

Chapter 5

Emerging issues

**The question is not what it costs
to develop family outreach programmes that
prevent abuse of women and children.
The question is what are the costs of protection if we fail?**

A number of important issues have emerged from the FCM sites. In this section we look at some of the key issues and why they should be considered important. We also make some recommendations for the way forward which we hope will be useful for those planning similar interventions.

1. The human rights framework

Rights are an important tool for freeing people from their subservient status but rights are not necessarily understood or embraced as a useful framework. Children's rights though basic to child survival, protection and development are often regarded as undermining parental authority. The use of corporal punishment and violence against women and children prevails.

Motivation

The importance of the rights-based appreciative enquiry framework which frames the FCM Programme cannot be understated. It is an important tool for freeing women, in particular, from their subservient status. Numerous positive accounts attest to the rapid rate of behavioural change experienced by women who have joined the FCM Programme and who report the benefits of being drawn into a supportive network. Benefits include receiving child support grants and pensions and starting a food garden on the one hand to breaking the isolation which often comes with deep suffering. The gains in sharing and receiving information during the home visits and cluster workshops have led to women actively engaging with behavioural responses which enhance resilience both in themselves and in the children.

Recommendation

Family-based programmes such as the FCM Programme have been shown to promote empowerment of parents and primary caregivers by promoting understanding of the rights-based framework including positive discipline and the capacity for resilience. This in turn promotes positive child outcomes.

2. The status of ECD

ECD as a sector has low status.

Motivation

ECD is recognised in the policies of a number of government departments including the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Development, and the Amended Children's Bill. Implementation plans are in the pipeline. However ECD is often overlooked entirely in the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and budgeting at local government level. The recent *Costing Report for the Childrens Bill*¹ indicated that ECD funding was based on an inherited and outdated scenario at national and provincial government level where the budgets are insufficiently geared to address the needs of all South Africa's children – which will have implications in time regarding child rights including basic rights to health, social services, education and the right to equality.

Recommendation

This is an important ECD advocacy issue which must be highlighted at all levels and which includes the critical need for better data management, budgeting processes and integration into the Integrated Development Plans(IDPs) at district level.

3. Gender

The low status of ECD can also be attributed to the low status of women and children in South Africa.

Motivation

The vulnerability of women of child bearing age and the impact on children is tragically illustrated in the high rate of deaths in the 25–35 and under 4 age groups largely attributed to HIV and AIDS. Gender relationships are at the heart of ECD and encompass issues of power and authority. Many women in rural areas remain marginalised within the patriarchal hierarchy where men get the lion's share. Men generally understand their role as providers even if they are unable to or fail to provide but lack role models around nurturing in the early years.

Food is often saved for the man's food requirements the next day while children are the last to be fed and little or nothing is left.

Motivator report

Recommendation

The focus on resilience strategies and affirming women's roles in the FCM Programme has shown increasing positive outcomes for maternal and paternal coping skills. More attention must be paid to the role of men in the lives of young children starting from the prebirth stage of development. Men must be allowed access to jobs as ECD practitioners as illustrated in the FCM Programme where men are playing vital roles.

1. Barberton, C, 2006

4. The importance of investing in ECD

Motivation

ECD does not function in a vacuum. ECD is at the roots of social capital formation which is why ECD is such a critical development arena. ECD family programmes which form the bedrock of, or first level of, ECD provision as shown in this account deserve equal funding. The interaction with the primary caregivers of children, the task of building the curriculum based on the existing beliefs and practices around child raising and the networking with other ECD programmes forms the basic level building blocks of the broader social capital development project.

Recommendation

ECD family programmes must be regarded as on a par with other ECD programmes and must therefore be properly costed and funded.

5. Community consultation

Motivation

The FCM Programme has shown the importance of time spent on the consultative process including identifying key stakeholders in order to ensure community buy-in and support.

Recommendation

Regular reportbacks on programme progress and challenges must be included in programme design.

6. The value of non-formal training programmes

Motivation

The FCM programme has shown that the Family and Community Motivators who start with basic level non-accredited training programmes can progress to higher educational level and higher levels of organisational responsibility.

In the Vukile Tshwete ISLP Programme the current principal started as a Family and Community Motivator and worked her way through ECD Level 4 to become principal of the centre taking with her a clear commitment to the family outreach work.

Others stated that while they wanted to improve their knowledge they did not necessarily have the time or the inclination to go the formal route.

It is important to recognise the contribution that people make to the ECD sector but not everyone wants or needs a formal qualification. ECD family workers need recognition as frontline workers doing the work of government by providing needed and appropriate services.

Recommendation

- a) Non formal training programmes that meet acceptable criteria must be accepted but not necessarily as part of the formal system.
- b) ECD family workers such as the motivators with or without accredited certificates perform a valuable service and deserve recognition.

7. Methodology

Motivation

The way we train is important. The FCM programme showed that training based on affirmative and participatory methodology deserves recognition as a way of advancing caregiver capacity, honouring diversity and cherishing socio-cultural roots. The way that trainers train can either inform and enhance or restrict knowledge acquisition and the mediation of ideas.

Recommendation

The methodology that frames the training is as important as the content.

It is not everyone who wants or requests to come on board with a full NQF accredited qualification but everyone in our experience who has taken on the task of a motivator wants to improve their practice.

8. Funding and equity

Motivation

Poor and inadequate funding leads directly to substandard ECD service provisioning which means poor standards for poor children. The challenge for the progressive economists is to support the ECD sector with economic models based on a comprehensive ECD plan which is focused on achieving the values and goals enshrined in our Constitution. The challenge for government departments is to develop progressive budgets within this framework.²

Recommendation

Funding for ECD family-based programmes must support the principle of the child's right to equitable access.

9. Lack of consistent funding retards scope

Motivation

Lack of consistent funding retards the scope, scaling up and quality of ECD family based programme development and implementation. ECD family based programmes such as the Family and Community Motivator Programme have shown that they can develop broad scope in terms of addressing the needs as well as go to scale and address quality issues, therefore they deserve both recognition and adequate funding support. However the reality is that ECD family based funding is often inconsistent, unreliable, does not meet adequate wage standards and is vulnerable to government budgets which often deflect funds allocated to ECD to other educational needs. The hidden costs of service provision must include the working time that motivators and facilitators spend on preparation, networking, reportbacks and report writing.

Recommendation

Funding for ECD family-based programmes must meet recognised quality standards and be reliable and consistent in order to support the scaling up that is urgently required to meet the needs of the vast numbers of vulnerable ECD aged children and their caregivers outside of existing provision.

10. Inadequate funding affects staffing and outcomes

Motivation

The sector is retarded by the movement of competent people to better work opportunities. While it may be argued that training is never lost, there is also no doubt that programmes suffer when there is a lack of continuity and particularly in areas which lack the infrastructure for delivery. FCM programmes have shown that a stable staff complement has better capacity to achieve the intended outcomes.

Recommendation

ECD family programmes must not be treated as less important than ECD centre-based or any other educational programmes. Remuneration must be located within the educator's salary/ remuneration framework.

11. Support, monitoring and evaluation

Motivation

Support and monitoring, evaluation and mentoring of the operational structure and programme functions and outcomes must be included in the costing exercise. There is a need for the development of appropriate tools and instruments to be costed in proposals and tenders to ensure that every FCM programme is able to measure progress and identify challenges and can develop the capacity to feed this information into the planning, budgeting and policy work at local government and other levels.

Recommendation

Processes and procedures with tools and instruments that are required must be costed and included in funding proposals and tenders.

12. Operational structure

Motivation

The operational structure offers a way forward but must be adapted to suit the needs of particular settings based on the results of the baseline survey and community mapping procedures.

Recommendation

That a generic structure is reviewed and adapted to meet the needs of particular settings as the family based programme unfolds.

13. Size and capacity of FCM programmes

Motivation

A one size fits all approach would in our view be very counter-productive. A range of factors must be taken into consideration when determining the size and capacity of the programme.

Recommendation

Maximum size of the FCM Programme in a particular setting is an important issue and cannot be pre-determined. Size will depend on a number of factors such as the budget available, distance, communication systems, resources, trained and committed staff in key positions, support, monitoring and evaluation.

14. Quality programming

Motivation

How many home visits make for a sound family-based programme and what are the implications for maternal coping skills? What amount of time is required to access government services, to support caregivers with key ECD messages, to build social networks? These and other questions that emerge out of family based work in different settings must guide the debates on issues such as quality and sustainability. Our work has shown that sustained interventions require time.

Recommendation

These and other leading questions must be included in the follow up studies which are required as part of ongoing evaluation related to programme design. Links to examples of family based work in other contexts in Africa and elsewhere are always useful.

15. Quality and child outcomes

Motivation

Our experience has shown that improving programme quality can improve child outcomes.

Recommendation

- Data collection and collation for better statistics at government and programme levels.
- Salaries, training, incentives, venues, ECD appropriate equipment and materials such as toys and books.

16. Listening to the voices of children and their caregivers

Motivation

All aspects of programme inputs must be assessed in relation to child, caregiver's, motivator's and facilitator's own views of needs and outcomes.

Recommendation

FCM programme design must ensure that the inputs on behalf of and for the child, the parents and primary caregivers and the motivators and the facilitators and any other players address their questions and concerns.

17. Linking family based work to a local ECD centre

Motivation

Linking family-based work to a local ECD centre as a node of care and support offers an alternative model that brings its own opportunities and challenges. This relates to the operational structure and the search for models that will assist ECD programmes to go to scale. The extent of scale that is possible will be determined by the needs and resources available to the local setting.

Recommendation

Clear plans with outputs, intended indicators of progress and expected outcomes must be presented in order to ensure realistic expectations. ECD centres that are struggling to survive with many children and poor facilities cannot be expected to cope with the demands of all the needy families in their orbit.

18. Coordination, consistency, commitment and conflict management

Motivation

These are our 4C's and if any one of these is lacking the programme will not thrive. Coordination is about bringing together the chosen representatives, consistency is about ensuring that they attend regularly and for the allocated time period, commitment is what makes the difference to the success of any programme and conflict management is about managing tense situations before they reach boiling point and loss of control.

Recommendation

To be included as indicators in programme design.

19. Cost benefit analysis

Motivation

The question is not what would it cost to develop a comprehensive ECD plan which includes family outreach programmes as part of the prevention strategy around women and children. The question is what are the costs of protection if we fail?

Recommendation

It is critically important to provide evidence to show the vital role that ECD family-based programmes such as the FCM Programme play.