

Expert Consultation on Family and Parenting Support

26-27 May 2014

UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence Italy

Report written by Rachel Bray, University of Oxford



Background

Across the globe there is growing awareness of the potential to achieve more for child well-being through family and parenting support. Simultaneously there is increased attention paid to the structural institutions that underlie child well-being. UNICEF's recent strategic plan positions family and parenting support as significant elements of provisions related to child protection, early childhood development and health. These developments mark a shift in thinking towards regarding governments as primary actors in the field of family and parenting support, rather than seeing it solely as the domain of NGOs and other civil society institutions.

There are inherent challenges to exploring and bolstering the area family and parenting support policy and services owing to the multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approaches entailed. This is especially true for a sectorally driven organisation like UNICEF. One such challenge is the variation in understandings of the concepts of parenting support and family support, and a paucity of evidence relating to policy drivers, the impact of interventions and contextual factors, specifically from lower and middle-income countries (LMICs). Questions remain as to how transferable approaches and interventions are within and across regions.

In order to begin addressing these challenges, UNICEF Office of Research has undertaken a three-phase study. The first phase began in January 2014 in partnership with the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford. The aim of this research is to examine different conceptual understandings and policy orientations of family and parenting support, and to develop an analytical framework able to map the field of policy and provision in a global context. In tandem with this work, UNICEF Office of Research reviewed definitions of the family and family support evident in national law and policy documents, and analysed responses to a short survey on this topic administered to UNICEF national offices in 33 countries.

The purpose of the conference was to consult academics, researchers, UN agencies and civil society organizations on the core concepts, frameworks, policy orientations and elements of provision that pertain to family and parenting support, and to discuss regional and national variation in their interpretation and practical application. The aims of the presentations and accompanying discussions were to reflect on the early development of the analytical framework, to provide additional data to the research team from the University of Oxford in order to refine the framework, and to identify major gaps in information or knowledge in the fields of family and parenting support.

Expected Outcomes of the Consultation

1. Clarifying/finalising the conceptual and analytical framework that links policy to impact of intervention and examines the continuum of services for multiple outcomes
2. Defining further steps and contributions to the selected case studies
3. Identifying gaps in evidence and future research priorities
4. Developing a reference group to advance research and strategy on family and parenting support and defining roles/contributions of different actors: UN, academia, civil society

Agenda

Monday, 26 May 2014	
09:00-09:30	Arrival and Registration
09:30-09:45	Welcome and Introduction Marie-Claude Martin , Director, a.i. (UNICEF Office of Research)
PART 1 – OoR/OXFORD UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ON FAMILY AND PARENTING SUPPORT Moderator: Goran Holmqvist	
09:45-11:00	Jasmina Byrne : Background and a broad research framework Mary Daly : Presentation of the preliminary findings <i>“Family and Parenting Support: Analytical Framework and Key Orientations in Policy and Provision”</i> Jasmina Byrne and Alice Margaria : Overview analysis of UNICEF supported policy and provision in lower and middle income countries
11:00-11:30	Coffee
11:30-13:00	Discussion about the analytical framework and the findings with introductory remarks from: Andrew Dawes Maria Herczog
13:00-14:00	Lunch
PART 2 – DRIVERS OF POLICY AND PROVISION Moderator: Mary Catherine Maternowska	
14:00-15:30	Maureen Samms-Vaughan : The Development and Implementation of a Parent Support Policy in Jamaica Ninoslava Pecnik : Drivers of Policy and Provision – the case of Croatia Lena Karlsson : Family and Parenting Support – Save the Children approaches Jana Hainsworth : Developments at the EU level
15:30-16:00	Coffee
16:00-16:20	LESSONS FROM RESEARCH Jenny Pearce : Parenting support and prevention of sexual violence John Coleman : Parenting teenage victims and perpetrators of violence – lessons from research on prevention and support
16:20-17:30	Discussion on Day 1
Tuesday, 27 May 2014	
PART 3 – THE NATURE AND CONTINUUM OF SERVICES AND NEEDS Moderator: Clarice Da Silva and Peter Gross	
09:00-10:15	Pat Dolan : Family support for families at risk Bernadette Madrid : Parenting Support in the Context of Violence Prevention Rosana Morgado : Violence prevention: how to ensure parenting support?
10:15-10:45	Coffee
Moderator: Heidi Loening-Voysdey	
10:45-12:10	Lorraine Sherr : Parenting support and HIV risk reduction Elena Gaia : Children, Families and Social Protection in CEE/CIS Denise Stuckenbruck : Reflections on the Conceptual Framework Florence Martin : Family support for Prevention of Family Separation
12:10-13:00	Q&A
13:00-14:00	Lunch
PART 4 – FAMILY AND COMMUNITY: GENDERED ROLES AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION Moderator: Prerna Banati	
14:00-15:30	Ruti Levto : Men and Caregiving Emebet Mulugeta : Gendered Roles and Family and Parenting Support in Ethiopia Mark Brennan : Achieving Family and Community Support: Community, Education and Equity as a Basis for Development
PART 5 – CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTINUED COLLABORATION Moderator: Goran Holmqvist	

Participants

Name	Title/Affiliation
Rachel Bray	Research Officer, Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford
Mark Brennan	Professor and UNESCO Chair in Rural Community, Leadership and Youth Development, The Pennsylvania State University, USA
Zlata Bruckauf	Consultant, University of Oxford
John Coleman	Senior Research Fellow, Department of Education, University of Oxford
Clarice da Silva	Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF NYHQ
Mary Daly	Professor of Sociology and Social Policy, Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford
Andy Dawes	Professor Emeritus, Department of Psychology, University of Capetown
Pat Dolan	UNESCO Chair and Director, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, School of Political Science and Sociology, Research and Innovation Centre, NUI
Elena Gaia	Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF CEE/CIS
Peter Gross	Child Protection Specialist (Alternative Care), UNICEF NYHQ
Jana Hainsworth	Secretary General, Eurochild, Brussels
Maria Herczog	Associate Professor at Eszterhazy College, Budapest and Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child
Lena Karlsson	Director, Child Protection Initiative, Save the Children Sweden
Ruti Levto	Program Officer Promundo-US and Co-ordinator of the MenCare Campaign
Heidi Loening-Voysey	Orphans and Vulnerable Children Specialist, UNICEF South Africa
Bernadette Madrid	Director of the Child Protection Unit, University of the Philippines
Florence Martin	Senior Policy and Knowledge Management Adviser, Better Care Network
Rosana Morgado	Professor, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro Brazil
Emebet Mulugeta	Associate Professor, Institute of Gender Studies and Psychology, Addis Ababa
Jenny Pearce	Professor of Young People and Public Policy, University of Bedfordshire, UK
Ninoslava Pecnik	Professor, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb
Elayn Sammon	Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Zimbabwe
Maureen Samms-Vaughan	Professor, Department of Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Child Health, Faculty of Medical Sciences, The University of the West Indies
Lorraine Sherr	Professor, University College London
Denise Stuckenbruck	Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF ESARO

Office of Research

Name	Title/Affiliation
Claire Akehurst	Executive Assistant, Child Protection
Perna Banati	Senior Planning Specialist, Knowledge Management
Jasmina Byrne	Child Protection Specialist, Child Protection
Yekaterina Chzehn	Social Policy Specialist, Child Poverty and Social and Economic Policy Responses
Goran Holmqvist	Associate Director
Alice Margaria	Consultant, Child Protection
Marie-Claude Martin	Director, a. i.
Mary Catherine Maternowska	Child Protection Specialist, Child Protection
Andrew Mawson	Chief, Child Protection
Dale Rutstein	Chief, Communication

DAY 1

PART 1 – UNICEF Office of Research/University of Oxford research on Family and Parenting Support

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. **What are the main lines of development in family and parenting support, and what are the aims and modalities?**
2. **What are the underpinning rationales as well as the connections to other policy areas?**
3. **What or who is driving developments in this field?**

Mary Daly, University of Oxford, presented the analytical framework and preliminary research findings. In light of varying usage of the terms family support and parenting support across regions and sectors, this work employs a working definition of these terms. Family support is both a way of working with families and a philosophical approach that recognises and seeks to bolster the strengths and functioning of families. Parenting support is oriented to parents and how they execute or perform their parenting role, with a primary aim to increase parents' resources (broadly defined) and competencies.

The study comprised a literature and policy review, the development of nine country case studies of policy and provision (Belarus, Chile, China, Croatia, England, Jamaica, Philippines, South Africa, Sweden), and analysis of responses from 33 UNICEF country and regional offices to a survey devised and circulated for this work. Key findings include considerable innovation in provision at national level, within and across countries, but perhaps less so at policy level. The study shows that family support is being developed in two main ways. The first is through services, especially social, health, psychological services that are envisaged or practised cross-sectorally, and the second through the re-orientation or establishment of cash payments to families. Parenting support is also quite extensive and takes two main forms: education or information (either generalised or highly focused through parenting programmes), and health-related family visiting (done by nurses or paraprofessionals with a primary focus on maternal health and new-borns).

The analytical framework under development takes four lines of analysis namely: underlying philosophy/values, the main drivers and actors, the main aims and modalities, and impact and outcomes. Variation in the direction of development of parenting and family support may, for example, result from divergence in underlying philosophies and values at work. Social and demographic challenges and their interpretation may drive development in the field, as may changing perspectives around children, the goals and activities of international agencies, the work of experts/professionals and the belief in evidence, the role of state actors with particular kinds of politics or political agency, and finally community actors including NGOs. Families themselves may also be drivers or actors in the process. The line of analysis focusing on aims and modalities proposes to interrogate main expressions of policy and key details of provision. Examples include whether it is formal or informal, targeted or universal, top down or bottom up in its approach, the degree of intervention, whether it comprises single or connected set of interventions, and how embedded these are in policy and law.

At this point in the study, a list of potential outcomes have been identified not all of which will be sought or applicable in any one context. They include child focused outcomes (emotional and behavioural, educational, reduced risk), those that are parent focused (on their skills, knowledge and competencies, their orientations and attitudes, and their emotional, mental and material resources and well-being), as well as family focused outcomes (improved stability and functioning, improved material and other resources and increased integration/less isolation). The study suggests that we lack knowledge or information with respect to an underlying theory of change, the gap between statements of intent and the reality of what is delivered on the ground, and the ability to trace, identify and measure outcomes.

The parallel research conducted by **Jasmina Byrne** and **Alice Margaria** (UNICEF Office of Research) also identified a paucity of evaluations in all regions. The high proportion of responses to the Office of Research initiated survey from the Central and East European/Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region indicates particularly growth of interest in parenting and family support in this region. The study detected change in understandings of family form within governments across regions. While the nuclear family remains

dominant as a family form within policy discourse, a progressive expansion in definitions of the family now affords policy-makers room to define target beneficiaries more broadly. Also evident is a shift in emphasis from family form to the function of the family.

Few national laws and policies use the terms ‘parenting support’ or ‘family support’, but family support tends to be thought of as available through laws pertaining to social protection and child protection, alongside social assistance. Government supported services offered under the name of family support are rare in Asia and Africa, and those found in the CEE/CIS region vary widely in their coverage and focus (from preventative social work, to prevention of child abandonment, respite care or family counselling). UNICEF country offices from lower income countries reported an over reliance on traditional networks that prevents the development of a state response. Parenting support is found to be narrower in scope, focused on how parents understand and conduct their role. It is typically provided under the umbrellas of health or early childhood development in the form of nurse visitation or parenting education. Some regions employ mixed policies that combine social transfers (cash) and social assistance/support (care). Interest in their potential is growing within and beyond these regions.

Challenges related to this field include the disconnect between policy and what exists on the ground, and a scant evidence base regarding the social, structural, institutional and organisational factors influencing not only existing provision, but in motivating and facilitating the development of responses appropriate to context. Two questions arise from this first piece of exploratory research, namely 1) Do we need to develop a distinct policy arena for family support and parenting support, or is it sufficient that they are carried along in other policy developments? 2) What kind of evidence do we need to support the process of policy development?

Two members of the advisory board gave feedback on the proposed analytical framework. **Andy Dawes**, University of Cape Town, cautioned against developing multiplicities of policy that address closely related issues in contexts where the problem is implementation. One way to avoid overburdening the administrative landscape is to treat parenting support as a subset of family support, and to ensure that this piece of family policy articulates and harmonises with policy elements (e.g. maternal child health, ECD, adolescent health policy) that share underlying ideas and forms of provision. The language we use also carries certain risks. The term ‘parenting support’ can imply a deficit approach, re-enforced by discourse that refers to the need to capacitate parents. A language of enabling informal support systems within families, and the scope of formal responses to compliment these, explicitly recognises the capabilities of parents. Evidence from lower income countries in various regions suggests that our thinking regarding parenting and family support should include the area of psycho-social support for individual parents, especially single mothers with few resources or social networks. In terms of envisaging outcomes, attention should be paid to evidence relating to the first 1000 days of life while keeping in mind the potential of support thereafter, especially when children are on the cusp of adolescence.

Maria Herczog, Eszterhazy Karoly College, Budapest, Hungary and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, responded to the draft analytical framework from the perspective of this Committee and her own research experience. She spoke about the difficulties in ascertaining how the sharing of responsibility for children between the state, families and parents (as stipulated in the UN CRC) translates into obligations of the state. Hence signatory countries avoid the issue of defining their duty to provide adequate support for families to raise their children. A realistic assessment of limited and decreasing economic resources raises the question of how we can empower parents, children and communities in such a way that they can help each other. There are models that compliment and substitute for missing services (e.g. mediation, self-help groups, and knowledge-sharing), but bolstering such indigenous support mechanisms lends legitimacy to further withdrawal of the state. Ideological motivations around family and child-rearing tend to influence policy development yet become explicit only when provision emerges. Policy and service directions that professionalise parenting support may unintentionally contribute to the devaluing of informal, indigenous decision-making. Understanding trends in information-seeking on the part of parents, for instance through the web, is a critical counterbalance to this trend. The life-cycle approach proposed in the UNICEF/Oxford study is critical in terms of understanding different needs according to the age and stage of children, of parents and to kinship care more broadly. Maria Herczog flagged caution about the idea to lodge parenting support under family support because tensions exist between individual and collective interests. Placing everything under the umbrella of family risks de-prioritising individual rights and well-being.

PART 2 – Drivers of Policy and Provision

KEY QUESTIONS:

- **Why is there an emerging interest in family and parenting support and what are the implications?**
- **What are the driving forces underlying policy development and provision in the fields of family and parenting support?**
- **What are the entry points of family and parenting support in the legal and political domains?**
- **To what extent is existing family and parenting support policy evidence-based?**

Maureen Samms-Vaughan, University of the West Indies, presented insights into the origins and drivers of parenting support in Jamaica. The development of policy and provision proceeded quite rapidly and smoothly, following the government's initiation in 2005 of the development of a National Parenting Support Policy. Research of various forms was a major driver, as were state initiatives towards a co-ordinated focus on parenting. Developments in other sectors contributed to the momentum, including the inclusion of parenting as the first key objective within the national strategic plan for early childhood development. In brief, Jamaica's process entailed the development of policy, the establishment of a parent support commission, a national strategy and finally a set of national standards. The tangible outcome of this process in terms of services is that 'Parenting Places' are now being opened up across the country within schools and ECD centres. Organisations already engaged in parenting support can apply to become a Parenting Place. Learning included the importance of local research to ensure that policy addresses needs, the tendency for policy development to be driven by the needs of lower socio-economic status groups yet result in a universal policy, the vital role of stakeholder partnerships and consultations in developing the content of parenting support, and the role of an institutional anchor within government in the form of an enabling agency for facilitating policy development and steering policy implementation.

Ninoslava Pecnik, University of Zagreb, presented the case of Croatia where the development of parenting support is rooted in a long tradition of engaging with parents, specifically around child protection and as a response to poor parenting. When the concept of 'parenting support' was first introduced in 2006 it was paired with family support. Croatia looked to Europe for models of provision and the Ministry of Family established 19 multi-professional family centres that offered universal and targeted parenting support. At the same time there was a national plan of activities for the rights of the child which had a section on supporting families in their educational function. A political change saw the replacement of the Ministry of Families by the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth. Family centres were subsequently incorporated into Centres for Social Welfare, a transition regarded as a step backwards by many in the field. Considerable support to families and parents was rolled out through schools. This year sees the ratification of a new family law that uses the term 'parenting support' and the state is now funding projects to strengthen parenting skills alongside those to prevent violence against children. The key internal drivers in this process included gradual acknowledgement by government of the increasing demands on parents accompanied by concerns regarding the social conditions of parenting, desires to implement the UN CRC with respect to violence reduction and children's participation, growing commitment to support families and parents, strengthened by research on different family forms and a growing NGO voice, recognition of social changes that have affected parent-child relations and public understanding of the parental role, a recognition and accompanying definition of 'good parenting' as well as of unacceptable parenting practices, growing perception that parenting support offers a solution for the absence of services for poor families for families at risk and to the ineffectiveness of child protection systems in preventing institutionalisation. Key external influences were the Council of Europe recommendations to support positive parenting (2006).

Lena Karlsson, Save the Children, spoke about this organisation's child rights orientation and the consequent approach to the field of parenting and family support. SCF begins by acknowledging differences in family forms and focusing on the family's function in the nurture and protection of children. One goal is to strengthen the focus on violence prevention by identifying and addressing root causes, while attending to children's opinions and perspectives on the issues. Another is to strengthen families and prevent unnecessary separation of

children from their families, and a third is securing family reunification in humanitarian crisis (and psychosocial support to parents in emergency situations). The organisation's current approach to parenting and family support is through a range of sectors other than child protection, a diversity that runs the risk of undermining a coherent response from the organisation. These sectors include education (specifically ECD), health and nutrition (for mothers and newborns), child poverty, child rights and business principles for promoting work life balance, and fatherhood programs aimed at gender equality, and the care and well-being of children (e.g. through MenCare – see *presentation by Ruti Levtov below*). The organisation plans to move forward with parenting and family support through research, responding to findings from their recent study of kinship care (in the DRC, Nigeria and Sierre Leone), integrating 'positive discipline' into fatherhood programmes and other parenting/family and education programs, and improving collaboration with other sectors (including private sector).

Jana Hainsworth, Eurochild, spoke about the drivers behind the development of policy and provision in the fields of parenting and family support within Eurochild and its members. For Eurochild, the main driver in the development of parenting and family support has been rising rates of child poverty, a trend recognised in political circles for its likely negative impact on the economic status of future society. Eurochild has pushed for a holistic view of child poverty as measured through a multi-dimensional poverty index, and for the recognition that investing in children is a significant dimension of a social investment package. Working at European Union level means that this recommendation cannot translate directly into legislation, but it can be put forward in ways that have an impact at national level. The recommendation's three pillars for investing in children and their families are access to services, access to resources and the participation of children in social, civic and other arena. This framework provides the means to engage member states in dialogue with how they are implementing these policies. Eurochild and the AntiPoverty network recently had their first joint meeting with many countries to discuss these directions. The Irish Government has taken big steps in dovetailing services and cash transfers, an area Eurochild intends to explore further. Although the recommendation is not legally binding it has had considerable impact. Eurochild aims to facilitate greater intra-national collaboration to coordinate a coalition of organisations to support its implementation at national level.

Another key driver is the push towards de-institutionalisation, an agenda endorsed by the EU commissioners who want more family and community-based care. Guidelines and toolkits to support this process have been published, and the last round of funding showed that institutions are now starting to monitor the process. At the level of the European Union, there is significant guidance and financial incentive to support child-centred investment. The Eurochild working group on parenting and family support relies extensively on the evidence base and regards it to be well-advanced in some areas, but weak in others.

Lessons from Research

Jenny Pearce, University of Bedfordshire, gave an overview of work in preventing sexual violence amongst children. She advocated recognition of children's agency and voice, especially in the case of teenagers. It is often the case that interventions for vulnerable or (sexually) exploited teenagers provide a series of interventions focusing on the young person or her schoolwork and behaviour, none of which look at her family or involve her parents.

She pointed a policy disconnect in that parenting support interventions are not connected with interventions designed to prevent sexual violence amongst young people. Moreover, there is a related knowledge disconnect between child protection (preventing sexual abuse in the family) and youth centred preventative interventions (preventing sexual violence during adolescence). A recent evaluation of parenting and family support interventions designed to protect sexual violence against children found that the family/parent/community representative may not be best place to start in protecting the child as these figures may be involved in networks that promote exploitative measures. Access can be best facilitated through neighbourhood, local community networks over time, and parents (including substitute parents) and young people ask for shared understanding and communication because they value each other.

John Coleman, Department of Education, University of Oxford, reflected on the proposed analytical framework in light of his own research. One strength of the framework is its attendance to the underlying

values and philosophy of policy and provision. At the same time, while local government apply this value base, parents of teenagers want more information and more support. Their priority is guidance as to how to respond to the specific changes that occur in adolescence, rather than an initiative that points to their shortcomings as parents. Regarding the framework's consideration of key actors, the issues here will vary according to context. In the UK, for example, a critical issue is skill levels in the workforce.

The evidence points to the potential for particular gains from family and parenting support interventions during early childhood and in adolescence because these are both critical periods in terms of individual development and its relationship to long-term outcomes. In the current drive towards the former, there is a danger that the potential for work in adolescence is ignored. During adolescence there are many factors influencing current well-being and future life-chances, and there is work to be done in understanding where and how family and parenting support makes a difference. In considering support for parents of adolescents, the issue of adolescent involvement in the process arises. There has been little thought given to how to engage teenagers, especially in contexts where parents are reticent to tell their teenagers that they are doing a parenting course, and most interventions do not consider how to do so.

CONCLUDING REMARKS EMERGING FROM DAY 1

- Finding the means of capturing the distinction between family support and parenting support (where it exists) and of the relationship between them is the biggest challenge of this research process. Is a global concept possible and if so, what would it look like? The value of something globally applicable stems from the similarities in the challenges faced by children and parents across the world. The aim is not a blueprint, but the development of a set of principles one can apply in multiple settings. The momentum around family and parenting support gained at a global, regional or country level may provide the appropriate opportunity to bring sectoral approaches together towards offering more connected provision. One way of approaching this distinction is through considering family related policy as the umbrella under which family support and parenting support both sit, and distinguishing these based on the object of attention and unit in which change is envisaged.
- The values that underlie recent national developments in parenting and family support tend towards an asset-based approach that recognises the capacities of parents and families.
- The need for an evidence base is not just about the effectiveness of certain programmes (what works and for whom) but also understanding how these programmes work.
- One of the concerns relates to the appropriateness of developing family support and parenting support where there is lack of other basic needs that require a response to the structural drivers of vulnerability. How can we use the drive of efficiency in governments to promote a more multi-sectoral and universal programme of family and parenting support? Are there ways in which parenting support services can be hubs for multiple services that are available universally?
- We still do not know enough about the nature of parenting support and family support as it exists informally, and its responsiveness to socio-economic and cultural changes occurring at societal level. How do continuities and change at this level either enable or constrain parents and families in their efforts to meet their ideals in raising children? It is important to take into account the change that may be underway within the normative environment that guides parental aspirations and behaviour, for example in the context of migration and urbanisation and widening access to digital and other forms of new media that expose a wide variety of ideals and practices pertaining to parenting.

DAY 2

PART 3 – The Nature and Continuum of Services and Needs

KEY QUESTIONS:

- **To what extent do existing programmes and services ensure the continuum of care?**
- **How are parenting programmes addressing specific needs/issues within the family?**

Pat Dolan, University of Ireland, presented work on family support that he and Dr Carmel Devaney have conducted. This divides the analysis of family support into four key components, namely its sources (network kin and others), types, quality and amount. A further dimension for analysis is the limitations of support in recognition that not all support is helpful. Such findings have major implications for the attachment of support to cash transfers. Family support is conceptualised as employing a strengths-based perspective rather than deficit model, and one that advocates choice, participation, anti-discrimination, and timeliness with regard to the employment of people’s own solutions and community collaboration as a central objectives. Trends in these directions entail moving away from reliance on experts and towards endogenous sources of solutions, and away from a treatment emphasis towards a preventative one.

In Ireland, ‘prevention and early intervention’ is the repeated message given to service providers but one that proves difficult to operationalise. Other general points about the state of play with respect to family support include the finding that more time is spent on the assessment period of family support than on the intervention itself; the paucity of intervention in relation to policy; the tendency to demand more programmes and re-invent existing approaches; and the scarce use of family group conferencing as a mechanism for family support because this method takes power away from social workers.

The context in which family support is applied matters. Research shows that provision is more effective where it is able to allow for nuances in the form and modality of delivery, some flexibility in terms of the programmes used, and for practitioners to feel secure in being responsive and “messy” rather than pre-ordered and restrictive. Worker style and reflective practice is a key issue in effectiveness of delivery. Dolan’s current work explores how one organises family support in the context of children or youth at risk by trialling an approach to targeting or for matching services to need based on four ‘A’s (Area, Age/stage (early childhood, latency, adolescence), Adversity and Asking people what they most need in terms of support).

Bernadette Madrid, University of the Philippines, spoke about family and parenting support in the context of violence prevention. Using a case history, she illustrated a level of child neglect that is widespread in the Philippines, often arising when nuclear families (or the child and parent) is dependent on the extended family for survival. A central point made was that evidence-based interventions alone are not sufficient to prevent child maltreatment. Other conditions must be met to bridge the science-practice gap. There is a need to attend to policy readiness and the context in which services exist or are being planned. Bernadette showed a step-wise ladder of increasing community readiness beginning at ‘no awareness’ and ending in ‘high level of community ownership’. She then described a model of readiness assessment for child maltreatment prevention prepared by Mikton et al (2011), one that includes enquiry into sources of knowledge, attitudes and levels/types of resources. When this model was applied to the Philippines it was found that different parts of the country varied in their readiness according to the ten domains specified. The conclusion of this work was a decision to form a coalition of NGOs and others to steer a national direction for addressing child maltreatment. Parenting programmes were identified as the best mechanism to respond to the issues identified. This group revised the Maslow pyramid of needs in a way that parenting is on the peak of the pyramid, and the principle of economies of scale used to embed parenting programmes within existing services, specifically universal health care and conditional cash transfers. These transfers already reach 4 million people. It was also decided to insert parenting support (parenting programmes) into schools.

The presentation by **Rosana Morgado**, the Federal University of Rio do Janeiro, demonstrated how poor families are being supported in Brazil and the challenges faced in this process. Brazil has high levels of socio-

economic inequalities. For example, the middle classes pay for schooling through rates and use private health facilities, whereas poor people use overburdened public services. Rates of violence are very high, especially against women and children. There is a legal and policy framework pertaining to children, adolescents and women, including several national plans put in place since 2000 and a law to criminalise domestic violence against women that brought with it the creation of special courts for judging such cases. Despite these new laws, domestic violence is not a priority in Brazil, while corporal punishment is common, accepted and often preferred by families.

The institution of the family is central within Brazilian society. New official definitions of family are more inclusive but their use is not yet evident within practice. Instead family policy is focused on highly vulnerable situations where there are multiple complex needs (housing problems, substance abuse etc). The basic support and social protection through generalised 'reference centres' run by PNAS helps parents be more protective. PNAS are tasked with following up vulnerable families using these centres. There are some reasons to question this model in relation to parenting support as they can be seen as a mechanism of control over poor families. PNAS also run specialised social services centres in which staff respond to referrals for cases of extreme vulnerability and rights violation. Brazil's conditional cash transfer programme 'Bolsa Familia' has run across the country since 2003 and now supports over 25% of the population. The programme's three aims relate to its components; to transfer income to promote immediate poverty relief, to impose conditionalities in order to strengthen access to basic social rights in the areas of education, health and social care, and to support families through actions and complementary programmes.

Lorraine Sherr, University College London, spoke about the rationale for, and nature of, global interest in parenting support as part of a broader response to the HIV epidemic. Depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and suicidality are much higher in children with an HIV infected parent, a portion of which is related to the stigma and secrecy that surrounds the virus and related illnesses. Thus far, we know little about the effects of HIV on their parenting behaviours and competencies. There are additional dimensions and complications to the task of parenting when the parent is HIV positive, especially in resource poor settings within LMICs. These include deciding to try to keep an infant HIV-free, disclosure to one's children and others, and preparation for illness, treatment and death. Studies are now underway in Malawi and South Africa looking at effects of parental HIV, mental illness and treatment (or none of these) on child outcomes. At the same time, within the AIDS and development field there is somewhat of a fascination with the unusual, for example parentification, child-headed households and grandparent-headed households. The numbers of people who could be categorised as such are actually much lower than is commonly believed, and the core issue is parenting under extreme adversity and mounting evidence of the negative mental health impacts of this on children.

There is a gender bias in policy development and the acquisition of knowledge. Much work is oriented around a pre-supposition that fathers are mostly absent, and that such absence has negative impact on children. Studies have shown that death of a father increases risks to children, yet very little work done on the obverse scenario in terms of the benefits of living fathers, whether present or absent from the household. Recent research in South Africa demonstrates that a cash transfer results in reductions in girls' risk behaviours, and that cash transfers plus care (that includes parenting support amongst other measures) stretches these protective benefits further.

Elena Gaia, Social Policy Specialist in UNICEF CEE/CIS presented on children, families and social protection in CEE/CIS. This region is experiencing changing fertility rates and in family structures (including rising numbers of children who live with neither parent). Poverty and unemployment rates are also rising, and children are at now at higher risk of poverty. The depth of poverty is also growing across the region. In a number of countries (e.g. Serbia and the Czech Republic), disability in children is one of the main reasons that leads to children being left without parental care. Responses differ between countries and while large portions of such children enter family-type care, the majority in some countries are placed in institutions. Thus, while the total numbers of children who are separated from families is growing, the proportion of these who are in informal care (rather than institutional care) is increasing.

These figures prompted UNICEF to increase the focus on prevention rather than extracting children from institutions, stimulating a growing interest in social protection and what its potential role is in this region. The

focus is on reducing social and economic vulnerability (rather than on violence or other vulnerabilities) and on thinking about home-based care models for children with disability. There is a tendency for social protection in the region to over-rely on institutional responses to the point that it fails to provide individualised support for enabling families to overcome difficulties. One of the barriers here is that the workforce in this sector is low paid. Another is gaps in the available data and lack of programmatic evaluations. More research is needed. Services are underdeveloped and underfunded, and lack co-ordination. Most social protection systems are not effective in relieving vulnerabilities.

Denise Stuckenbruck, Child Protection Specialist from UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), gave a presentation titled 'Reflections on the Conceptual Framework' that was jointly prepared with Heidi Loening-Voysey (Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF South Africa) and Elayn Sammon (Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Zimbabwe). Focusing on lessons from practice relevant to the draft analytical framework, the key message of this presentation was the necessity to respond to context. A global framework must be able to account for heterogeneity in situations on the ground (rural vs urban, MICs vs fragile states and diversity within national borders). The terms we use may imply different things and be politically charged, so they can be interpreted or translated variously and 'incorrectly'. Ensuring contextual appropriateness matters because efforts to support families can be linked to perceptions of a 'western/colonialist' approach.

In the ESA region there is an underlying tension between the prioritisation of child rights versus 'family rights', the latter deriving from protection of the family. Discussion now underway about 'family rights' is motivating various political and religious movements. In this region the role of religion should not be under-estimated in shaping public opinion and state responses. Certain key actors in the debate not present in this meeting include regional mechanisms such as the African Union and the Parenting in Africa Network (PAN). The latter is not highly structured but comprises a group of parenting organisations bringing their own vision of what parenting in Africa means. Key themes of discussion in the region of salience to this area are 1) the notion of resilience and its value in addressing risk and shocks, 2) gender and traditional roles, specifically the impact on women and girls and the place of men and boys in the discussion, and 3) evidence and the need for rigorous and robust research alongside better ongoing monitoring of learning from practice.

Given that UNICEF's action in this region is grounded in the rights of the child, four building blocks to the Oxford team's research can be identified: 1) social protection (cash transfers, access to basic social services, access to justice, productive safety nets), 2) case management, 3) family and parenting groups/clubs (for peer support and exchange within one's wider network rather than the vertical approach of a class) and 4) services (alternative care, adoption, counselling, rehabilitation, psychosocial support). Regional specificities that may apply to other LMIC contexts include the fact that services in the name of parenting and family support will be provided by paraprofessionals such as community social workers rather than professionals. Moreover, cash transfers in Africa are linked to long term outcomes and are unconditional unlike those in Latin America. There is consensus that the optimum is universal provision of cash transfers rather than targeted approaches. Trends affecting parenting within alternative care include high proportions of children in formal foster care. In South Africa, 80% of the 500,000 children in foster care arranged through the courts live in extended family arrangements.

Florence Martin from Better Care Network presented on family support to prevent family separation. Reasons to focus on family separation include research showing poor immediate outcomes for children in alternative care. There is slightly less evidence around the long term negative outcomes for children. Challenges in doing so include a history of focusing solely on orphanhood, resulting in scarce data on how many children live in residential care. Global estimates range from 2 to 8 million. The recommendation made was to focus on *who* children are living with. A breakdown of living arrangements shows wide diversity in primary caregivers. There are scattered efforts to prevent the abandonment or relinquishment of infants and young children including support to pregnant and young mothers through home visiting and group programmes, and support to primary caregivers of children with disability. A number of critical issues regarding the provision of family or parenting support were mentioned including the necessity of measuring the impact of social transfers on prevention of separation (not only access to education and health), and the need for a life-course perspective able to encompass the early critical period, transition to school, and teenage relationships.

PART 4 – Family and Community: Gendered Roles and Community Participation

KEY QUESTIONS:

- **What are the implications of gender imbalances in the provision of family and parenting support?**
- **Are existing policies challenging or reproducing traditional gender roles?**
- **What is the role of communities in the provision of family and parenting support?**

Emebet Mulugeta from Addis Ababa University presented on gendered roles in family and parenting support in Ethiopia. Context was again emphasised through links between the vulnerability of women and children and Ethiopia's rural subsistence and vulnerability to climatic extremes and conflict. Although culturally diverse, the Ethiopian population is patriarchal and holds authoritarian values regarding child-rearing in which corporal punishment is acceptable and widely practiced. Rates of child stunting are very high and about half of all children are actively involved in economic production. Various indicators showing women's status in society were presented including high rates of violence against women, and the consistent primary responsibility for the household and child-rearing taken by women even amongst those with high status jobs. Fathers tend to be economic providers, disciplinarians but otherwise to be emotionally (and often physically) distant from children, at least until they are older. It was suggested that opportunity costs to children and families are incurred by this model of fathering.

The draft National Child Policy proposes to provide families with opportunities for income generation, provide counselling, create conducive environments for working parents, especially mothers, raise awareness about children's rights, facilitate access to health facilities, and adult education to improve the family life. Women and children are the primary intended beneficiaries of the draft Social Protection Policy. This policy aims to address gender inequalities through women's economic empowerment and access to education, as well as generalized efforts to change negative attitudes and discriminatory laws and regulations. Provision of family support is very limited, consisting of input by minimally trained, government health extension workers (HEWs) and small-scale NGO initiatives to alert parents to issues of healthy child development within certain villages, and using radio broadcasts.

A presentation by **Ruti Levto**v from Promundo-US and the MenCare Campaign on men and care-giving served to introduce participants to Promundo's work towards engaging men in maternal and child health, gender equality and violence prevention primarily through the health and education sectors. The approach acknowledges the social constructions of masculinity and the fatherhood role that place gendered restrictions as to what is expected of, and acceptable for, men in their roles as fathers. The rationale for working with fathers is their potential for breaking inter-generational cycles of violence through greater involvement in the social and emotional aspects of child-rearing. Evidence suggests that if fathers are involved in their children's lives in the early months and years, this involvement is more likely to be sustained.

The current thrust of the organisation is on institutionalising MenCare as a set of messages through working with the health sector. The Mencare initiative is a 3 year collaboration between Promundo US and Rutgers University being implemented in Brazil, Indonesia, Rwanda and South Africa. The primary objectives are to promote men's involvement in prenatal and postnatal care, the equal division of household labor and caregiving, men's self-efficacy as care-givers and positive communication in order to reduce parental and family stress and violence. The design of MenCare's provision recognises the diversity in family types and structures. It consists of group education for young men, young women, fathers/couples; counselling for men who perpetrated violence; campaigns; working with the health sector and advocacy at local, national, and international levels. The parenting programme (Programme P) is guided by a manual adapted to the context in which it is used. Plans are in place to conduct an RCT of this programme in Rwanda and South Africa, to adapt it for fathers of children of different age groups and to establish an on-line training portal.

The final presentation was by Professor **Mark Brennan** from Pennsylvania State University. It focused on family and community support, the inclusion of community justified by the large proportion of rural dwellers in LMICs

and the function of community as a source of support to families and individuals. There are various means of measuring community based on the nature and level of interaction and interdependence therein. Differences exist between approaches to development ‘in’ communities as opposed to development ‘of’ community, and their respective implications for the areas of parenting and family support. There is evidence supporting the value of community participation in young people over and above the characteristics of family and home. The experience of civic engagement in youth is shown to dramatically increase young people’s belief in the power of civic engagement. Moreover civic engagement is desired by young people more than by the adults who steer their lives, especially amongst low income students who found the experience of civic engagement to be life transforming.

CONCLUDING REMARKS EMERGING FROM DAY 2

- The conditionality attached to conditional cash transfers can be an ethical problem in low-income settings where the services are not attended to.
- Participants reflected on the importance of defining the objectives of family and parenting support, in light of the tendency to focus on the content of the services. Often these objectives are implicit, but it is important to ensure that we consider these explicitly in going forward with this study.
- As the learning from research demonstrates that the family is the best context for children, and that there is an increasing range of family forms, policy makers and practitioners need to be mindful of risk factors that are at play in the spectrum of family forms in a given context. The policy implication is that we need multiple types of interventions because one approach will not be sufficient. It is worth bearing in mind the sensitivities that exist in all countries regarding the range of policies that push children towards needing alternative care.
- Most communities have harmful elements as well as positive ones that can be identified and bolstered. Where decision-making is made more localised, residents who know what the issues are and have good ideas about solutions, can be brought in. These more consultative processes have been forgotten in many intervention designs.
- Community health workers in LMICs who act as home-visitors are expected to do more and more for less and less pay. Where there is evidence of good child outcomes from these interventions, the data show that it depends both on dose (exposure) and the quality of what is delivered by providers. Little to nothing is known about the probable outcomes of lighter-touch family and parenting support delivered through paraprofessionals and volunteers.

PART 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The draft conceptual framework is considered to be valid but would benefit from attention to:

- the life-course of child and parent (latency, adolescence, young parenthood)
- considerations of diversity in context and circumstance (including disability, discrimination)
- a means of capturing the distinction between family support and parenting support (where it exists) and of the relationship between them.

Family support and parenting support can differ in their focus of attention (family function vs child-rearing). Related policy objectives are multiple and often implicit. The nature of family support as implemented varies more widely than the nature of parenting support.

‘Family support’ and ‘parenting support’ are differently interpreted within and across regions. Similarly, national and regional variation exists in the focus on gender and gender equality in policy and provision.

The ecological framework is a helpful means to connect the proximate and more distal spheres of influence on children’s lives, and to understand the interpenetration of different sectors.

The intention of the Oxford research team is to keep the two lenses of family support and parenting support as two lines of development. However, there is a need for narrowing the study’s focus, perhaps by orientating the analysis around child-rearing.

The significance of the specific intra-regional and intra-national context might be added to the analytical framework in the form of a fifth line of enquiry around context.

A gap in policy exists around the latency period, namely from school age to adolescence. By implication this gap relates to appropriate responses for families and parents of children in this age group.

The final point made was the widespread lack of attention to population-level data in this field, and hence neglect of issues relating to implementing policy or delivering provision at scale. Thus, it is important that this research encompass a population-level framework and pose questions around the issues at stake when taking it to scale (e.g. human resources, support systems, finance).



UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti

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