

# Reducing Violence Against Children: Parent and Caregiver Support in Conflict Settings

## BACKGROUND

A safe and nurturing environment is essential for the well-being and healthy development of children, especially in adverse settings. Research shows that poverty and community violence are risk factors that often co-occur and have a lasting effect on a child's development, increasing stress that can impair brain development and damage the nervous and immune systems.

Children living in situations of chronic poverty and violence are at increased risk of physical and mental impacts related to toxic stress. **In the Colombian region of Chocó, where serious challenges remain in the current post-conflict context, violence against children is common with 99.4% of caregivers reporting having used physical violence to discipline children.**

## RESULTS AND IMPACT

In conflict settings, with extreme levels of poverty, unemployment, crime and violence, parent and caregiver support can play a crucial role in reducing the use of physical punishment against children, as illustrated by the International Child Development Programme (ICDP) in Colombia.



### VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Six months after the parenting program was complete, violence against children was reported to have **decreased by 40.7%**



### MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Among parents, the intervention also helped to decrease the prevalence of mental health issues, **dropping from 22.4% To 5.1%.**

## INSPIRE STRATEGIES

Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children ([read more](#))



Parent and caregiver support

## ISSUES ADDRESSED

**Violence against Children** (VAC)  
**Extreme Poverty** (EP)  
**Community Violence** (CV)  
**Conflict** (CO)  
**Mental Health** (MH)

## DURATION

August 2012–July 2014



## LOCATION

Chocó Region, **Colombia**



## METHODOLOGY

Randomized controlled trial (RTC). Participants were 176 parents of 3–4 year-olds attending child centers. Effects were tested using univariate logistic regression to examine predictors of victimization and perpetration of intimate partner violence, use of violence to discipline children, and prevalence of mental health problems.

## BENEFICIARIES

Low-income households in conflict settings

## LEARN MORE

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*“ Understanding effective programs to protect children and families affected by violence is one of the most pressing challenges for the construction of a peaceful and equal post-conflict society in Colombia. ”*

**Andres Moya** – Assistant Professor  
School of Economics Universidad de los Andes, Bogota, Colombia

## EVALUATION CHALLENGES



High levels of violence in the community, logistical and administrative issues related to community poverty, and internet connection failures all added to challenges in achieving **timely and standardized data collection**.



In the caregiver survey, one of the questions had not been properly understood by the participants, requiring this data to be left out from the study. The might have been due to **the lack of experience among the participants with using scales and to think in abstract terms**.

Future research in high-risk contexts should consider using scales with **concrete, accessible language**.



During the survey collection, many participants sent other family members to fill out questionnaires, which might be linked to poverty and violence-related issues. Future **research should strive to reach the same respondents throughout the interview process** so as not to lose data.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

**Recognizing that a child's development is dependent on the caregivers, ICDP works with families and communities to enhance their own ability to sustain the social, cultural, and environmental conditions necessary for the growth and development of a childhood free of violence.**

International Child Development Programme (ICDP) Colombia is a national ICDP branch that provides community-based caregiver training through locally trained ICDP facilitators. In Chocó, ICDP facilitators run weekly meetings for a period of 12 weeks that are open to all caregivers and meet at the community center. The initiative is activity-based in the sense that the participants have to carry out the actions themselves – through observations, self-evaluations and reporting back.



## PARTNERS

Role	Organization
Local Implementer	International Child Development Programme (ICDP) Colombia, International
Local Coordinator	UNICEF Regional Office, Colombia
Researchers	University of Oslo, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, Norway
Researchers	University College London, Department of Infection and Population Health, UK
Researchers	University of Chocó, Colombia
Researchers	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar, Colombia

## PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Ane-Marthe Solheim Skar, Lorraine Sherr, Ana Macedo, Stephen von Teitzhner, Knut Inge Fostervold (2017) **Evaluation of Parenting Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Children in Colombia: A randomized Controlled Trial**, Journal of Interpersonal Violence.

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