories showcased improved spousal relationships, stronger parent-child interactions, better discipline, and positive gender socialization, painting a compelling picture of transformation at the household level.

TESTIMONY



In Turdakatuba Village, Amuru, the home of Apio Grace and Orach John was once torn apart by conflict. John, a local elder, has two wives Grace and Juliet and nine children. When Juliet joined the family, Grace withdrew, focusing solely on her own children and neglecting the unity of the household. Tension and division soon took hold.

This changed when John mobilized parents in the community, including his wives, to attend parenting sessions. Today, Grace proudly shares how peace has returned to their home. "We now eat, work, and care for each other together. When my co-wife went for antenatal care, I was the one taking care of her child," she said with a smile.

Their son Brian, who had previously dropped out of school and resorted to theft, is now disciplined and helps on the farm. They hope to enroll him in a motor vehicle mechanics course soon.

John is grateful for the program that restored harmony in their family. They now look forward to building permanent homes and creating a stronger future together.



Some of the participants attending to one of the parenting sessions in Busia in March, 2025.



Ms. Carolyn N. Byekwaso, CHDC (3rd from left) and Mr. Kyambadde Gerald, CDO Kalongo, together with PfR facilitators having a pre-visit meeting before commencing to the individual villages in Nakasongola district.

ECD Intervention Parents Embrace New Skills

During the same period, CHDC and partners also conducted monitoring of the ECD trial in Mella Sub-county, Tororo district. We visited 18 villages and found that the sessions were running smoothly with impressive attendance of sessions. Approximately, 300 participants were receiving the intervention. The groups met regularly as scheduled and were eager to learn, share, and support one another.

There were many positive testimonies from the caregivers. We share some of them below;

“Before the training, I used to stop my children from playing because I thought they were only getting dirty and wasting my things. But now I have changed I let them play freely with their friends,” shared a **28-year-old mother from Mella**, her face lighting up with pride.

For another **young mother**, just 23, the sessions have meant the gift of health: *“One of my children was becoming malnourished because of my poor feeding habits. After learning about the importance of proper nutrition, I now make an effort to prepare nutritious meals. He looks so much healthier.”*

Similarly, a **32-year-old mother** expressed her joy: *“Ever since I started attending these sessions, I feel happier about my children because they look healthy. I’ve become more attentive to their well-being than I ever was before.”*

These heartfelt stories offer just a glimpse of how parenting sessions are changing lives throughout Mella sub county in Tororo.



L - A mother interacting with her daughter in Mella Sub County Tororo district; R - Father playing with his daughter

CHDC Finalizes Development of Parenting Data Hub

During the past few months, MGLSD, in collaboration with CHDC, have worked hard to finalise the development of a National Parenting Data Hub a digital platform aimed at transforming how parenting programme data is to be collected, managed, and used across Uganda.

The National Information and Technology Authority - Uganda (NITA-U) supported the development of the Data Hub to ensure it aligns with the Information Technology (IT) development guidelines.

This new tool builds on the momentum of a national mapping exercise conducted 2019 and 2021, which identified 102 parenting programmes being implemented by 79 organizations. The primary goal of the Data Hub is to streamline coordination, consolidate data sources, and strengthen collaboration among partners delivering parenting programmes nationwide. Previously, there was no central system to facilitate coordination, which often led to duplication of services among



Parenting Data Hub finalisation workshop at Esella Hotel.

implementing partners.

The platform is expected to:

- Provide a centralized digital space for efficient data collection, information sharing, and documentation of parenting initiatives.
- Enhance understanding of regional priorities in parenting programming.
- Minimize duplication of services among partners.
- Foster stronger partnerships and enable harmonized planning and

delivery of interventions.

- Support assessment and alignment of partner capacities with government standards for more effective programme implementation.
- Inform government decisions and guide the strategic allocation of services, thereby expanding outreach and improving coverage to meet diverse parenting needs across the country.

MGLSD plans to launch the Parenting Data Hub soon.

Scoping visits to introduce the Radio & Billboard Initiative to strengthen PfR's reach

To commence the radio and billboard initiative to expand PfR's reach, we conducted a scoping visit to four districts (Nakasongola, Busia, Tororo and Amuru) where the PfR is being scaled-up.

The scoping visits were aimed at identifying existing and suitable radio stations with respect to their radio listenership, reach, cost, experience and expertise in disseminating parenting messages.

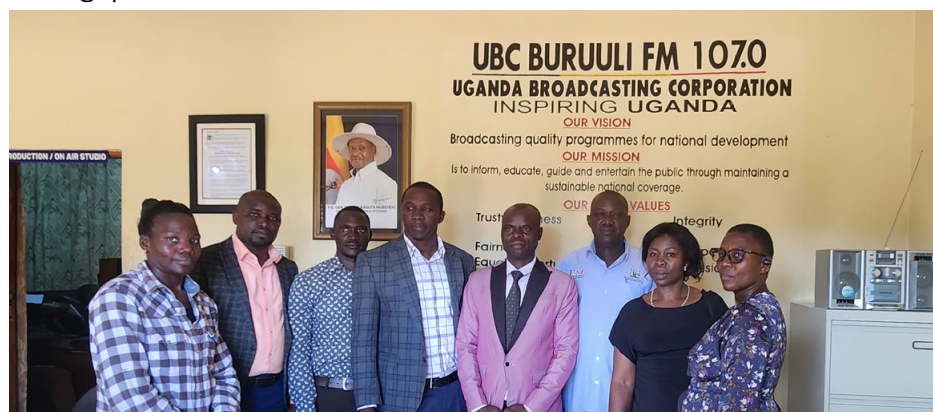
In each district, we met with the District Community Development Officer (DCDO), District planner, Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) and the Senior Probation and Social Welfare Officer (SPSWO), as well as the managers of different radio stations (Rock Mambo Radio, Bululi Radio, Jogo FM and Favor Radio).

Working closely with the RDCs, the teams identified possible locations for the signposts and billboards.

Following the scoping visit, the team worked with DCDO's office to adapt PfR content for the radio spots, DJ mentions, talk-shows, billboards and signposts.

The radio content was then tested during orientation and training of the DJ presenters.

After the orientation, the adapted content was translated into different languages, overseen by the DCDOs and radio station managers.



L-R: Buruuli FM DJ presenter, CDO- Wabinyonyi, Project Officer - CTP, RDC Nakasongola, Radio Station Manager, DCDO Nakasongola, District Planner, and Carolyn N. Byekwaso - CHDC.

Refugees, Early Learning and Playful Parenting Intervention - RELAP Study in Lamwo District

CHDC has commenced the implementation of the RELAP Study in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo district. It aims to assess the feasibility of introducing playful parenting intervention for enhancing school readiness, foundational literacy and numeracy in a crisis-context in Uganda.

During this period, the project conducted several inception activities; (i) the inception meeting, (ii) district and sub county entry meetings, (iii) project launch. The activities were aimed at starting stakeholder engagement, getting local approvals and buy-in. The launch introduced project relevant stakeholders and enlisted their acceptance, commitment and willingness to actively support and participate in relevant activities when called upon.



Dr. Betty Okot, RELAP Project leader, presenting during the project launch in Lamwo District, January 2025.

The project received clearance from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and ethics review by Makerere University and Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST).

DIP Project commences delivery of a blended In-Person, SMS and WhatsApp Intervention

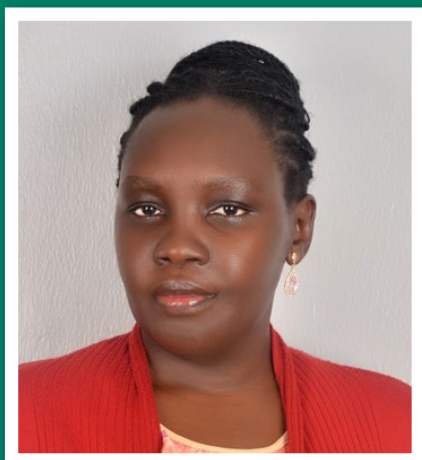
An adaptation of the well-established PFR program, Disability Inclusive Parenting (DIP) fills a critical gap by addressing disability-specific parenting needs that have long been overlooked. The program blends in-person sessions with SMS, and WhatsApp-based interventions to ensure broader access in Wakiso district. To make this program inclusive and accessible we introduced an SMS component to reach participants who may not have smart phones or time to attend in-person sessions. This initiative ensures that all care givers can stay engaged, share feedback and benefit fully from this program. The initiative involves about 150 parents with disabilities and parents caring for children with disabilities commenced in March and is led by young research

peers with disabilities. In-person participants reported improved parenting confidence and more inclusive attitudes at home.



DIP team during SMS and WhatsApp manual adaptation.

Programme Drives Academic and Professional Advancement through Postdoc, PhD & Masters training



Dr. Betty Okot (Postdoctoral)



Mr. Onesmus Kamacooko (PhD Student)



Joy Martin Omello (Masters Student)

Between January and March, the programme invested in capacity building, particularly among students. Several team members made progress in their academic and professional development.

Onesmus Kamacooko is steadily advancing with the development of his PhD proposal, working closely with his supervisors to refine his research focus and

methodology. Similarly, Martin Omello is actively engaged in drafting his proposal, under the guidance of the School of Public Health.

Betty Okot remains a key contributor to the programme. She continues to support qualitative research activities, oversee overall programme management, and supervise DIP team.

IIDC Webinar on impact story documentation

On January 29th, Carolyn Byekwaso, Programme Manager for the Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme at Makerere University, participated in a compelling webinar focused on documenting impact stories from interventions addressing violence against children.

The session brought together communication and child protection experts from across the region. Alongside Byekwaso were Grace Odour, Regional Communications Advisor at Terre des Hommes Netherlands (Kenya), and Hilda George Ngaja, Executive Director of the Raising up Friendship Foundation (Tanzania).

The webinar was attended by approximately 50 participants across the region.

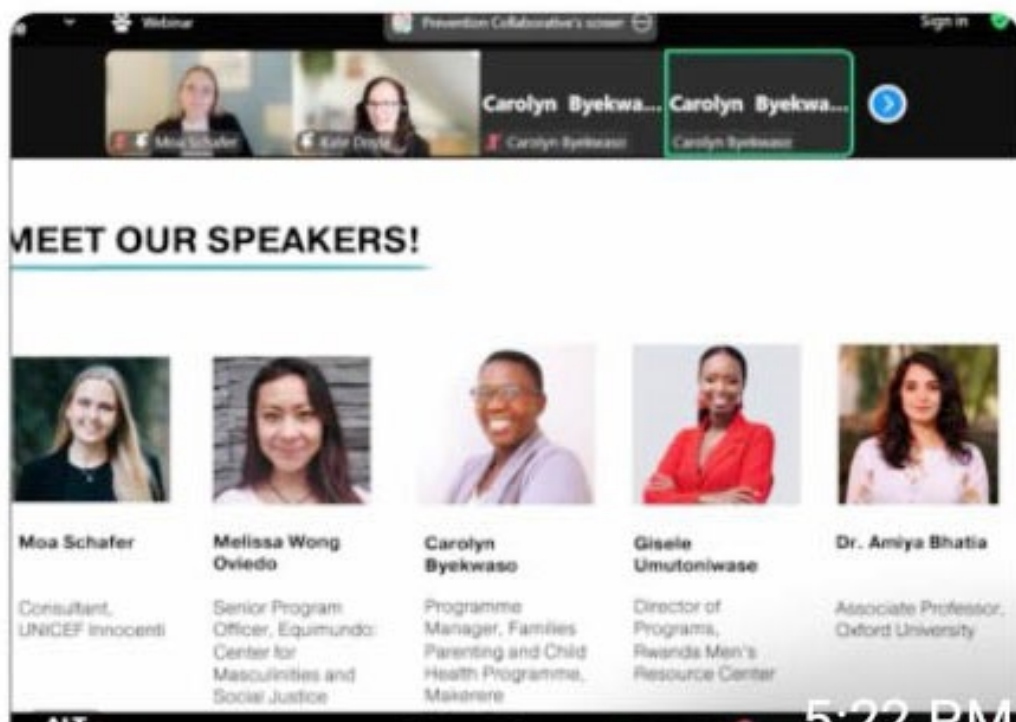
GPI webinar on how to measure change

Carolyn N. Byekwaso, was among the prominent voices featured in a high-level webinar focused on parenting programs as essential interventions to reduce violence against women and children.

The virtual event which took place in March, drew together a panel of distinguished experts committed to advancing gender equality and child protection. Alongside Byekwaso were Moa Schafer, a consultant with UNICEF Innocent; Melissa Wong Oviedo, Senior Program Officer at Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice; Gisele Umutonwase, Director of Programs at the Rwanda Men's

Resource Center; and Dr. Amiya Bhatia, Associate Professor at Oxford University.

This webinar, which was attended by approximately 100 participants across the globe, demonstrates our commitment to engage in ongoing conversations at international level.



CHDC-MaK in the Media



Over the past three months, our advocacy efforts have gained wide national visibility. The New Vision, Uganda's leading daily, ran a story with the headline "MUK graduates 30 members in parenting course," highlighting

how raising children at home is crucial for their healthy development. The article emphasized that a stable and secure home environment allows children to build strong bonds with their parents, fostering a sense of belonging and laying the foundation for their emotional, social, and cognitive growth.

Additionally, the same newspaper published another article titled *Makerere's Parenting Course a Big Breakthrough*: which highlighted that currently, minimal investment

has been made in the rearing of children at National level. Most efforts have focused on child survival, with significant progress in immunisation and reducing

premature deaths. However, more resources and funding need to be directed towards child-rearing, as this is critical to shaping the quality of future citizens.

22 **NV** Monday, March 31, 2025

COMMENT & LETTERS

Makerere's parenting course a big breakthrough

EDITOR: Makerere University, recently graduated its first cohort from its new parenting course.

The three-month certificate course, with potential to upgrade to diploma and postgraduate status, attracted parenting practitioners from both the public and private sectors across the country.

Participants were equipped with practical skills in designing, implementing and evaluating evidence-based parenting interventions relevant to local settings.

Parenting is an issue of global concern, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that countries adopt evidence-based parenting interventions to improve parenting outcomes and address key challenges such as violence against children, father absenteeism, poor bonding and attachment deficiencies.

Evidence-based parenting interventions draw from approaches subjected to top-level scientific research, the highest being Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews, which provide the best insights into effective parenting strategies.

The College of Health Science, School of Medicine, hosts the parenting course under the Child Health Development Centre, in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender. It was designed by Dr Godfrey Siu, an experienced researcher in the field of parenting, together with his team, and then subjected to academic assessment rigor before it was approved.

At its launch, the dean of the School of Medicine, Prof. Annette Nakimuli, emphasised the course's timeliness, stating that Makerere University was becoming more relevant. "At 100 years, we want to demystify the ivory tower and address real issues in our communities," Nakimuli remarked.

Family advocates see the Makerere course as a new, powerful tool in the field of parenting.

The course elevates parenting from a household matter and from immobile government policies and NGO researches to an academic discipline where it will receive greater engagement, debate and dynamism.

Academia will give parenting and family bigger, better and steadier legs needed to drive new momentum and escalate change at both national and household levels.

Currently, minimal investment

However, more resources and funding need to be directed towards child-rearing, as this is critical to shaping the quality of future citizens. There is also a need to activate the National family Policy which gives key guidance on parenting nationwide, currently it sits unimplemented at the mother ministry.

Academia can be a powerful catalyst for positive change. Nearly 20 years ago, Uganda Christian University, under the Save the Mothers initiative, introduced a master's in public health for non-medical professionals.

This initiative normalised maternal survival as a responsibility beyond medical professionals, It further amplified the voice to save the mother, enriching it with experiences and skills from other professionals – efforts that have significantly improved maternal health statistics.

Currently, the parenting statistics in Uganda are alarming. Recent research by Makerere University, in collaboration with AfriChild, a family-focused non-governmental organisation, revealed a troubling fatherhood statistics.

Ten per cent of men in Uganda are unaware they have fathered a

child, 45% of fathers provide for their children but lack emotional connection, 40% of men have fathered a child and abandoned them, while only 5% of fathers both provide for and emotionally engage with their children.

These findings highlight severe neglect of children at family level and they demand quick action.

With such alarming statistics, we can expect a continuous rise in juvenile delinquency, moral decay, and poor academic performance. Additionally, teenage pregnancy remains a major concern, currently standing at 25% – one of the highest in Africa.

Hopefully, the Makerere course will serve as a catalyst for change, together with other efforts, improving parenting practices, intercepting negative trends we see, particularly among juvenile boys and vulnerable teenage girls.

Read the full version at www.newvision.co.ug

The writer heads a family-based organisation and was part of the 1 Cohort of this parenting course



CATHERINE RUHWEZA

has been made in the rearing of children at national level. Most efforts have focused on child survival, with significant progress in immunisation and reducing premature deaths.

New Vision, Monday, March 31, 2025 page 22

Photo Gallery



Prof Richard Idro Deputy Principal Makerere University College of Health Sciences and Dr Godfrey Siu interacting with Juliana Naumo, Commissioner for Culture and Family Affairs Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development at the graduation ceremony of Cohort 1 of the Evidence-based course.



(L-R) Teddy Nanteza Administrator, Martha Atuhaire, Dr Godfrey Siu, Senior Lecturer and Programme Lead, Hosea Katende Scale and Capacity Building Specialist, Carolyn N. Byekwaso Programme Manager Families, Parenting and Child Health and Joselyn Racheal Kiwanuka staff of Makerere University Child Health and Development Centre.



Participants in a training session in Busia.



A facilitator perusing through PfR registers.



A facilitator training participants on parenting skills.



A father and mother in Nakasongola spend quality time with their children.



Parents in Tororo during a session.

Published by:
Child Health & Development Centre,
Makerere University (CHDC-Mak)

April, 2025



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