



Notes Parenting Event June 13th

Plenary speakers

Dr. Prof. Maria de Haan – Good parenting in international development

Different cultures have different parenting styles, important to be mindful of this. For example:

- White middle class parents = being responsive to early babbling
- African parents = ignore early babbling

What is good parenting? Parenting is normative. Decisions on parenting cannot be made by others.

The scientific research on parenting and education is often done in WEIRD (Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic) societies. This leads to parenting interventions often being based on western parenting strategies.

Remarks during the discussion:

- There is not a perfect binary between different cultures, and there is a continuous process of change in parenting.
- Through confrontation of parenting strategies, there can be space for growth.
- Migration is changing views on parenting, for example in the West.
- There are many environmental influences that children will adopt, for example being more responsive to authority in many African cultures, whereas Western culture is focused more on autonomy. Parents are also regarded somewhat differently in different cultures, for example in Africa it is often seen as a real transition, being someone's mom is a new role. In the West it is more important to also keep your individuality.
- There is mutual learning from parenting practices. Individualization can borrow from collectivism.

Liesbeth Speelman – Help a Child's Parenting approach

Parenting is part of the Child Centered Community Development approach. It was discovered that starting self-help groups was not enough, parents needed more support. That is why the parenting approach was developed, which is a practical way to help parents be more confident and knowledgeable in their role as parents. In many societies the extended family is also overstretched, and social networks are not as strong as they used to be.

Principles of the parenting strategy:

- Group work is crucial, so parents can share experiences, learn from each other and know that they are not alone
- Sharing + thinking + practice, so that things that are learned will become intrinsic
- Ideally, mothers and fathers are in one group
- Parents decide together which modules are most relevant for them and their children

Roreen Mzembe – The parenting challenge in practice

In Roreen's personal experience with raising her son who had some developmental delays, the more Western 'helicopter' style of parenting was very beneficial. This approach was more hands-on and improved the quality of living of her son significantly. Some of the benefits of this approach are also found in the parenting challenge that is currently being implemented in Malawi.

After they have followed the parenting program, parents express feeling more confident about parenting, and experiencing it as less difficult. There is not always a need for many (expensive) materials, once parents are made aware of the possibilities they already have to engage with their children and promote early learning in the home.



Different parenting styles have benefits, a discussion is needed on what to keep and what not. This is why it is important for parents to come into contact with different approaches to parenting and decide what is best for them and their children.

Dialogue table 1: Make the first 1000 days count - ICDI

ICDI's *'Make the first 1000 days count'* program originated from a need in the Ethiopian communities; there was a desire for informal pre-school education. They aim is to promote playful learning and positive parenting.

In the discussion between ICDI employees and employees from other developmental organisations the following question was central: What works in advocacy approaches about ECD, play and parenting that leads to comm and local government buy in?

In the discussion it became clear that it is important to involve governments in every stage of the intervention, from design to evaluation results. They have to realise what the benefits of an intervention are and why it is important for the government that these programs continue. At the same time an organisation should not aim only at governments, the local community also has to see the value in a program. Governments or the stability in a region might change. Therefore, it is important that the local community is stimulated to advocate for programs as well. They should want the services provided and see the benefits they bring. So that when a program threatens to disappear, they demand its continuation.

Dialogue table 2: Parenting a child with a disability – Liliane Fonds

Liliane Fonds works closely with children with different types of disabilities, and their parents and community. Children with a disability often live in isolation, there is sometimes stigma and trauma involved. Especially when disability is combined with (extreme) poverty, this can create a vicious cycle. For parents, there is an element of grief and letting go of certain expectations and dreams for their child. Parents are role models for their children, so it is crucial to empower them. As organizations, we should be facilitators and empower people to take the lead, we should not overstep our boundaries. The whole system around the child should be involved, think for example about making schools accessible and inclusive, and raising awareness in the community. This inclusivity is also very important in early childhood education and TVET facilities.

During the discussion it became clear that it can sometimes be difficult to link parents and children to appropriate care. Sensitization should not only be aimed at parents of children with a disability, but at the whole community, because it can become a reality in everyone's life. The earlier people are aware, the better. This also goes for early detection of any developmental issues or delays for children. Parents should make peace with the limits their child might have, but at the same time the child should be encouraged to develop as much as possible, and helped to reach **their own** potential. In working with children with disabilities, there is an increased challenge for organizations that are not exclusively focused on disability inclusion, cooperation between organizations is necessary in this regard.

Dialogue table 3: How to address the funding gap?

The parenting funding landscape is currently dominated by foundations. Government spending on parenting interventions remains low, so it is usually reliant on donor money. Parenting often remains an integrated element, for example in programs related to women or community empowerment. It has not yet been scaled up or standardised in a significant way. However, attention for parenting is slowly increasing through advocacy.

During the discussion, the questions below were answered by all the participants.

1. What opportunities and possibilities do you currently see in the parenting financing market?
 - It can be included as a crucial element in larger programs
 - Large parenting donors look for scalable solutions in child development



- We can develop the social business case further, good parenting benefits society and prevents problems later on
1. What is needed for better fundraising?
 - Emphasising the importance of parenting for children's development
 - Linking to recent 'developments'/ priorities for donors, such as the improved mental health of parents and the effect that has on children
 - The social return on investment of parenting programs should be calculated
 - Linking parenting more strongly to positive outcomes later in life (self-confidence, functioning well in society)
 2. What are the obstacles to better funding?
 - Outcomes are not easy to measure
 - It can be difficult to clearly establish the link between the parenting intervention and the positive outcomes later in the children's lives
 - Parenting is taken for granted, not visible or recognized as a relevant issue
 3. How can we make private donors enthusiastic about parenting?
 - Show the potential impact
 - Link to their own experience as parents
 - Make it beneficial for both parties (not necessarily financially), for example through exchanging experiences or good practices
 4. What are the most important unique buying reasons for parenting?
 - High impact on areas such as health, productivity, wellbeing, self-confidence (of parents and children)
 - Cost efficiency, because of the focus on holistic child development
 - Increasing attention for the importance of mental health and the link between the mental health of the parents and children
 - Breakdown of extended family system requires new focus on strengthening families and social cohesion
 5. What do you see as your (organization's) most important added value when it comes to scaling parenting and fundraising for it?
 - Experience with parenting programs in different countries and different cultural contexts
 - Link with the University of Utrecht, so more academic support behind the programs
 - Parenting approach that is less 'western biased' and aimed at empowering parents
 - Lots of local and contextual knowledge in different areas