International Conference On
CHILD PROTECTION
IN AFRICA

THEME
From Vulnerability to Resilience, Innovation and Evidence

VENUE
Daystar University, Nairobi Campus
Nairobi, Kenya

DATE
8th - 10th August 2018
IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD: “THE PARENT, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL (PACOME)” PARTNERSHIP MODEL TO CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY RESILIENCES

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AVSI Foundation, a NGO created in 1972, carries out cooperation projects for development, with particular emphasis on education. In its work, its attention is focused on the defense and promotion of the dignity of the person, the cornerstone of every project.

AVSI’s works for a world where the person, aware of his/her value and dignity, is the protagonist of his/her own integral development and that of his/her community. AVSI Rwanda follows the AVSI model in the world which consists on working directly with communities and individuals to strengthen them to become protagonists of their future.
AVSI in Rwanda

- Rwanda was one of the first countries in the world to ratify the Convention on the Child Rights (CRC). It has taken significant steps to improve the legal and institutional framework for the protection of the rights of children.
- AVSI is closely aligned with the GoR’s national policies and strategies and it contributes to the sustainable development goals with particular attention to child protection, poverty reduction, nutrition and food security, promotion of well-being and health, quality education, promotion of gender equality, water hygiene and sanitation, energy, and young employment.
- AVSI Rwanda’s interventions are grouped into four technical sectors: socio-educational, families' economic strengthening, child protection and capacity building. The fight against gender-based violence is cross-cutting in all its interventions in Rwanda. AVSI is active in 12 districts of the country.
AVSI in Rwanda

- AVSI Foundation innovated on a model in which children in extreme poverty conditions are cared for within the environment in which they live.
- The model branded **PACOME** factors in a partnership between Family (PArent), COMMunity and School (Ecole) as **key partners** in the promotion of a protective care environment in which a child can thrive.
- Synergy induced in **PACOME** allows a protection net to be weaved around the children and it allows exchange and knowledge transfer to the grassroots structures to ensure sustainability.
- The child is cared for within the **URINZIRA** socio-educational center, a community-based 6 day per week early childhood care center run by parents who take turns at managing the facility and is freely attended to by children from the community.
Evidence of Why It Is a Promising Practice

- Initiated child protection network at district level with continuous support of medical, legal and psychosocial services
- 1,748 children (53% girls) aged 2 - 6 were taken care of in the ECDs by their parents (2015 - 2018)
- Among 865 Day Care parents volunteers, actively involved in running the community - based ECD, 17% (148) are male.
- 811 children (56% are girls) have transitioned to Primary in neighboring school and are doing well.

In the picture:
We are in the 4th child cohort of Daycare (beginning the P4), and the testimony of the teachers of the schools attended show a positive difference between the children from Daycare and others.
Evidence of Why It Is a Promising Practice

- The community identified a new need of focusing efforts in supporting teenage mothers and fighting the phenomenon.
- 316 teenage mothers are identified and their 297 children (aged 2-5) integrated in ECD centers.
- So far, the different actors have taken ownership of the approach also because we start from their ideas.
- The approach was set up 3 years ago. Since then, the daycare programs initiated in 5 districts and ran by parents volunteering, are still running.
- At community level, 5 of the 6 ECD initiated with AVSI support are now hosted in facilities provided by local authorities.
- The approach is salable, as 8 new ECD centers have self-set up in the neighboring communities. In some cases the community got together to build, in others it was the cell authorities which were the driving force.
- The approach to early childhood development at a moderate cost is compelling and donors (UNICEF is one of them) have appreciated and now they are supporting for scaling in new areas.
Replicability

- Affordability in terms of resources because it is built on what already exists in all communities
- Parents’ / caregivers’ motivation through technical trainings and complementary activities as incentive (e.g. savings groups)
- Capacity building of existing grassroots structures rather than starting from scratch
- Relying Rwandan culture to address the issues raised by the modern way of life to bring communities to a behavior change - No expensive expertise needed

In the picture is shown a daycare as well as a playground, built with local materials, by parents’ Umuganda because the one their children attended was proved to be too distant and overpopulated.
Scalability

Project/Program **scalability** may often require a significant expansion of both personnel and financial resources. **PACOME** is built on what already exists, it is low cost and in line with the priorities of the country allowing scalability with:

- Collaboration with community actors to agree on everyone responsibility (parents, community leaders and local authorities) and parent commitment to be prime caregivers
- Parents in nearest communities who participated in the training were able to initiate new ECD centers in their respective communities and to train new caregivers on child care and themes related to ECD community-based management
- Home solution: local authorities avail infrastructures for community based ECD or community members avail spaces for home-based ECD
- Trainings, coaching, supports for rehabilitation to make spaces child-friendly and adapted to national standards
Lessons Learnt

A multi-sectoral community-based approach helps to rationalize resources, making better use of existing resources by:

• Involving all stakeholders including families and communities from the beginning
• Starting from what already exist rather than duplicating
• Taking stock of community knowledge and learning from it
• Recognizing the human and social wealth present in the community
• Culture and tradition carry the values of a society which allow its survival and perpetuation: it is a common heritage accepted by all
• Capacity building for parental responsibility and parenting as well as related to "human social security" issues must start in and with the family
• Responding to the real need felt by members of the community rather than imagining and inventing in their place
Recommended Areas for Further Research on Promising Practices

- Community is exposed to a diversity of approaches from different stakeholders with the risk of discouraging community initiatives (Ex: payment of caregivers, substituting the role of parents)
- How to harmonize the community-based interventions on child protection and avoid duplication in some areas with clear guidance from local authorities on the needy area
- What are the actions to be taken to break the circle of violence that can affect generations of/ from teenage mothers?
- Efforts to measure changes in child protection are still limited by social norms and results may appear positive while some child protection issues are considered as acceptable in communities (AVSI experience with HVAT)
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