REACHING THE LAST MILE
Sustainable Comprehensive Responses for Vulnerable Children and their families project (SCORE)


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The person regardless of their condition of need is our focus because each of them represents a potential resource. Our programs have a human face and respond to the needs of those we work with to enhance their resources and strengths to address their own circumstances - We start from the positive.

John Makoha, Regional Representative, AVSI Foundation

The principles that guide our interventions

Partnerships
We do not walk alone. The situation requires the creation of partnerships between the different subjects present in a particular context or working in environments that can foster the exchange of experiences, optimize the use of resources, and allow us to embrace the most wide-ranging future possible.

Working together
AVSI believes that it is the direct and personal relationship between the people carrying out a project and those it is intended to help that opens new possibilities of development. Based on this conviction, that is born of experience, they decide together what steps to take, in a shared journey.

Starting from the positive
Every person and their community, no matter what situation of poverty or emergency they find themselves in, is a resource that should be valued. Starting from the positive means working to increase their awareness that it is possible to treat every circumstance as an opportunity for a new start.

Development of intermediary and subsidiary bodies
To plan and carry out development projects implies favoring people’s social skills, promoting the creation of intermediary bodies (civil society or auxiliary organizations) and of a social fabric eager for participation and capable of joint responsibility.
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MESSAGES

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Achievements in numbers...

- **60% female** 43% male
  - **11,300** household members received critical services through referral.
- **57% female** 43% male
  - **30,000** beneficiaries attended at least a community dialogue on reproductive health; HIV counseling and guidance; and hygiene and sanitation.
- **72% female** 27% male
  - **4,000** trained in parenting skills.
  - **6,700** adolescents and youth trained in life skills.

The training is premised on promoting the authoritative parenting style conceptualized by Diana Baumrind, which involves warm nurturance, firm discipline, and respect for child autonomy. Throughout the training, parents are taught to follow authoritative parenting behaviors such as explaining why a child’s behavior is wrong, asking the child about their aspirations, and using praise to encourage good behavior.

The training complements the project’s overall goal of working at the household level to reduce child vulnerability by strengthening relationships within the household and empowering parents to take better care of their children.
This compilation also presents the impact of the project’s life skills trainings on the resilience of orphaned and vulnerable adolescents and youths in 35 districts of Uganda. Our theory of change upholds that adolescents in and out of school trained in life skills acquire knowledge and skills that consequently positively impact their behavior, attitudes, skills and values, ultimately resulting in improved psychosocial well-being and the development of resilient conduct. Once resilient, the trainees are better positioned to enroll in school, stay in school and delay sex and childbearing. Those out of school are awakened and respond to the alternative survival options available such as apprenticeships for their own productivity.

Young people need to be helped with life skills essential for wisely navigating excitement waves to maturity. They need to know the facts about themselves, their dreams, dignity, relationships, emotions and sexuality and to learn the skills to plan and enjoy themselves in a positive way. It is on this background that the project’s life skills intervention for adolescents is built.
RESTORING UNITY BETWEEN COUPLES

“
I did not allow my wife of 30 years to meet with her fellow women or even go to the market; however, after attending a parenting skills training, I have since learnt to have cordial talks with her. We are a strong couple now.

- Ausi Lubwama

Right: Tasuye Mawazi, Imam and Chairman Local Council 1 of Kiruggu village in Buikwe District, with his wife.
“Growing in the care of my uncle and facing hard-handed treatment was the life my siblings and I were raised in the small village of Nkonko-Wakisi in Eastern Uganda. Love was far from my thought and I repeatedly confronted my wife with anger until she left me. My wife’s absence awakened me to rethink my bad behavior and I joined a training in parenting skills.”

Ibra Kawooya, a hawker in Nkonko village, Buikwe District is now married to Grace, his new wife whom he helps with household chores and also makes time for their children; Ibra and Grace are living in harmony.

When 29 year old mother of five picked interest to attend parenting skill trainings, little did she know that this decision would not please her husband Samson. Samson was suspicious that his wife Doreen would use this training as an excuse to indulge in inappropriate behavior with other males.

Realizing positive change in Doreen, Samson made a turn-around and encouraged his wife to attend the trainings. They now work towards amicable decisions for the well-being of their family; they have also taught their children their roles.

Doreen Aol, Agoro, Lamwo District

My husband and I were the talk of the village for the constant fights as our neighbors and 6 children watched. I was a nagging wife who harassed my children and denied them the basic needs for their well-being, including refusing to pay them in school - a behavior I regret.

I have learnt to listen to my children and care for my family. My husband has since returned home and I am a champion of parenting in my community - my family will never be the same again.

Anyango Immaculate, 55, Lubira village, Namayingo district
A COMMITMENT TO GIRL EDUCATION

“...He wished that we marry our girl-children at a young age in return for cows...”

When one of their daughters got pregnant, her furious dad forced her to get married to the man with four wives; Betty did not agree with her husband’s decision. Having enrolled for the parenting skills training, Betty’s expertise guided her to talk to her husband who allowed their daughter to return home, join a Nursing course and is currently working at Uganda’s main referral hospital in Kampala.

“My husband now appreciates the beauty of education: our daughters and sons are graduates” expressed Betty.

As a woman representative in her village, Betty engages her community in sensitization dialogues and mobilizes families to embrace parenting skills to nurture strong families. Betty’s children have nicknamed her “Mukwano” meaning friend; because of the love she shows them.

Betty Kaima, 57 year old mother of 11, Kirimira village, Buyende District

REDUCING RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

“...I was timid and could not take decisions on my own which caused young boys to coerce me into early sex...”

A formerly shy Jamawa 20, has learnt to make good decisions, is far from peer pressure and engages in productive ventures. The youth now owns 10 goats which she rears on her father’s land for income.

“...After divorcing my husband I became promiscuous and only realized that I was losing my dignity with this behavior...”

A nursing officer, Florence Mirembe, 39, attended the parenting skills training in Eastern Uganda and now lives a responsible life. The single mother of five also provides her children with their basic needs.
I fought with my friends for boys and turned the surrounding bushes to my hiding place with males.

- Shakira, 21, Kazigo village, Luuka District

Noticing behavior problems in their girl-child, Shakira’s parents immediately sent her to an aunt to counsel her into an exemplary child (in many Ugandan cultures, aunts mentor young girls to grow up responsibly) when they thought they were failing to shape their daughter. Returning from her aunt’s home, Shakira joined the training from which she learnt skills in self-respect, self-worthiness and is using her experience to change the youth around her. The 21-year-old hopes that her parents can pay her in school again.

My husband asked me to send Jane away because he feared she would infect our other children.

- Hadijah Kakaire, a Community Facilitator, Malindi village, Buikwe District.

Neighbors did not allow their children to play along with little Jane; she felt abandoned. When my whole family was tested for HIV, we were shocked to learn that my 5 year old orphaned niece Jane was HIV positive.

Realizing the stigma Jane was experiencing, I opted to share parenting skills with adults, including my husband who happily participated in the sessions.

Months later, experiencing a more positive attitude from home and from our neighbors, Jane now feels longed-for and is excited to start schooling.
Seeing no useful future for her seven orphaned children all of whom were not in school and two infected with HIV and AIDS and epilepsy, Beatrice’s hope faded.

While walking along, Beatrice encountered Meeting Point Kitgum, a local CBO in Kitgum District working with mothers infected and affected with HIV and AIDS from where she joined a parent’s group for training.

Beatrice has become a defender of child rights and visits homes to mentor parents to take their children to school and work towards growing children with meaningful lives.

A BOND OF PEACE

“I turned my half children into victims of my problems because my husband was returning home late.

Married to a “boda-boda” cyclist in Mukono District, Joyce was not sure about her husband’s whereabouts whenever he returned home late.

The mother of four taking care of three other children from her husband’s previous marriage began discussing her sentiments with her husband after her training and they are now enjoying peace in their home.
Everything Sharon went through before attending the training is history as she now lives a new and promising relationship with her husband.

Sharon had fights with her husband every single day and minded less what people thought about them.

“I witnessed a lot of change in my marriage and our joy is now at the peak - my community calls me “the love nurse” because I have mentored couples into happy families. I have imparted good morals to my children. I boast of a stable and promising family.”
“My wife Margaret and children were victims of my abusive behavior and they longed to break away from the agony”, says 44 year old father of five.

Wilbrode did not provide for his family and instead humiliated his wife and forced her to till their family land to be able to provide for him and their children. Known in the community for his harsh behavior, he did not give chance for a mutual environment which caused fear in his home. Many women in Margaret’s village of Mutumba, Namayingo District undergo agony in their families and through such trainings, they are empowered to deal with causes of violence in their homes.

Growing up with overbearing parents, Bazirio adopted similar parenting styles when he got his own family unaware of the trauma he brought to his wife and four children. Previously causing uneasiness in his home due to his involvement with alcohol, Bazirio can now sit together with his wife and children to amicably resolve their family issues.

I am a promoter of “the beauty of peaceful families” in my community. I also learnt the power of using friendly speech while interacting with people.

- Jovat Kamusime, Karagwe village in Ntungamo District.

Jovat and other women in her neighborhood formed a drama group to promote parenting skills among families in their community.
Gertrude had neglected her five year old daughter Alice who has a mental illness and denied her food and a mother’s smile.

Feeling abandoned and looking unhappy day after day, Alice’s siblings did not leave their sister all alone; in concealment from their mother, they provided her with the most minimal help.

“I learnt to embrace Alice, feed and bathe her. I am close to my daughter I once neglected - it is pleasing to see my daughter smile, eat and look healthy.”

- Gertrude Namazzi, Mukono District.

Gertrude’s care and support for her daughter brought back joy to Alice’s face as her siblings also now embrace their sister openly.
Mary’s husband has begun calling her and she sees hope in his return home. The couple plans to start working together again.

SAYING NO TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Mido and I are now leading a cultural group - Lake Edward Cultural Performers in Rukungiri District, where we give hope to fellow youth especially orphans to return to or stay in school through drama performances.

Mido and Isa, both 26 were formerly involved in substance abuse and other bad behavior.

Abdulrahman, 25, resident of Kikondo village in Buikwe District recounts his life’s journey: I was a smoker, took alcohol and was involved in petty thefts at a lake-side market when my dad sent me out of home.

When I came across the life-skills training, I thought it was a waste of time but slowly picked interest and learnt to reflect on myself and how to become a responsible and productive youth.

I have gained the trust of my parents, established a brick-making and bicycle repair business which enabled me to buy a plot of land on which I have constructed my house and started my own family.

# Life-skills reunited me with my family
Latifu Laaki whose dream is to become a medical doctor benefited from life-skills training and reunited with his family he once ran away from.

Together with 13 other youth from his village of Nabugalu in Budaka District, Latifu used to steal the neighbor’s food and animals, sell them and use the money to buy local brew and cigarettes. Latifu, 16 is currently in school and is working hard to become a medical doctor.

“When Apollo came to my hospital bed-side; little did I know he was a life skill’s trainer.

A known prostitute at a fish-landing site, abuser of drugs and involved in fights with males and females alike, 27 year old Jovia was imprisoned more than once and hospitalized for three months for assault. Approached by a life-skills trainer, Jovia learnt to live a transformed life and now sensitizes other youth to abandon bad behavior and live productive lives through drama. Jovia is mother of one and resides in Rwenshama village in Rukungiri District.

“I lead the anti-betting and anti-drug abuse campaign among the youth in my community.

- Julius, formerly referred to by his peers as “Betting chairman”

Julius, 17, together with a group of other youth in his community involved himself in drug abuse and often got himself in contact with the law.

Formerly referred to as “Betting chairman”, Julius now leads the anti-betting and anti-drug abuse campaign among the youth in his community and is enthusiastic about his farming business.

The youth plan to own cows, goats and “graduate” to commercial farming in the near future.
It seemed like a tradition in my community that girls aged 17 were ready for marriage

- Sarah Kutesa

Sarah, 19, decided to get married when her parents could not afford her tuition and she had dropped out of school in primary seven. Lucky to be enrolled in the apprenticeship training, Sarah gained her self-esteem and her hope was restored.

Now a tailor and earning a monthly income of UGX 250,000, Sarah provides for her family, supports her sibling in school and plans to build a permanent house for her mother and install a solar lighting system. Formerly resident of Nyamuyanja village in Isingiro District, Sarah is now living in a Kampala suburb where she runs her tailoring business.
I preferred to use my earnings to buy friends alcohol and get myself fancy clothing. I did not value making savings - Alex, 17, carpentry trainee.

Alex attended the “Reaching your goals” life-skills module which changed his thinking and in a period of 12 months he had saved up to UGX 1.4 million from his employment at a carpentry workshop. He now plans to start his own carpentry business in Ntungamo District.

“I said no to bad peer influence after attending life skills training which shaped me into a responsible person. I am a youth leader at our Catholic parish and I own a six-acre tomato garden from which I plan to earn income to pay myself for an electrical installation course in a couple of months and provide for my four siblings and widowed mother.”
- Ronald Oiringi, 21 year old youth from Buikwe District.

Richard Okot is the Local Council Secretary in his village in Kitgum District.

The now assertive father of two is able to make good decisions for himself and his family which has enabled him to venture into animal, bird rearing and tree planting. He has also started a hair dressing business as an income making activity for his wife.

Known as a champion in his village of Oguda, Richard’s community refers to him for entrepreneurial advise and guidance for their families. Richard plans to contest for a higher position to represent the voices of the people of Oguda.
I am focusing on educating my daughter who I want to attain a high level education.

Peter was not ready for marriage; however, when he impregnated Flavia he was forced to marry her at the young age of 20. Realizing that there was no love between them and family responsibilities staring at him, Peter felt he had wasted his life, resorted to taking alcohol and was frustrated. Having attended the training modules, he appreciated the value of life and begun to focus on building his future. He now manages his cotton growing business and retails simsim, sorghum and beans in Lagoro village to sustain his family.

“A HAPPY HOME FOR CHILDREN

Margaret and her husband always sent their five children to till land for the family hungry. The couple had meals away from their children who they made sure were always doing some kind of work without rest or play.

Now a happy family on hungry stomachs, they have meals together, play and chat with their children.

“Staying close to our children has given them ease to share with us their personal difficulties.”  - Margaret Nankya, Namayingo District.
Loyce, once referred to by her own children as “police woman” for giving them heavy punishments and fighting with her husband every other day can now afford to hug her family members.

The mother of three joined Karagwe Twihaneyo Parenting Group and has not lived to look back again.

“From the police woman my children called me to now a parenting counselor in my community.” Loyce Ayebare

Loyce also convinced her husband to join the parenting group where they volunteer to counsel couples in Karagwe-Itojo village.

COPING WITH TEENAGE PREGNANCY

In Eastern Uganda where Veronica comes from, young girls often drop out of school, an occurrence that seems “normal” in the community. Unfortunately, Veronica did not escape this norm, she got pregnant at age 18 and dropped out of her high school education.

“I did not listen to my parent’s advise, which led me to drop out of school.”

Veronica decided to enrol for a life-skills training and is currently employed as a hair dresser from which she provides for her child and hopes to start her own business.
At 15, I got pregnant and the boy ran away leaving me with no one to turn to. - Janat Namaja

Janat and her baby have since been accepted in her family, she is currently in primary six and is the Assistant Head Prefect at her school.

The trainers visited me at home and I was enrolled for a life-skills training. I have regained my self-esteem and I am happy to be in school again.

Immaculate Kisa, 18 year old gave birth at age 16 and six months later she sat for her Ordinary Level exams from Nakirungu Secondary School in Sironko District. She is also an active youth mobilizer for behavioral change.

Rwantebire Phiona and her baby of Rwanshama Parenting group, Rukungiri District.
I would leave home but never reach school; my peers and I preferred to meet boys.

Fearing to face her parents, Lydia was left hopeless when the boy who impregnated her ran away.

In her situation, Lydia met a life-skills trainer who counseled her and she took the decision to sustain her pregnancy and at age 17, Lydia gave birth to a baby girl.

Six months later, she returned to high school at Buyaka Secondary School, Bulambuli District. She has also learnt self-respect and how to choose the right friends.

A second born of 11 siblings Lydia dreams of becoming a teacher.

# PARENTING SKILLS FOR HAPPY FAMILIES

The parenting skills training operational research carried out in 2015 confirmed that parenting skills trainings had changed the behavior of parents who had adopted more affectionate ways, ended corporal punishments and practiced improved communication which improved the psychological well-being of their children.

Children as well had become obedient, respectful and open with their parents, realizing better parent-child relationships.

Additionally, households were enthusiastic about the trainings and eager to share the skill with their communities, satisfying a significant need among vulnerable caregivers.

# LIFE SKILLS FOR SURVIVAL

The results enabled us to deduce that life skills trainings build resilience, as evidenced in the youth’s better control of emotions, communication skills, stress management, better decision making abilities, formation of stronger relationships among families and good psychological well-being.
A SHARED EFFORT

After all this worthwhile teamwork to equip parents and caretakers with authoritative parenting knowledge, attitudes and practices, alongside life transforming skills trainings for adolescents and youths in the Sustainable Comprehensive Responses for Vulnerable Children and their Families project households, I feel honored to be part of the team that has worked with 125,000 households for the several achievements, a few of which are pooled in this change story book.

Reading through the entire change story booklet arouses in me a sense of gratitude to the numerous trainees for their efforts which have contributed to the distinctive changes unveiled as much as working with each of the Implementing Partners engaged by AVSI Foundation: CARE International, TPO and FHI360 was satisfying at each stage of this intervention.

The entire spectrum of stakeholders has been a great encouragement to me and so indirectly to my family where I practice the Family Strengthening skills I acquired during this life awakening experience, alongside the unique successes and influence made in the lives of the people we came in interaction with.

While reflecting on each of the change stories documented in this book, I gladly say that Sustainable Comprehensive Responses for Vulnerable Children and their Families project has ably accompanied the trained caretakers on the path to the freedom of parents and children alike and the nature and free association demonstrated in each of these stories remains a living testimony to others that no one is too difficult to change to better circumstances for the global dignity of every person.

Alfred Agaba, Technical Advisor
CONTINUITY OF THE PROMISING RESULTS

“We shall work towards sustaining the project successes by integrating the groups into the district strategic plans and programs. District staff have also had their capacity built for continuity of the project interventions.”

Charles Masaba, A/g Chief Administrative Officer, Sironko District.

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