

COVID-19 Child and Family Mentoring Programme



Overview

Violence against children is one of the most pressing issues facing us in the COVID-19 pandemic. Globally, 1 billion children aged 2-17 experience physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect each year¹. Most of this violence occurs in the home, and parent-child relationships are one of the key determinants of whether a child will experience violence. Many factors combine to make violence at home very likely to increase during COVID-19: the pressure of providing fulltime childcare during lockdown, reduced access to social support and child protection services, mental health pressures, crowded and cramped living conditions, increased time spent online, and financial and food insecurity.² There is growing evidence that violence at home is already increasing.³

Viva's 6-week COVID-19 Child and Family Mentoring programme will reduce violence and abuse of children during the current COVID-19 pandemic, and provide psychosocial support, through building meaningful connections with vulnerable families who may not otherwise be reached by support and messaging. This programme targets unreached families and seeks to work in a relational way through local communities to support positive relationships and practical strategies proven to reduce the likelihood of violence and abuse at home. Through a combination of working with families to promote positive parenting skills at the same time as working with children themselves to build their resilience, families will be demonstrably stronger, able to support one another, and able to thrive during this crisis and beyond.

The programme

Viva's partner networks⁴, already active in 38 cities across Asia, Africa, Central and Latin America, will work with existing community actors and churches to identify ~500 community mentors. These mentors will talk with an average of ~10 families through a focused conversation with one parent and one child in the family through six sessions delivered by phone call, online or in-person where this becomes possible. These sessions will be participatory and engaging and support proactive action for the family on each topic.

The six themes have been identified through contributions from Viva's worldwide team based on emerging issues, as well as the 'COVID-19 Global Parenting Resources'⁵ derived from evidence-based content adapted to fit the COVID-19 context, and drawing on Viva's existing parenting and child protection programmes.

The six sessions cover:

- 1) **COVID-19 awareness** – good practices for staying safe and how families can talk about COVID-19 together
- 2) **Building strong relationships within the family** – How to listen to and spend time with children, helping children identify their strengths and their role in the family
- 3) **Mental health and resilience** – techniques for staying calm and relaxing, understanding children's reactions, how to cope with strong feelings and how to talk about how we feel

¹ [Global prevalence of past-year violence against children: a systematic review and minimum estimates](#), Hillis S, Mercy J, Amobi A, Kress H. *Pediatrics* 2016; 137(3): e20154079.

² Alliance for CPHA – Guidance brief

³ Increased domestic violence has been reported in the UK <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/09/uk-domestic-abuse-helplines-report-surge-in-calls-during-lockdown> and online exploitation is rising <https://www.ecpat.org/news/covid-19-sexual-abuse/>

⁴ A typical partner network is made up of 100 churches and local grassroots organisations

⁵ COVID-19 parenting – Unicef, WHO, CDC, USAID, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children

- 4) **Staying safe at home** – Anger management and positive discipline strategies, recognising and preventing abuse and what to do when we feel unsafe
- 5) **Staying safe online** – How to engage with children’s online world, risk awareness and setting limits, helping children to make positive choices online
- 6) **Learning together every day** – Supporting children’s learning as a parent and structuring time at home in a positive way to stay healthy and active

Each session will also include a visual ‘poster’ covering some of the week’s themes, as well as a game or activity to do as a family, and a brief devotional reflection which the mentor can send as an additional support where appropriate. Mentors will be supported with training, ongoing supervision, and appropriate safeguarding procedures to mitigate risks of one-to-one mentoring and support effective reporting of safeguarding issues.

Why will this programme be effective?

We know that parenting programmes are proven to have significant potential to reduce violence against children.⁶ This programme addresses a gap in current programming by enabling access to some of the most vulnerable families who will otherwise be unreached, particularly those with lack of internet access and economic vulnerability. The programme will be effective because we are able to bring together a unique set of expertise and reach with our strong foundation of existing relationships developed over many years by our partner networks in their communities, and the ability of our regional teams to contextualise materials for their context, as well as including Viva’s expertise in child protection generally and in emergencies. The model provides a flexible framework which can be adapted for use in multiple ways and over multiple timescales, and with family strengthening themes which will remain relevant for use beyond this current crisis.

Measuring change and impact

Each mentor will complete a call log following every mentoring session, answering a maximum of 6 quick questions to show what has been learnt during the session by the parent and child. It will also give space to record the actions committed to and whether or not these took place to enable measurement of change. A simple baseline survey will enable understanding of the current situation as well as enabling measurement of overall change on key indicators around protection and wellbeing.

Using a real-time monitoring and evaluation system will enable instant feedback and learning which will provide opportunity for continuous learning within and between countries, and enable development of further materials, making this a ‘living’ programme adapting to support real current needs of vulnerable children and families around the world.

Timescale and how you can be part of this

We have now launched this programme with our partner networks so materials are readily available. They are being translated to a number of local languages as well. We would love these materials to be used widely to support vulnerable children and families worldwide. Viva can offer training support to get the programme up and running and an MEL system from which we can send you regular reports on the reach and impact.

Please email Anna Barker at a.barker@viva.org for more information

⁶ INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children (2018) shows that parenting programmes are proven to show reductions in proven child maltreatment cases and in referrals to child protection services, reductions in abusive, negative or harsh parenting, especially in relation to discipline, reductions in bullying and being bullied, reductions in physical, emotional or sexual violence victimization by partners or peers, reductions in aggression and delinquency