



Child Health and Development
Centre (CHDC), Makerere University

QUARTERLY Newsletter

April - June 2025

Transforming Lives: The Activities and Impact of the Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme



Dr Godfrey Siu, Senior Lecturer and course Leader and Prof. Helen Nambalirwa, Principal CHUSS, handing over a gift to Her Royal Majesty Juliet Among Emolot as His Highness Emorimor Papa Paul Emolot as Prof Richard Idro, Deputy Principal of the College of Health Sciences, and Juliana Naumo look on.



Message

From Programme Manager



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the April–June edition of the Families, Parenting, and Child Health Newsletter from the Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC), Makerere University.

This quarter, we are pleased to share key initiatives and activities advancing our shared mission to strengthen families and improve children’s well-being.

This quarter we feature the following key engagements:

- Nutrition and Child Health Day Celebration in Tororo
- Science of Evidence-Based Practitioners Course Cohort 2
- Parenting for Respectability App evaluation
- Digital delivery of Parenting for Respectability for Parents with disabilities and children with disabilities
- Training partners on the Uganda Parenting Manual and National Standards,
- Child protection Sector Committee Meetings in Nakasongola and Busia

- District-led radio talk shows and DJ mentions of parenting messages
- Our regular staff meetings to keep everyone connected and moving forward

We extend our sincere appreciation to our funders, collaborators, and partners—particularly the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD)—for their steadfast partnership and invaluable support in advancing family well-being and child health across Uganda

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and feel as inspired as we do to keep working together for healthier, happier families.

Carolyn N Byekwaso,

Programme Manager, Families, Parenting and Child Health, CHDC.

Over 1,000 attend PfR-ECD Nutrition and Health Day in Mella -Tororo

April 3, was a milestone for Mella Sub-county in Tororo District as nearly 1,000 residents gathered to celebrate the conclusion of the Parenting for Respectability (PfR) for Early Childhood Development (PfR-ECD) program. The PfR – ECD cluster trial enrolled 600 parent-child dyads in Tororo District, assigned to the intervention group and control arms (ratio 1:1). During this reporting period, delivery of the sessions had been completed and parents within the intervention arm concluded the programme with the Nutrition and Child day celebration.

The parents from the 18 villages that received the intervention in Mella were invited with their partners to attend the event.

Spearheaded by CHDC in partnership with the local government, the Health and Nutrition event was designed as a family-centered behavioral and medical intervention that featured child immunisation, health education, and nutrition counselling. The residents were also provided with detailed information and procedures on how to register births and get certificates.

Mella Sub county, a predominantly rural area with numerous socio-economic and public health challenges, including poor sanitation, inadequate child registration, low immunization rates, and entrenched gender dynamics, provided a critical context for the program's implementation. The function sought to celebrate the gains made during the delivery of ECD intervention trial, engage the broader community, and advocate



The Emorimor handing over a certificate to one of the participants

for the continued integration of the PfR program into local governance structures and development agendas. At least 100 children were vaccinated and over 1,000 people, including pupils of Mella Primary school attended. The Iteso Cultural Leader, His Highness Emorimor Papa Paul Emolot, officiated the event.

Other dignitaries in attendance were the Chairman LC 5 , the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, District Health Officer, RDC and the district Community Development Officer and LC III chairman..

Emorimor urged his subjects to embrace the PfR model within their respective families in order to raise responsible children.

He noted that the parenting model, developed by CHDC - Makerere University, has proven to be a game changer in the communities where it has been implemented.

Emorimor added that once adopted, the model will play a significant role in promoting love and unity within family settings and reducing violence among the youth, as parents will have more time for their families.

He remarked that corruption is rooted in moral decay, but with this kind of support,

things can change for the better.

Dr. Siu said they have been implementing the PfR programme and an evidence-based, home-grown parental model to create positive change in families.

The university is currently

Parents from

18 Intervention villages were invited with their partners to attend the event

conducting a study in collaboration with the District Community Development Officer (DCDO) to evaluate the effectiveness of the PfR programme in improving early childhood outcomes among children aged 0–5 years in Mella Sub-county.

Dr. Siu explained that the PfR-ECD model aims to equip parents with knowledge and skills to promote healthy behaviours among children under five, including exclusive breastfeeding, balanced nutrition, and access to immunisation, proper hygiene practices, and the reduction of parental violence. These efforts are intended to help reduce the disease burden, lower hospital costs, and improve community productivity.

He noted that 600 families across 18 villages have participated in the programme, and beneficiaries have reported significant positive changes and appreciated the



A display of nutritious locally available foods.

services offered.

The Assistant Resident District Commissioner in charge of Tororo County appreciated the project, saying it is going to play a significant role in promoting development within families.

The District Chairman challenged parents to provide their children with a balanced diet to prevent malnutrition, and urged them to take responsibility for their children to deter them from engaging in violence and attending night video shows.

The Acting Assistant Principal Secretary applauded CHDC for the Programme, saying it has had a positive impact in communities and is contributing to a reduction in domestic violence.

Beneficiaries shared some testimonies. One of the

beneficiaries testified that the programme has brought back lost love in the family and that her husband is now responsible enough to take care of the family's needs something that made her have twins.

Another beneficiary appreciated

the programme for teaching them things that seemed obvious but have promoted love and peace in the family.

During the event, the Community Based Facilitators who implemented the intervention were recognized and awarded certificates.



One of the female participants sharing her testimony.

PfR App Onboards over 300 Parents, Caregivers in Wakiso and Amuru

With funding from GPI, CHDC has continued to advance the PfR program through a feasibility study aimed at assessing the effectiveness of digital delivery methods. Supported by technical expertise from IDEMS and INNODEMS, the CHDC team dedicated over 12 months to developing the app's content.

The PfR App is the culmination of concerted effort to condense and digitalize the content from the 16 session PfR manual into an accessible digital format. This process involved a careful review of the in-person sessions in the manuals to ensure both accuracy and relevance.

Between 28th May and 2nd June, the project team conducted recruitment, baseline assessments, enrolment, and onboarding of parents and caregivers to participate in the App-based intervention, successfully reaching 301 parents and caregivers.

This study also received full ethical clearance and approvals from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), Makerere University School of

Public Health, and respective District Local Governments.

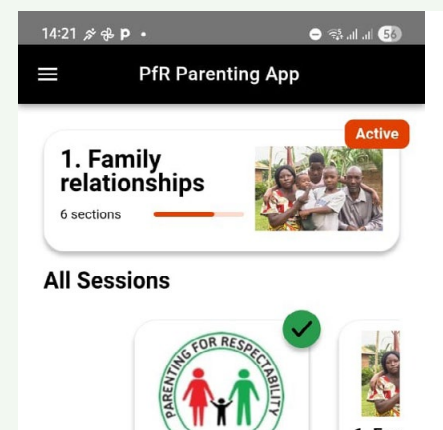
Community mobilization was done in partnership with schools, faith-based organizations, and through the efforts of the DCDO in both districts. CDOs played a key role in connecting the project team with local leaders and structures to ensure effective participant recruitment. Both men and women were recruited ensuring balanced representation across all assessment arms of the study.

Early insights from the field demonstrate prevailing enthusiasm for the programme and showed a strong sense of commitment by the parents who freely consented and accepted the App to be uploaded on their smart phones. In one primary school in Wakiso, teachers took the initiative to create a WhatsApp group specifically for PfR-Digital parents and invited the CHDC team to join, offering guidance and support where needed. In Amuru, the Parish Priest welcomed the App and emphasized the importance of reaching the "lost boys", a growing concern in the community due to rising incidents of delinquent



behaviour among boys.

Many participants also shared clear motivations for joining the PfR Digital programme, expressing a strong desire to improve their parenting. During onboarding, participants shared statements such as, "I want to join the program to become a better parent," "I want to learn how to be a good parent," and "I am a parent, that is why I want to join the program."



Monitoring PfR Implementation in Wakiso District highlights successes, challenges and opportunities

We conducted implementation monitoring of the PfR programme in Wakiso district in April, in collaboration with the District Local Government and with support from MGLSD.

Our primary objectives were to assess the fidelity of session delivery and intervention reach to both direct and indirect participants (children and other caregivers) in four sub counties. The team also, explored opportunities to expand implementation, understand field dynamics, and ensure the long-term sustainability of parenting interventions. The monitoring exercise was largely successful, with the programme now reaching 82 villages in the districts. Despite some challenges, the initiative has been well received and appreciated in both rural and semi-urban communities. The facilitator coordinators (leads selected by facilitators to support with information and in-person mentorship), in particular, demonstrated outstanding commitment and leadership throughout the process.

During this second monitoring visit of the quarter, the programme had already begun to show promising early impacts most notably in strengthening parent child relationships and improving spousal interactions within households. Facilitators also reported personal growth, citing positive changes within their own families.

"I thought I knew but this programme made me realise that actually I did not know. I have learnt a lot of things regarding my relationship with my husband and children which have improved my home. My husband did not join but I kept sharing and now he has changed and participates in other child care issues in addition to paying school fees". **Explained a female parent aged 42 years**



Participants during a training session.

"I joined jokingly not knowing that I would benefit a lot. I learnt my family members individually yet I used to struggle. The friendship activity taught me lot." **Shared, a male participant, 44 years**

"When I joined the programme, I learnt that I could raise them without being violent to them. Now I treat them equally with my children. Another thing is that I used to quarrel with my husband even before other people. I used not to respect him at all but I learnt that it is not good to quarrel with your husband before others". **Explained,**

female facilitator, 39 years

Despite the challenges experienced working with semi urban and peri-urban communities, facilitators were able to hold the weekly sessions with impressive group attendance ranging between 10-20 parents. Generally, the groups had lower numbers of male participants, limiting the implementation of the mixed sessions, and highlighting an urgent need to test more innovative strategies to reach men and reinforce their attendance.



Some of the participants in a session.

PfR - ECD Report Highlights Positive Post-Intervention Changes in Tororo District



During this period, we conducted a study to collect endline data for the PfR -Early Childhood Development (PfR-ECD) programme. The aim was to assess immediate post-intervention changes among participating caregivers, with a particular focus on parental beliefs, attitudes, and practices related to child-rearing.

The study also sought to evaluate secondary outcomes, including intimate partner violence (IPV), the quality of spousal relationships, and caregiver mental health following the delivery of the parenting intervention.

These outcomes will later be assessed again during the 12-month follow-up phase to evaluate sustainability over time.

This study is being implemented as a cluster-randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effectiveness of the PfR-ECD program in improving

early childhood development outcomes over a 12-month follow-up period in two sub-counties in Tororo district.

Prior to this endline, several preparatory and implementation activities had been completed, including a district-level launch, community mobilization, and baseline data collection. Parenting sessions were delivered to the intervention group, while the control group received only a two-hour lecture during this phase.

This endline exercise involved both the intervention and control arms of the study to allow for comparison of immediate post-intervention outcomes between the groups.

Field Observations

Data collection in Kalait, the control community, was characterized by a good participant response, with

a high turnout at the interview venue. Community members were generally easy to mobilize, and many arrived promptly for their interviews. Notably, several participants were accompanied by their spouses. Although interviews were conducted only with the listed primary participant, many partners remained at the venue, waiting to walk home together, reflecting strong family support.

In the intervention community, participants expressed deep appreciation for the PfR-ECD program. Many shared how the sessions had led to positive changes in their households. One participant emotionally stated:

“The man who had gone away, I brought him back because of the parenting program. Now the love is too much. I am going to take care of this one (pointing to her pregnancy) the way I was taught in parenting.”

CHDC completes recruitment and commences delivery of DIP Programme in Wakiso district

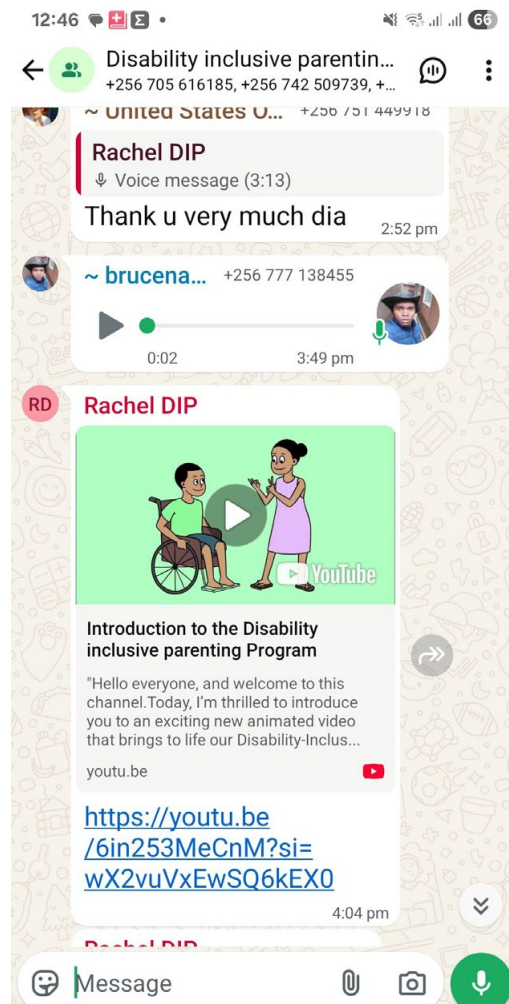
The Disability Inclusion Project (DIP) has taken a huge step forward with families raising children with disabilities in Wakiso.

Between March and April, the DIP team undertook an intensive recruitment and baseline data collection exercise, involving strategic community mobilization, thorough pre-screening, and the administration of a structured quantitative parent tool with parents. The exercise involved recruiting participants for two delivery systems – SMS and WhatsApp platforms.

Working closely with the District Community Development Officer (DCDO), the Leaders of People with Disabilities (PWDs), the team's dedicated efforts led to the successful enrolment of 125 caregivers, 60 of them on the SMS and 65 on WhatsApp.

Following successful recruitment, the team commenced the onboarding process and allocated participants either to the SMS or WhatsApp. Parents on each of these delivery options are now attending the programme being implemented through customized messages and tips, complemented by interactive sessions, discussions, and home practice activities, all aimed at promoting disability-inclusive parenting practices.

To ensure sustained and engaged participation, the DIP team maintains close contact with participants through weekly phone calls. The invaluable feedback gathered continues to shape and refine both the content and delivery of the program, ensuring it remains closely aligned with caregivers' needs.



Papa Emorimor Calls for Makerere to Upgrade the Science of Evidence Based Parenting Course



The Iteso Cultural Leader, His Highness Emorimor Papa Paul Emolot (Center) taking a photo moment with participants of cohort two during a graduation ceremony at Makerere University.

The Iteso Cultural Leader, His Highness Emorimor Papa Paul Sande Emolot, has called on Makerere University to elevate the Science of Designing, Adaptation,

and Implementation of Evidence-Based Parenting Interventions course into a fully-fledged programme. This, he argued, would strengthen the capacity of

practitioners implementing parenting interventions across Uganda.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony for Cohort II participants held on 11th June 2025 at Makerere University where 35 practitioners completed the 12-week course, Emorimor Papa Emolot emphasized the transformative power of effective parenting. He urged aspiring parents and advocates of the Parenting for Respectability model to enroll in the course. Citing the impact in his own sub-county and village, the cultural leader revealed that over 800 families had already benefited from the Parenting for Respectability Programme.

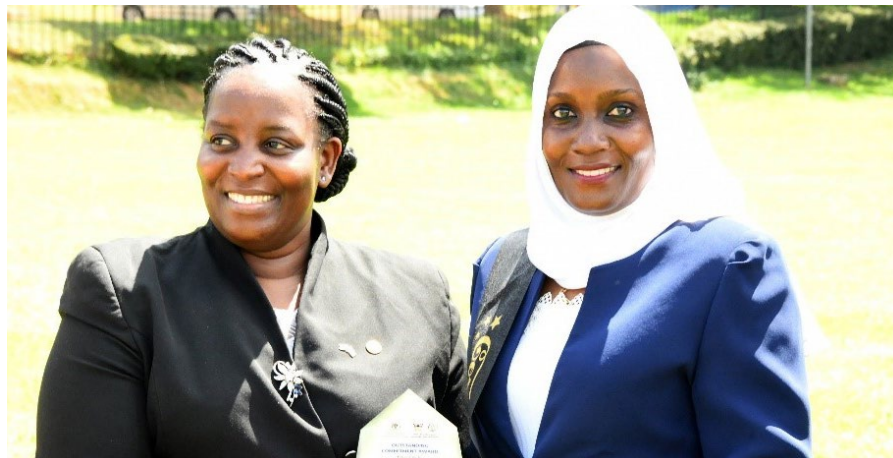
"We now see peace and love in homes where there was once conflict. Without good parenting, you risk raising animals instead of children," he passionately stated.

He praised the course for equipping practitioners, policymakers, and researchers with the skills needed to design culturally sensitive, evidence-based parenting interventions tailored to Uganda's context, and called on the University to consider making it a fully-fledged post-graduate course. Among the notable graduates was Her Royal Majesty Juliet Among Emolot Atomeileng Akaliat Toto, who reaffirmed her commitment to advancing family-strengthening initiatives using the skills and knowledge acquired. The Queen of Iteso shared that her personal motivation for enrolling:

"I want to acquire skills so that I can better support my people in Teso." She narrated.

She pledged to roll out the Parenting for Respectability intervention through her foundation – the AKADEF.

Dr. Godfrey Siu, Senior Lecturer and Course Leader at Makerere University, described the course as a timely intervention. During this remarks, Dr. Siu described the graduation event as a significant milestone in advancing the field of evidence based parenting intervention and family



The Principal of CHUSS, Prof. Helen Nambalirwa, takes a photo with participant Nuruh Mbalyowere, who had one of the best proposals.

strengthening in Uganda.

"This course is meant to empower you as practitioners, policy makers and all those involved in development and implementation of parenting work. It provides both theoretical knowledge and practical tools essential for developing high quality interventions", **Dr. Siu noted.**

Dr. Aggrey Dhabangi, Lecturer at CHDC, representing Dr. Herbert Muyinda, Director of CHDC, acknowledged the contributions of partners such as the ELMA Foundation and Echidna Giving for their financial and capacity-building support. He also appreciated the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, among other stakeholders, for their technical guidance in the programme's successful implementation. Dr. Dhabangi extended gratitude to cultural institutions, especially the Kingdom of Teso, and acknowledged growing collaborations with other cultural institutions such as the Kingdom of Acholi, in the shared mission of building strong families as the foundation of Uganda's future.

The Event was attended by officials from the Gender Ministry, including Assistant Commissioner Lucy Otto, and Mrs Juliana Naumo, Commissioner for Culture and Family Affairs, who represented the Permanent Secretary. In her remarks, Ms Naumo said the course supports the government's agenda to address negative social outcomes affecting families.

"By grounding parenting in

research, harmonizing policy with practice, and advocating for equity, we will ensure no family is left behind," she said.

"Cross-sectoral collaboration is key to unlocking transformative change", she said while appreciating the highly productive collaboration Makerere through CHDC has had with the Gender Ministry.

While delivering the Vice chancellor Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe's speech, Prof Helen Nambalirwa, Principal of the CHUSS commended the graduates as a beacon of hope.

"At a time when parenting faces challenges like digital distractions, changing societal norms, and a rising mental health crisis, Makerere reaffirms its support for interventions that drive the societal transformation we desire".

Prof. Richard Idro, Deputy Principal of the College of Health Sciences, acknowledged the



Dr Aggrey Dhabangi speaking during a graduation ceremony at Makerere University



The Queen of Iteso Her Royal Majesty Juliet Among Emolot (Second on Left) take a photo moment with facilitators, participants and officials from Royal family

growing parenting challenges in Uganda and the region, adding that the course was a major step towards standardizing parenting interventions nationwide. He applauded the Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC) for leading this paramount and critical

initiative.

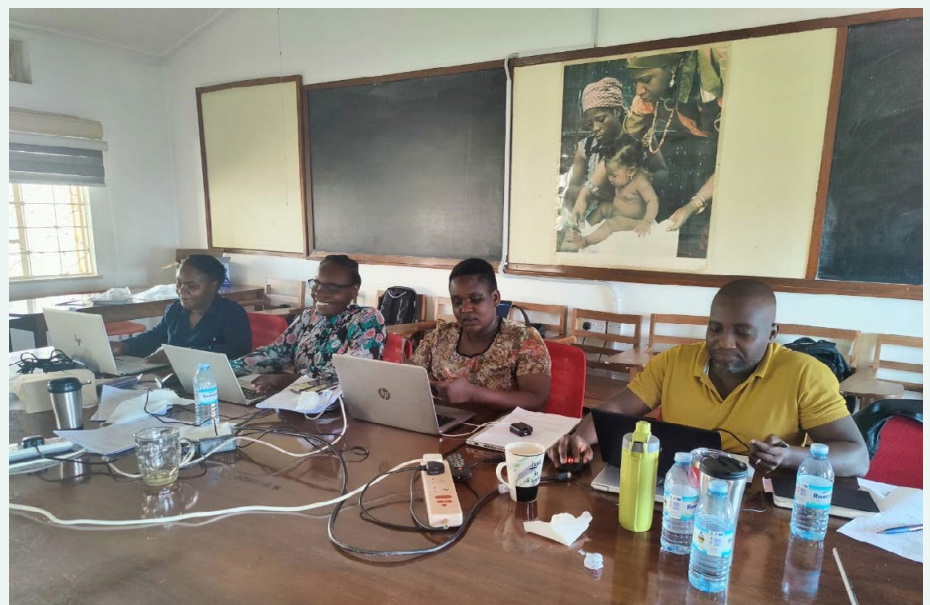
Nuruh Mbalyowere, a Rehabilitation and Reintegration Officer with the Uganda Prisons Service, was honored for developing the best parenting intervention titled *“Parenting Behind Prison Bars.”* She expressed her intention to

apply the knowledge gained both at home and in her workplace.

Among the graduands were 19 from NGOs, 4 from Faith Based Institutions, 1 Ministry of Gender officer, and 10 District Officers.

RELAP ECD Study Update

During this period, CHDC continued to plan for the commencement of implementation of the Refugees Early Learning and Playful Parenting (RELAP) intervention in Lamwo district. The online progress meeting was hosted by the project funder to allow all her Africa-based grantees to update on their progress. It was attended by the CHDC team, the donor and other African-based grantees who are conducting similar studies funded by CODE. During the discussions, the Project Lead (Dr. Betty Okot) explained the study progress, particularly outlining the completed baseline activities, shared experiences and key insights from the project launch and awareness creation community engagements, including how partners and stakeholders, pledged



RELAP Baseline preparation meeting

to support the intervention, stating that *“this project confirms the critical importance of ECD in shaping future academic success, social-emotional*

growth, and economic productivity of learners;” Grantees were reminded to stick to the central focus of the research on playful parenting.

Nakasongola and Busia districts push to Expand Parenting, Child Health Programmes

In this quarter, CHDC was invited to attend the District Child Sector Committee meetings in Busia and Nakasongola Districts where expansion of the PfR programme across these districts was discussed. The Committee, which convenes partners on a quarterly basis to coordinate and deliver family and child-focused programmes within the districts, received and discussed updates on the progress of the scaling-up of the PfR intervention in their district.

In Nakasongola, district partners expressed strong interest in expanding the programme to schools and requested that all Community Development Officers (CDOs) be trained to



Local facilitator conducting a mixed group session at a health facility in Nakasongola.

better integrate the initiative into community activities.

In Busia, the leaders have urged partners to support the scaling of PfR to more sub-counties

and villages that have not yet been reached. The meetings also discussed strategies to sustain intervention impact among programme beneficiaries.

Radio Talk Shows Drive Parenting and Family Strengthening Message across Five Districts

The Parenting for Respectability Radio Initiative aims to reach about 15,000 parents across 5 districts of Nakasongola, Wakiso, Amuru, Tororo and Busia, complementing the in-person delivery, which also targets the same number of parents in the same districts. This component includes radio talk shows, and tailored radio packages designed to engage communities on key family and child well-being topics as they relate to the parenting programme being delivered through in-person sessions.

This quarter, Ms Carolyn Namutebi, the Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme Manager, together with the District Community Development Officer Nakasongola featured on Radio Bululi, where they held an interactive discussion on the critical role fathers' play in caregiving and child discipline. The show attracted approximately nine callers, many of whom expressed keen interest in more programs focused on



Carolyn N. Byekwaso, the Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme Manager, and District Community Development Officer Nakasongola featuring Nakasongola featuring on Radio Bululi.

strengthening families. These radio talk shows are aired twice a month across the five districts, under the coordination and oversight of the DCDOs.

The local radio stations are also playing a pivotal role in disseminating key messages summarised from the PfR manual. The DJs/ hosts have played a unique role in deepening audience

engagement. On Jojo FM in Tororo, DJs creatively summarize key messages from the programs through role-play segments, fostering continued engagement and discussion around parenting themes. Callers frequently seek advice on partner relationships and express appreciation for the ongoing parental sessions, indicating strong community interest and participation.

CHDC supports the Gender Ministry to Rollout implementation of the National Parenting Training Manual



Participants and facilitators take a photo moment.

In this reporting period, MGLSD, in partnership with CHDC, with funding support from UNICEF and other development partners, has intensified efforts to build the capacity of duty bearers to implement the National Manual for Parenting Training.

During this period several activities were carried out, including training workshops and distribution of essential materials such as the

Uganda National Standards and Facilitators' Guide. These materials serve as critical references to ensure consistent understanding and application of the manual's principles and guideline for implementers.

Notably, training sessions were successfully conducted in Abim District with 40 participants, and in Amudat District with another 40 participants. The

participants comprised a diverse mix of local government officials, representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and key stakeholders from the private sector. These targeted trainings aim to empower local actors with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement parenting training in their districts.

Staffing issues

This quarter, we have managed to hold our weekly staff meetings to strengthen coordination and sustain programme momentum. These sessions provide a platform for team leaders to share critical updates, map out plans to achieve targets, and address emerging challenges. Additionally, these meetings enable us to align our participation in national and international forums that promote advocacy and support efforts for family strengthening and the prevention of violence. Beyond operational priorities, our weekly team meetings offer a valuable space for staff to encourage one another, celebrate individual and team contributions, encourage

each other socially, and reaffirm our shared commitment to the programme's goals.



CHDC staff in a weekly meeting

Photo Gallery



Hosea Katende Course coordinator(L) , Her Royal Majesty Juliet Among Emolot as His Highness Emorimor Papa Paul Emolot and Dr Godfrey Siu Senior Lecturer and course Leader interacting.



Graduands and Prof. Helen Nambalirwa principal CHUSS cutting a cake during a graduation ceremony at Makerere University.



Samalie Lutaaya, one of the course facilitators together with commissioner for culture and family Affairs Juliana Naumo and Prof. Helen Nambalirwa.



A man cleaning his compound.



A father playing with his children.

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