Reducing Violence Against Children in Low-Income Settings Through Economic Strengthening and Caregiver Support

BACKGROUND
Children in extreme poverty are at higher risk of violence, deprivation, and stress, which can negatively impact children’s well-being and development. Conditions of extreme poverty also undermine caregivers’ ability to mitigate risk factors, while also contributing to tensions that can lead to abuse within households.

In a pilot study in Burkina Faso, 44% of children in extremely poor households reported experiencing physical abuse and 58% experienced emotional abuse at home.

RESULTS AND IMPACT
A combination of household economic strengthening and caregiver support consisting of sensitization and coaching on child well-being led to a number of positive outcomes for children in extremely poor households, such as less risk of physical or emotional violence, and improved parental attitudes. The economic intervention served to create an enabling environment, including improved women’s empowerment and financial well-being. However, impacts on children were greater when combined with the caregiver support and sensitization component.

VIOLANCE AGAINST CHILDREN
With the combined intervention, children were less likely to be abused while working or performing household chores and had 58% less risk of physical or emotional violence at home.

CAREGIVER DISCIPLINE AND ATTITUDES
In households that received the sensitization and coaching, combined with the economic intervention, caregivers reported improvements in parental attitudes, reduction in the use of harsh discipline practices, and improvement in relationships with their children.

CHILD MENTAL HEALTH
With the combined intervention, children reported lower symptoms of depression and trauma and improved self-esteem.

COST
The approximate per-household direct cost of economic strengthening intervention: USD $208 per 2-year program. With the addition of the caregiver sensitization component: USD $228.

METHODOLOGY
A three-arm cluster-randomized controlled trial with 360 households. Data collected at baseline, 12 months, and 24 months.

BENEFICIARIES
Households with women living in extreme poverty with children aged 10–15.

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PROGRAM DETAILS

Income and economic strengthening were based on the "graduation" approach, which combines integration into savings groups, training and livelihood planning, provision of a grant of approximately US$100 to jumpstart livelihood activities, and monthly coaching for 2 years.

Parent and caregiver support consisted of culturally tailored, family-focused sensitization and coaching on child well-being and children’s rights for 5 months. This component was designed to address normative beliefs related to protection of children from violence and exploitation and to raise the awareness about context-specific child protection risks. The curriculum was developed by the Burkina Faso ministry of social action.

Parents and caregivers, who participated in the sensitization, reported that they felt empowered to speak up against violence and that they were better equipped to identify and report violence.

The results are a source of inspiration for those involved in promoting and protecting children’s rights.

Yvette Dembélé – State Secretary of Burkina Faso for Social Affairs, Disability and Inclusion, Representing the Minister for Women, National Solidarity and the Family.

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES


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