Parenting
Key to Human and Social Development

Linda M Richter

Global Initiative to Support Parents
African Regional Convening to Support Parents and Caregivers
21-23 June Virtual
Parenting: What and Why?

What is parenting, who is a parent?
• Anyone who is committed to the long-term love and protection of a child
• Many people can be a parent to a child

What is caregiving, who is a caregiver?
• Provision of temporary care for a child
• For family reasons, assistance, pay
- No young child can survive or develop without a parent

- A child makes a parent
  - E.g. babies elicit care by helplessness, crying

- Parent/s are critical at all ages and stages of a child’s life (our lives!)
Why are parents so important?

- Development **starts at conception**

  Foetus gets ready to respond to people eg, to touch (8w), smell & sound - (20w), ‘learns’ (recognizes) (26w)

- Parts of babies’ brains needed for social life (e.g. emotional expressions, communication,) **develop in the early months after birth**

- Innate mechanisms develop **in interaction** with caring, responsive parents, e.g.:
  - Newborn preference for human face, voice, smell, taste
  - Infant obligatory gaze, imitation, emotional resonance
How does parenting develop?

- Parenting is ‘intuitive’, **inborn**
- And **part of culture in all societies**
- Every ‘normal’ person **can parent** (without severe mental illness, substance abuse, etc.)
- And experience physiological and emotional changes with the **love we feel** for a child
- Parent responses are activated by eg. **“cuteness”** of baby faces, their smell & sounds
‘Cuteness’ of babies - small button nose, small chin, large cheek size in relation to face, large forehead proportionally,
Cuteness of babies

- Seen in spontaneous ‘motherese’ - the way young/old, men/women, parents/non-parents talk to babies (lilting, musical, repetitive, questioning with looming, gestures & touch)

- Behavioural and neuroimaging studies show that babies activate adult neural activity involved in play and empathy

- And elicit caregiving and protection

- Which ‘Locks’ in love & protection for child
What can go wrong with parenting?

- ‘Intuitive parenting’ & responsiveness and driven by emotional & motivational states – not only knowledge

- **Responsiveness can break down** under competing pre-occupations, for example, due to:
  - Depression, substance abuse etc.
  - Stress related to poverty, hardship and insecurity, interpersonal and community violence, social exclusion, etc.
Parenting and Nurturing Care

Health
Nutrition
Safety/security
Opportunities to learn
Responsive caregiving

Provided by PARENTS
With support from enabling policies, services and communities
Parenting and Nurturing Care throughout childhood

Nurturing Care Framework from preconception through adolescence
All parents need support

Four inter-related approaches:

All parents need supportive state and sector policies

All parents need community supports

All parents need supportive systems (health, education, social services, child care etc.)

Some parents need special parent services/programmes
Supportive policies

Resources for family conditions, e.g.:
- Access to housing, transport etc.
- Violence and crime prevention
- Decent work
- Social protection, income support, poverty relief

Time, e.g.:
- Paid parental leave for birth and care of young children
- Breastfeeding breaks at work
- Child care for working parents
Examples of parenting in AU policies


- Article 14: State parties to ensure that all sectors of the society including parents are informed and supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, and the prevention of domestic and other accidents.
- Article 19: Every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of parental care and protection and shall, whenever possible, have the right to reside with his or her parents.
- Article 20: Parents or other persons responsible for the child shall have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development the child and shall have the duty.

Promote the participation of parents in the educational affairs of their children.

Nutrition sensitive interventions targeting promotion of knowledge, understanding and practices of good nutrition among parents.

For example, good feeding and caregiving practices, parenting, and stimulation

Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (ARNS) 2015–2025
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early adopters</th>
<th>2000-2010</th>
<th>2011-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namibia (1995)</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>Djibouti</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa (1997)</td>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Lesotho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius (1999)</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Seychelles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
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<td>(6)</td>
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<td>(3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>Cameroon, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda</td>
<td>31/54 = 57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community support

- Family, kin and neighbourhood support
- Companionship
- Assistance and relief for child care
- Help with transport etc.
- Community support groups
- Information (work, child care, services etc.)
- Clean and safe spaces for children to play & socialize
Supportive systems & services

Health, e.g.:
- Free or subsidized preventive and promotive health care for young children
- Nutrition supplementation
- Information, guidance and counselling

Education:
- Child care
- Pre-primary schooling
- School meals
- After school care

Social Services
Agriculture
Etc.
Parenting programmes

Parent support, parent education, parent training

Usually in groups with 3 aims:
- Promote child development
- Help families deal with stress & improve family life
- Help parents manage difficult child behavior non-violently

Venue:
- Community
- Clinic or school

Form:
- 6+ sessions
- Curriculum
- Trained facilitator
Private sector initiatives

- **Business initiatives**
  - To improve productivity, talent recruitment & retention, better employee health & morale, gender equity

- **Social investment** – build facilities, equipment & materials, train staff
  - Corporate social investment
  - Civic organizations e.g. Rotary, Lions etc

- **Family-friendly policies and practices important**
  - About ¾ of men and ½ women employed or looking for work – i.e. busy and away from home
  - Many more women work in the uncounted informal sector
Nurturing Care for ECD & outcomes

- Data from DHS, MICS & representative national surveys
- 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021
- 2021 country profiles
- 42 ECD indicators
- 197 countries
- Incl 60 high-income countries
- Encompass 99.8% of the world's children <5 years
- Include child disability & ‘on-track’ development
- Arabic, French, Russian & Spanish.
Nurturing Care for ECD & outcomes

Threats to child development
Risks and costs
Disability
Developmentally on track
Coverage of services to support NC
Community supports
Facilitating environment of laws and policies
## Parenting – How are we doing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>All Other Low- and Middle-Income Countries</th>
<th>High Income Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILY WELLBEING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic drinking water</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic sanitation</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child/family social protection</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
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## Maternal wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>All Other Low- and Middle-Income Countries</th>
<th>High Income Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality (per 100 000 births)</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antenatal care</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postnatal care</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent birth (per 1 000 15-19y)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low birthweight</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterm births</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Child care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Averages</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>All Other Low- and Middle-Income Countries</th>
<th>High Income Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care of child &lt;5y by 10+y child (&gt;1hr/wk)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violent discipline</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive discipline</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Data to Action: Key insights into global early childhood development from country-comparable data

Data updated annually by UNICEF

https://data.unicef.org/resources/countdown-to-2030-ecd-country-profiles/


https://www.ecdan.org/countries.html

https://nurturing-care.org/resources/country-profiles
Thank you