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Positive Parenting Programme:
The Impacts on Behavioural Change Among Parents or Caregivers

December **2020**

C⬤NTENTS

FIGURES AND TABLES

ACRONYMS

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICS-SP	Improving Cambodia's Society through Skillful Parenting
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KAPB	Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Behaviours
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This study aimed to determine the progress of the Positive Parenting Programme being implemented by Improving Cambodia's Society through Skillful Parenting (ICS-SP), and whether it had reached the intended results for children whose parents had participated in it. This study focuses on measuring the outputs and outcomes related to knowledge, attitudes and behaviours among the beneficiaries of Level 1 and 2 programmes implemented by ICS-SP. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used, including knowledge pre- and post-tests; knowledge, attitudes, behaviour, and practices (KAPB) surveys; and focus group discussions (FGDs) to collect data on perspectives, knowledge/attitudes, and practices/behaviour change among parents or caregivers who had participated in ICS-SP's positive parenting sessions. The study focused on ICS-SP, who implemented the project with UNICEF support from 2016-2019.

Knowledge and attitudes on positive parenting

Listed below are knowledge and attitudes on positive parenting, which aligned with training materials of ICS-SP.

› In general, parents displayed increased knowledge of positive parenting techniques, including positive discipline, family communication, providing children with warmth and care, stress management and child protection. These techniques reflect methods that parents were taught through the training materials of the ICS-SP programme.[1] The data suggests that parents may require more support in setting limitations and guidelines with their children.

› Beneficiary parents participating in this study agreed that their main duties as parents were to offer children physical or basic needs (food, health care, legal documents and schooling). The provision of warmth and socio-emotional support was not as highly prioritized by parents. Parents understand effective communication as a way to exchange information with their children, promote mutual understanding, ensure good relationships in the family, promote child protection, find solutions to problems, and to ensure obedience from their children.

› The majority of parents considered child abuse to consist of sexual and physical forms of abuse, whereas neglect and verbal abuse were less likely to be understood as forms of child abuse.

› Parents perceived that child protection methods included: providing children with advice on how to protect themselves; providing children with warmth; sharing information with children about abuse and techniques to deal with abusers; keeping dangerous objects away from children; and having older children take care of younger siblings when parents were not at home.

› Parents' understanding of child development largely focused on physical development, including changes related to puberty, and less on emotional and social development.

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[1] MoWA training materials on positive parenting were used by ICS-SP.

Practices of positive parenting/behavioural change

Listed below are the positive parenting practices of parents or caregivers, which aligned with knowledge and attitudes gained from the ICS-SP training programme.

› Parents are responding to children's misbehaviour by providing children with guidance and encouragement. They appear to have reduced their use of violence and physical discipline but may still be using harsh verbal discipline. Many parents are also using rewards as an incentive to reinforce children's positive behaviours.

› Parents are meeting their responsibility to provide children with basic needs and support in the form of guidance towards success in school, as well as in society. The provision of social and emotional support was often less prioritized by parents in the study.

› Parents place high expectations on their children to obey their orders and advice. These expectations of obedience may sometimes result in hostile punishment (particularly verbal discipline) when children do not obey, or when they make mistakes. Parents and children communicated with mutual understanding and active listening. Children reported gaining confidence and comfort in communicating with parents to help them cope with distressed feelings or problems. However, children stated that they could not discuss their wrongdoings and mistakes with parents because their parents previously responded aggressively to their mistakes, including scolding and blaming.

Child protection is mainly done through advice-oriented communication, particularly with older children. They generally place more emphasis on informing their daughters about sexual abuse while guiding their sons to respond to social pressure and physical abuse, including drug use and bullying. Parents also act to protect younger children by keeping them under close supervision and having adults look after them.

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BACKGROUND

This section sets out the background to the study, particularly in the Cambodian context, related to positive parenting, reducing violence against children and preventing family separation, as well as the key stakeholders of the study.

The 2013 Cambodia Violence Against Children Survey found that more than half of Cambodian children had experienced physical abuse, and roughly one quarter had experienced emotional abuse, where their parents or primary caregiver were often the abusers. Parents or caregivers are common perpetrators of physical and emotional violence and neglect, and they lack the capacity and resources to protect their children from violence perpetrated by others, including sexual abuse and economic exploitation. One in two children experienced violence while growing up and this had a powerful and profound impact on their lives and hopes for the future, as well as on their families, communities and society at large (MoWA, 2013).

The issue of violence against children is further exacerbated by the prevalence of family separation in Cambodia, mainly through parental migration. A national-level survey (IOM et al., 2019) with 1,459 Cambodian households highlights the disadvantages in health and psychological wellbeing among left-behind children in migrant households in Cambodia. These disadvantages include children's resilience, children's social behaviour and emotional problems, disorganized parent-child relationships, and children's negative attachment to their caregivers. Migration is one of several factors that contributes to a

child's entry to institutional care. Children of migrant parents who live in residential care institutions often experience many challenging situations in their family lives, including extreme poverty, domestic violence, parental alcoholism, and caregiving instability. Family poverty and instability, and educational opportunities available in residential care institutions are notable factors leading to children being placed in residential care (IOM et al., 2019).

Positive Parenting Programme in Cambodia

Responding to studies on the benefits of positive parenting, as well as the Government of Cambodia's commitment to preventing violence against children, reducing residential childcare[2] and promoting family-based alternative care options, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) worked with stakeholders, including UNICEF and ICS-SP, to develop a national Positive Parenting Strategy 2017-2021. It was launched in December 2017. Positive parenting, which is inclusive of equality and equity, means encouraging mothers, fathers and caregivers to collectively change behaviours and practices that have negative impacts. In particular, it encourages and provides both girls and boys with equal opportunities to receive education, care, nurturing and empowerment, and to equip them with the capacity and abilities to participate in the development of the family, community and society. Based on this strategy, MoWA engaged a core group of stakeholders to design and implement a positive parenting

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2 The Cambodia Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children 2017-2021. Positive Parenting is a core programme under Strategic Area 2 on prevention.

programme that aims to build safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for every child, and thus prevent violence against children in Cambodia.

Improving Cambodia's Society through Skillful Parenting

This section contains summary information on the object of the study, which is the Positive Parenting Programme implemented by ICS-SP since 2017.

Over the past four years, UNICEF Cambodia has funded local organization ICS-SP to deliver positive parenting support for parents and caregivers. The Positive Parenting Strategy aims to contribute towards achieving the overarching goal of ending violence against children and preventing unnecessary family separation in Cambodia, with a focus on the home environment. ICS-SP provides parenting support for all parents or caregivers, including the challenges faced in bringing up their children. The programme includes components for eliminating negative social norms that are tied to violence against children, such as biases due to a child's gender identity, sexual orientation or disability, deep-rooted beliefs about negative/harsh child discipline, and unaffectionate parent-child relations, as well as unrealistic expectations about children's behaviour and development.

Following MoWA's Positive Parenting Strategy 2017-2021, positive parenting support is provided through multiple levels of increasing intensity of parenting support, in accordance with the target group's level of risk for harsh, poor and/or negative parenting.

› **Level 1:** Universal parenting support to promote knowledge and awareness on positive parenting

› **Level 2:** Group-based parenting support to change parenting behaviour among sub-groups of parents or caregivers at risk of violence or family separation

› **Level 3:** Specialized parenting support in response to violence and family separation.

Figure 1: Multi-level strategy for positive parenting
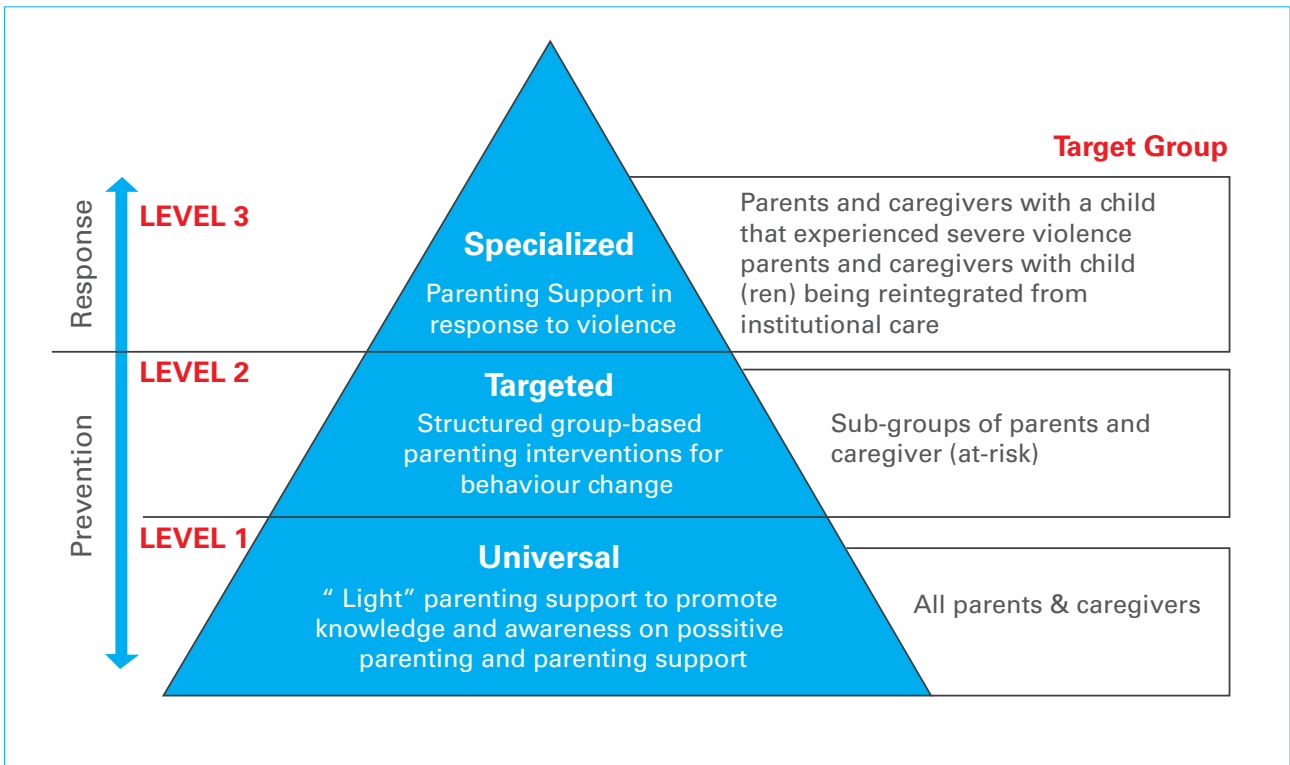
ICS-SP has followed the implementation of Level 1 and Level 2 interventions by applying three main strategies: 1) Provision of technical assistance for MoWA to develop positive parenting toolkits, 2) Capacity development (training-of-trainers) for national and sub-national workforces, and 3) Direct delivery of positive parenting Level 1 and Level 2 for parents or caregivers. ICS-SP addresses six core areas of positive parenting while providing positive parenting training:

Table 1: Core areas of positive parenting

	Core area	Content and rationale
1	**Parental wellbeing** Parental wellbeing equal to child wellbeing, stress and anger management	Parental wellbeing including mental health is key for positive parenting and violence prevention. Promote inconsistency in child discipline and response.
2	**Family communication** Parent-child communication Family communication (communication on sex and sexuality)	Understand the importance of active listening and effective communication Include communication on issues of sex and sexuality with youth Promote effective communication between parents and children.
3	**Child Protection** Understanding violence prevention and response to violence Children's self-protection/coping Prevention of family separation	Parents or caregivers are part of protecting children from abuse/violence from outside and inside home settings Strengthen knowledge, skills and confidence to prevent incidents of violence and abuse.
4	**Positive Discipline** Punishment vs. discipline Providing warmth and structure Challenging behaviour Problem solving	Understanding the difference between punishment and discipline Basic principles of positive discipline Age-specific factsheets on challenging behaviours in boys and girls.
5	**Child Development** Areas of child development Milestones and positive parenting at different developmental stages Gender differences	Understanding different areas of child development Basic knowledge on different stages of child development for boy and girls.
6	**Roles and Responsibilities** Roles and responsibilities Fatherhood Values and morality Short- and long-term goals Parenting styles	Understanding the important role of parents and family-based care Responsibilities of motherhood and fatherhood Role of children and moral responsibility in Cambodian culture.

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The Positive Parenting Programme is implemented by MoWA and ICS-SP through a phased approach, starting with two or three communes per province in 2018 where Level 1 and Level 2 parenting sessions were initiated, then expanded to an average of seven communes in each of six provinces in early 2020. So far, there are 26 master trainers, represented by eight governmental ministries, and 150 sub-national workforce members trained by ICS-SP. Since 2016, approximately 2,700 parents or caregivers have been equipped with knowledge and skills on positive parenting, and 4,800 children are benefitting from Level 1 and Level 2 positive parenting activities through ICS-SP. Additionally 7,903 parents or caregivers have been reached through peer-to-peer education.

Figure 2: Theory of change diagram

Postive Parenting to End Violence Against Children Theory of Change

Strategy Action Plan Impact

Girls and boys including adolescents, living with families and outside of family Care, are free from violence and exploitation (and threat of violence/exploitation) in their homes, including during humanitarian situations

Outcome C2 (Long-term)

- Parents/Caregivers are able to meet children's physical emotional cognitive and spiritual needs
- Parents/caregivers and children have safe, stable and nurturing relationships
- Children live in a non-violent home and (gender inclusive environment
- Children are protected from unnecessary separation and institutionalization

Outcome C1 (Long-term)

- Parents and children engage in effective and open communication, including communication about topics such as sex, sexual reproductive health and rights
- Parents have realistic expectations about children's behavior and development
- Parents adopt positive, non-violent parenting styles and disciplining methods
- Parents/caregivers provide children with an affectionate, responsive, non-discriminatory and supportive environment, inclusive of gender equity
- Parents/caregivers identify, respond to and prevent violence against children

Outputs

- Parents/caregivers have increased knowledge about child protection, including skills on preventing, reducing and responding to child abuse when it occurs.
- Parents have increased knowledge about the effects of harmful norms and beliefs, poor/negative parenting, including violence, for child development
- Parents/caregivers have improved knowledge of positive parent-child communication channel and practices
- Parents/caregivers have increased knowledge of positive techniques for reintegrating children from institutional care into families
- Parents/caregivers have increased knowledge on stress and anger management
- Parents increased their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to their children
- Parents/caregivers have knowledge about the basic principles of positive discipline and age-specific problem-solving techniques
- Parents/caregivers have improved confidence in managing challenging child behavior
- Parents and caregivers have increased knowledge about effective care/parenting techniques for children who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence

Programmatic activities

LEVEL 1: Universal "light" parenting support for positive parenting
- Nationwide media and communication strategy to disseminate key messages on positive parenting
- Build capacity among those who work with children and their families to provide parents and caregivers with information and advice on positive parenting

LEVEL 2: Targeted group-based parenting interventions
A CSO partnership to implement culturally appropriate, structured group parenting interventions targeted at sub-groups of parents and caregivers at risk of violence pilot new public service delivery models for parenting support by the government at community level

LEVEL 3: Specialized parenting support
Specialized parenting support, either one-on-one or group-based, as part of child protection response mechanisms delivered by MoSVY district social workers and CSOs

"Level 3 Specialized parenting support is still under development. Boxes in grey represent those activities, outputs, and outcomes where results are not expected at the time of the study.

Assumptions: 1) Strategy focuses on addressing negative, poor and/or harsh parenting–with violence at the most extrem, however, acknowledges that many parents and caregivers in Cambodia do raise their Children in a positive way, often under difficult circumstances, 2) While positive parenting is a key strategy to prevent and reduce gender gaps and violence against children, there are other factors contributing to violence against Children that cannot be addressed through this strategy. The strategy should therefore be implemented as part of a broader framework to end violence against children.

Theory of change

The theory of change for the ICS-SP Positive Parenting Programme is depicted below. It was developed by the evaluation team at UNICEF Cambodia, in the absence of an official theory of change or results framework within the ICS-SP programme strategy. This study, structured around the theory of change, will assess whether positive parenting programmes currently implemented by ICS-SP support the flow from activities to outputs and outcomes per the proposed theory of change.

In brief, the goal of the Positive Parenting Programme is considered to be girls and boys living in home environments that are free from violence and exploitation and without the unnecessary threat of family separation. This goal is more likely to be realized when parents or caregivers have increased knowledge of and confidence in positive parenting techniques. These include: positive discipline, parent-child communication, child development, reducing harmful traditional practices, child protection, positive reintegration strategies for children who have been in institutional care, and effective parenting techniques for children who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence. With increased knowledge and confidence in positive parenting, parents have enhanced their ability to act in ways that support their children's healthy development and wellbeing. Changes in the behaviour of parents or caregivers can help support the development of safe and nurturing home conditions, which protect children from violence and exploitation in their homes, and from unnecessary separation from their families.

Summarized through an 'if–then' logic, this theory of change has both mid- and long-term outcomes for reaching the programme's overarching goal of preventing violence against children in the home environment:

1. **Mid-term:** IF parents or caregivers have increased knowledge of AND confidence in positive parenting skills, THEN they will practice positive parenting behaviours towards their children at home (e.g., positive discipline, effective and open communication, realistic expectations, identification and reporting of violence, etc.).

2. **Long-term:** Based on this knowledge and on behavioural changes, the theory of change proposes that IF parents practice positive parenting behaviours towards their children, THEN they provide their children with the necessary conditions for safe and healthy child development.

3. **Broader impact level:** IF children are ensured with safe and positive conditions in their home, THEN they will be free from violence and exploitation (and the threat of violence and exploitation) in their homes.

STUDY PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine ICS-SP's current progress towards reaching the Positive Parenting Programme's intended results for children whose parents had participated in the programme. This study focuses on measuring outputs and outcomes related to knowledge, attitudes and behaviours among the beneficiaries of Level 1 and 2 programmes implemented by ICS-SP. The results will be used to provide ICS-SP and other implementers of the programme with recommendations on how to adapt its content and interventions to any contextual challenges, and factors that may influence the pace and scope of behaviour change among beneficiaries. Additional study recommendations will provide solutions for overcoming barriers to reaching the programme's long-term outcomes, as well as to support the scale up of the programme in Cambodia.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the extent to which the positive parenting modality is reaching its envisioned outcomes and to better understand which aspects of its design and approach are working, or that require improvement in future. Specific attention will be given to the impact on behavioural change (mid-term Outcome C1 as seen in the theory of change in Figure 2) among parents or caregivers to date. The study will assess whether knowledge and confidence that parents or caregivers gain from attending ICS-SP's positive parenting sessions and using the toolkits have translated into behaviours and practices that align with positive parenting, as well as the prevention of violence against children and unnecessary family separation. The study aims to identify barriers to change in order to recommend additional strategies and solutions.

2. To determine if programme activities, outputs and outcomes adequately account for the differentiated needs and requirements of girls, women, boys, men, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations.

3. To assess the sustainability of results of the Positive Parenting Programme. Specifically, this study will determine if positive parenting has a long-term effect on those who have received the training. It will also measure the level of positive parenting knowledge and confidence among participants who received Positive Parenting Level 1 or Level 2 at least six months prior to the start date of this study.

Scope

This study will cover the following geographic, thematic and temporal areas:

> Geographic: data collection will aim to cover as many sites as logistically possible where ICS-SP's Level 1 and 2 Positive Parenting Programme is being implemented currently, within the timeline of the study: Phnom Penh municipality, Kandal, Battambang, and

Siem Reap. However, results and findings can be applied to all implementing sites (where relevant) and can be used as a basis for additional regional assessments.

› Thematic: the focus of this study is positive parenting in Cambodia as it relates to the broader issues of violence against children, child protection, gender-based violence in the home, and the unnecessary separation of children from their families.

› Temporal: the Positive Parenting Programme in Cambodia is implemented through two programme cycles. MoWA developed a national Positive Parenting Strategy 2017-2021, launched in December 2017. In 2019, UNICEF and the Royal Government of Cambodia signed a Country Programme Document for 2019-2023. This study will focus on the activities, outputs and outcomes that have occurred since the launch of ICS-SP's Positive Parenting Programme in 2017.

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METHODOLOGY

This study collected quantitative and qualitative data focusing on the impact of positive parenting interventions on behavioural changes among parents or caregivers who had participated in ICS-SP's positive parenting sessions. The study mainly focused on ICS-SP, which implemented the project under UNICEF funding from 2017-2019. As children are involved as part of the study population, an ethical review and approval was sought from a UNICEF approved ethical review board. Additionally, written and active consent from both parent and guardian as well as the adolescent were ensured before proceeding with the survey. Additionally, enumerators were trained in how to best engage with children during data collection and were trained on referral pathways in case of identification of cases of exploitation or abuse. The research questions guiding the methodology of this study are in Table 2.

Table 2:   Study questions

Main theme	Research questions

Knowledge, attitudes and reported practices of positive parenting	What impact does the Positive Parenting Programme at Level 1 and Level 2 have on beneficiary parents or caregivers with respect to the following:
	
	 1. Knowledge level on key issues in positive parenting and the prevention of violence against children?
	
	 2. Level of confidence in providing positive parenting and preventing violence against children?
	
	 3. Attitudes towards the positive parenting module/concept and the prevention of violence against children?
	
	 4. Use of positive parenting strategies and techniques[3]
	
	    a. Which positive parenting techniques/practices do parents or caregivers report using most frequently in their day-to-day interactions with children?
	
	    b. What are parents or caregivers' reported changes in parenting techniques following the positive parenting sessions?
	
	 5. Have participants' knowledge, confidence, attitudes and practices around positive parenting changed over time?

Positive parenting in practice	1. How do parents or caregivers implement positive parenting in their home environments? 2. How have parent-child relations changed as a result of advanced knowledge on positive parenting? 3. How have the home environments of children changed as a result of their parents or caregivers completing positive parenting training? 4. What (if any) harmful norms/practices/expectations regarding children, parent-child relations, and parenting do participants of Positive Parenting Level 1 and Level 2 still regard as acceptable behaviour towards their children?
Social impact of positive parenting	1. What are the perspectives/attitudes of community members and/or family members towards positive parenting–as a general strategy as well as an ICS-SP-facilitated intervention–for child protection and the prevention of violence against children?
Gender, equity and inclusion	2. What are the differences in parenting practices of mothers and fathers of various ages and the parents of girls, boys and children with disabilities? 3. How do gender, age and other differences correlate with the knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents or caregivers towards positive parenting and the prevention of violence against children?
Monitoring and evaluation tools	1. What are ICS-SP's current methods for measuring the results of positive parenting interventions for: 1) beneficiary parents or caregivers; 2) children of beneficiary parents or caregivers; 3) target communities where ICS-SP is implementing the positive parenting programme? 2. Based on evidence gathered from this study, what kind of information and data validates the achievement of output and outcome level result statements?[4]

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[3] This study will first measure the reported use of positive parenting strategies and techniques by parents or caregivers who have completed Level 1 and Level 2 positive parenting sessions. It will later verify participants' claims of reported use through context-based questions in focus group discussions, which will provide results approximating actual use.

[4] Answers to this study question will support the development of indicators.

Data collection methods

The study used three methods for data collection: pre- and post-test, knowledge, attitudes, behaviour and practices (KAPB) surveys, and focus group discussions (FGD) to gather information from beneficiary parents, children and community members on knowledge and behavioural changes observed among parents or caregivers who are beneficiaries of ICS-SP's Positive Parenting Programme. This study also involved the participation of children and community members of the beneficiary groups. It was done to assess the influence of the programme on home environments, as well as on the community. Data collected from these three main methods were synthesized and analysed for relevant themes and patterns, which will be discussed further in the Findings section.

Pre- and post-tests of ICS-SP's positive parenting training and recent follow-up tests

Participants

There were 973 participants (44 male) in the pre- and post-tests from 2017 to 2020, and 158 who participated in the follow-up test during this study. This included parents/caregivers who are ICS-SP beneficiaries as well as community members and participants of the control group.

Measurement and procedure

The administration of pre- and post-tests took place before and right after each session of positive parenting training. Participants in the FGDs for this study were re-administered the same test at the beginning of the FGD. The test aimed to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices of positive parenting among the beneficiaries. It was a 14-question test for pre- and post-testing of ICP-SP's training, separately. The scoring method was 0 = incorrect answer, and 1= correct answer.

Knowledge, attitudes, behaviour and practices (KAPB)

Participants

In 2017, parents or caregivers and children participated in face-to-face interviews as part of the KAPB survey process done by ICS-SP. The 44 parents and 15 children were selected from 200 families in Khan Mean Chey and Khan Por Senchey of Phnom Penh, who had received positive parenting training delivered by ICS-SP during the KAPB survey. The majority of parents or caretakers (64 per cent) were aged between 41 and 50 years, while 36 per cent were aged between 20 and 40 years. Results of the survey were used in this current study as one source of data.

Measurement and procedure

The KAPB survey was conducted in 2017 to understand the knowledge, skills and practices of parenting among parents or caregivers, and to address the current challenges of parents in parenting. The survey aimed to identify changes in parenting practices after implementing the positive parenting toolkits. The KAPB survey used mixed methods of research (quantitative and qualitative).

Survey (follow-up test) during FGDs

Participants

A total of 190 participants did surveys during FGDs. Of these, 138 were ICP-SP beneficiaries (92 mothers, 14 fathers and 32 children). There were two control groups with 21 parents/caregivers, and their participation was used as one method of determining observed changes in knowledge and attitudes. Additionally, 33 family/community members were assessed to provide verifying information on positive parenting in the community, and to assess the broader social impacts of the programme.

The control groups were selected from the commune and district where ICS-SP's beneficiaries were living.

Measurement and procedure

Beneficiary parents, community members and the control group completed a 'survey' that was a replication of the pre- and post-tests administered during the training. The use of this replicated test as a survey in 2020 helped assess the sustainability of knowledge and attitudes among parents or caregivers since their participation in the trainings. The survey was based on the same 14-question tests used during the ICP-SP training. A different survey was used for the children's FGD. Both were multiple choice and participants could pick more than one answer. A descriptive analysis was conducted to analyse the survey data during the FGDs. This report assesses the survey results in terms of percentage of correct answers, while also looking individually at the participants' selected answers. This provides an insight into parents' perspectives and attitudes towards various positive parenting topics.

Focus group discussions

Participants

Through a random selection of ICS-SP beneficiaries for Level 1 and Level 2 positive parenting training, a total of 192 beneficiaries (92 mothers, 14 fathers, 33 family/community members, 21 control group, and 32 children) were invited to take part in FGDs. These participants came from communes in Siem Reap, Battambang, Kandal and Phnom Penh where ICS-SP has conducted trainings. The study recruited 21 non-beneficiaries as a control group from the same communes or districts as beneficiaries (see Table 3 for a breakdown of FGD participants).

Table 3:   Categories and numbers of participants in FGDs

Beneficiaries	Phnom Penh	Kandal	Battambang	Siem Reap	Total
Mothers of children 12-18 years	5	10	8	9	32
Mothers of children 6-12 years	4	7	8	8	27
Mothers of children under 6 years	7	8	8	10	33
Fathers of children of all ages	1	3	4	6	14
Family members/community members	5	9	11	8	33
Children 12-18 years old	5	7	10	10	32
Control group: parents or caregivers	6	5	5	5	21
Total	**33**	**49**	**54**	**56**	**192**

Measurement and procedure

FGDs aimed to determine how the Positive Parenting Programme delivered by ICS-SP at Levels 1 and 2 resulted in changes in parenting behaviours, confidence and attitudes. A total of 28 FGDs were conducted: 24 with beneficiaries and four with non-beneficiaries, with a maximum of 10 to 11 people per group. In each FGD, there was one facilitator and one notetaker. Each FGD took between 90 and 120 minutes.

Limitations

This study had several limitations, including the sampling method and sample size, and challenges in the data collection process.

The sample size is relatively small in each category of parents or caregivers, as well as the control group, especially in the surveys during FGDs. The FGD was able to collect information from parents or caregivers of beneficiaries or children from different age groups (under 6 years, 6-12 and 12-18).

Participants in the KAPB survey and FGDs were not randomly selected. Therefore, the results of this study are less likely to be generalized to overall beneficiaries of ICS-SP. Despite these limitations, the findings from this study may still provide some information on specific patterns in behavioural and knowledge change among the beneficiaries, which gives insight into the programme's outputs and outcomes to date.

The following field data collection challenges might also impact the accuracy of information and answers gathered from respondents.

› Limited knowledge of respondents in understanding the survey/FGDs questions, which required facilitators/interviewers to spend more time explaining; this resulted in time constraints

› The survey took longer than expected (between 1.5 and 2 hours). It was challenging for respondents to stay focused during the discussions.

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FINDINGS

This section draws on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to provide evidence on potential changes and impacts stemming from ICS-SP's Positive Parenting Programme. The analysis reflects the research objectives, using the programme's theory of change as a guiding analytical framework. The results of this report show the effects of the ICS-SP programme on the knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviours of parents or caregivers who participated in positive parenting activities.

The results are presented below in four main categories: 1) knowledge and attitudes, 2) practices of positive parenting or behavioural change, 3) home environments, and 4) challenges and coping strategies.

Knowledge and attitudes on positive parenting

Knowledge on positive parenting methods

Positive discipline and parenting techniques

The KAPB survey shows more than half of the participants (55 per cent) considered harsh conduct unacceptable in child discipline; 46 per cent strongly disagreed that parents should immediately hit a child when he or she did not stop do something after the parents said "No"; and 72 per cent of KAPB participants noted that when children misbehaved, parents should explain reasons why children should stop the bad behaviour.

The pre-tests from the ICS-SP training showed that 60 per cent of parents provided correct answers on how to deal with children when they were upset, which increased to 82 per cent in post-tests. Those who participated in follow-up tests during the FGDs scored 95 per cent correct answers to the question about positive discipline, which suggests that their knowledge was relatively sustained since the training.
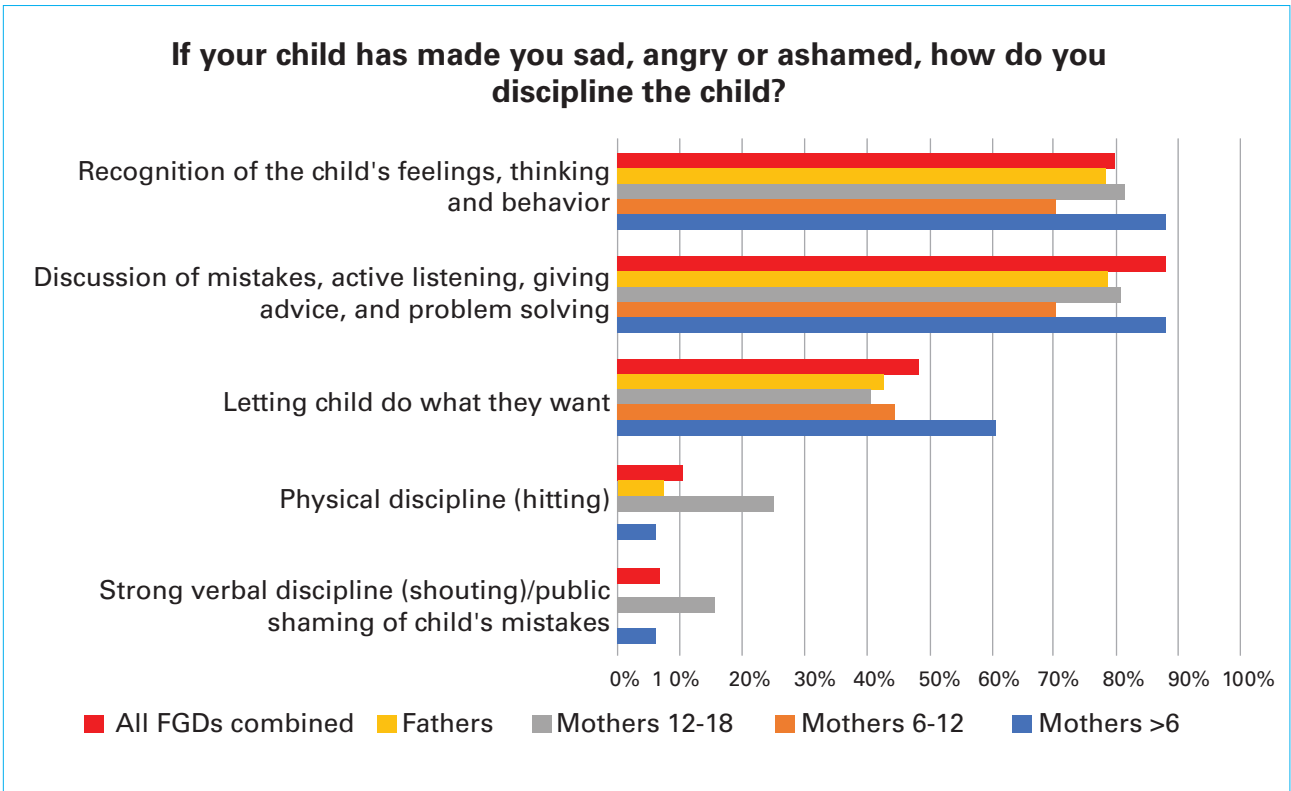
The more specific distribution of results from the follow-up test question on positive discipline during FGDs indicated that parents had an understanding of positive parenting methods towards children. When asked what they did if their children made them sad, angry or ashamed, mothers and fathers with children across all age groups reported that they would respond to their children's behaviours through actions that correspond with ICS-SP training materials on positive discipline. These included gently talking to children about their mistakes; discussions to find a solution; listening without blame; giving advice; and recognizing children's feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

Few respondents agreed that verbal or physical discipline was acceptable, and those parents who agreed with the use of this type of discipline were more likely to be mothers of children aged 12–18 years. A significant percentage of parents also said that they let the child do what he/she wanted, suggesting that parents may need more support to follow ICS-SP's recommendation for parents to set limitations and guidelines when practicing positive discipline (see Figure 3).

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Figure 3: Results of tests during FGDs on child discipline tactics

If your child has made you sad, angry or ashamed, how do you discipline the child?

- Recognition of the child's feelings, thinking and behavior
- Discussion of mistakes, active listening, giving advice, and problem solving
- Letting child do what they want
- Physical discipline (hitting)
- Strong verbal discipline (shouting)/public shaming of child's mistakes

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ All FGDs combined   ■ Fathers   ■ Mothers 12-18   ■ Mothers 6-12   ■ Mothers >6

Consistently, positive parenting techniques, including affirmative discipline, family communication and providing children with warmth, care and guidance for problem solving were takeaway tactics and knowledge that parents gained as a result of the ICS-SP programme.

As shown in the selected quotes from the FGD (below), community members shared similar perspectives on child discipline, including positive tactics to deal with children's misconduct instead of using aggressive responses. They saw aggressive behaviour, such as shouting, as unacceptable parenting action. Many community members also indicated that communication and understanding was an important parenting tactic. This data suggests that social norms on positive discipline reflect positive discipline methods that are also being taught to ICS-SP's beneficiaries and may therefore support parents' use of positive discipline.

When children misbehave, parents have to talk to them gently.[5]

As a parent we shouldn't scold, fight and blame children. Because it's abusive behaviour.[6]

Parents should discuss with children about the problems and help find the solution. Because they (children) need parents' guidance to walk on the right path.[7]

Ideal parents should not shout or yell at children or use violence against children.[8]

Emotional support for children: warmth and care

During the pre- and post-tests from ICS-SP's training, 38 per cent of parents provided correct answers to the question about the importance of providing warmth. During the post-test training, this increased to 73 per cent. However, during the follow-up test, only 47 per cent of FGD participants gave correct answers. When asked about actions for showcasing warmth, test scores increased from 63 per cent to 82 per cent during the training, while during the follow-up 79 per cent provided correct answers. This suggests that parents may have sustained knowledge on actions of providing warmth, even while their knowledge on its importance may have faltered.

As seen in Figure 4, a large proportion of both mothers and fathers with children across all age groups agreed that actions showcasing warmth for children were those that involved basic needs provision, quality time in the proximity of the child, listening/attentiveness, and physical displays of affection. These were also actions that ICS-SP encourages parents to use to provide children with warmth in the positive discipline module. A large percentage of parents, particularly mothers of children
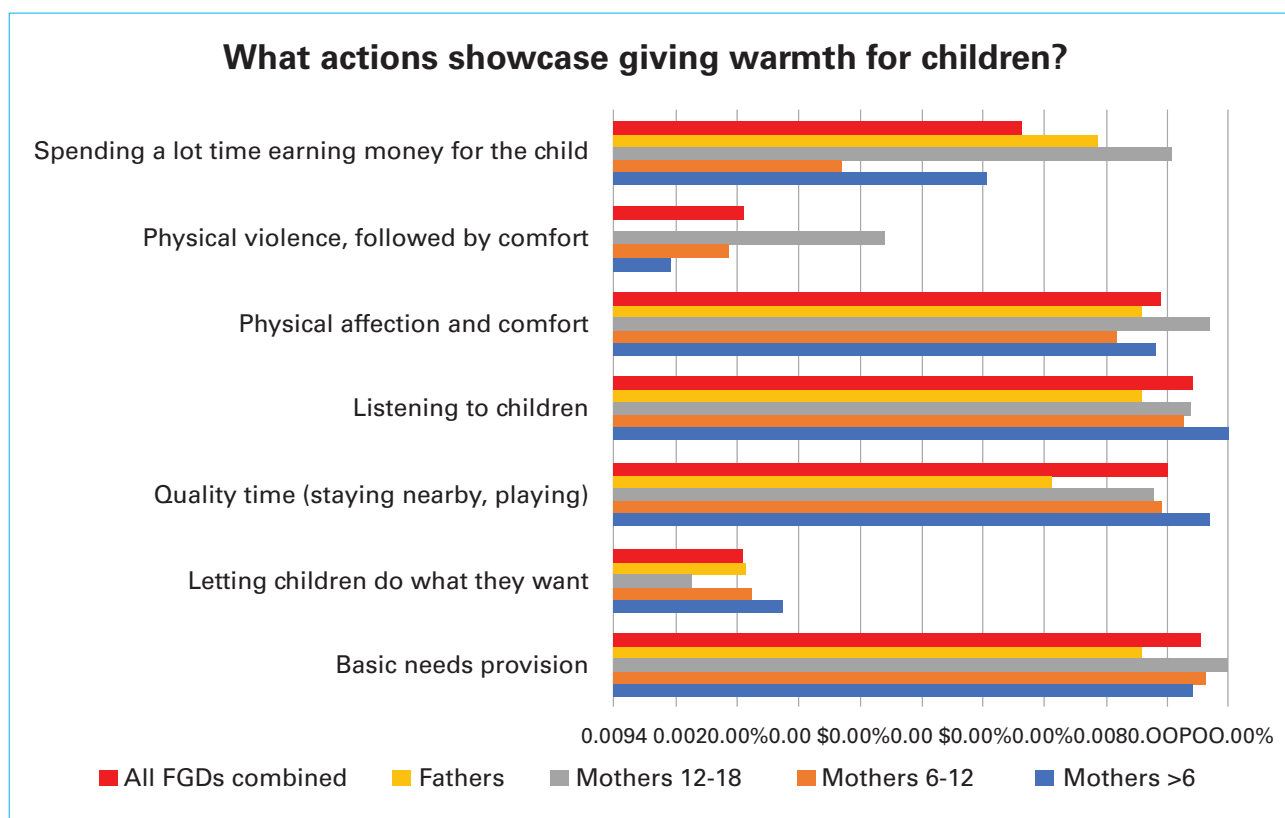
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[5]   A community member in Siem Reap.
[6]   A father in Siem Reap.
[7]   A community member in Kandal.
[8]   A community member in Siem Reap.

What actions showcase giving warmth for children?

- Spending a lot time earning money for the child
- Physical violence, followed by comfort
- Physical affection and comfort
- Listening to children
- Quality time (staying nearby, playing)
- Letting children do what they want
- Basic needs provision

0.0094 0.0020.00%0.00 $0.00%0.00 $0.00%0.00%0.0080.OOPOO.00%

■ All FGDs combined   ■ Fathers   ■ Mothers 12-18   ■ Mothers 6-12   ■ Mothers >6

aged 12–18 and fathers of all age groups, noted that warmth involved spending time earning money for the child. A noticeable number of mothers of children aged 12–18 said that they "hit, then comforted the child" to provide warmth. These latter two perspectives do not reflect the ICS-SP training suggestions.

In the FGDs with mothers, mothers of all ages discussed their belief that spending quality time with children was good for children. As shown in the quotes below, quality time is seen as a way for parents to comfort their children, enhance communication and reduce violence in the family. This corresponds with ICS-SP's recommendations in its training materials regarding the use of warmth towards children of all ages, and its importance as a positive discipline method.

I think spending more time with my children and comforting them when they feel upset about things is the right thing to do.[9]

I believe the use of violence is reducing in my family, and instead I talk to my children more and they listen to me. I think that the Positive Parenting Programme is helping me to learn how to raise my children properly and positively.[10]
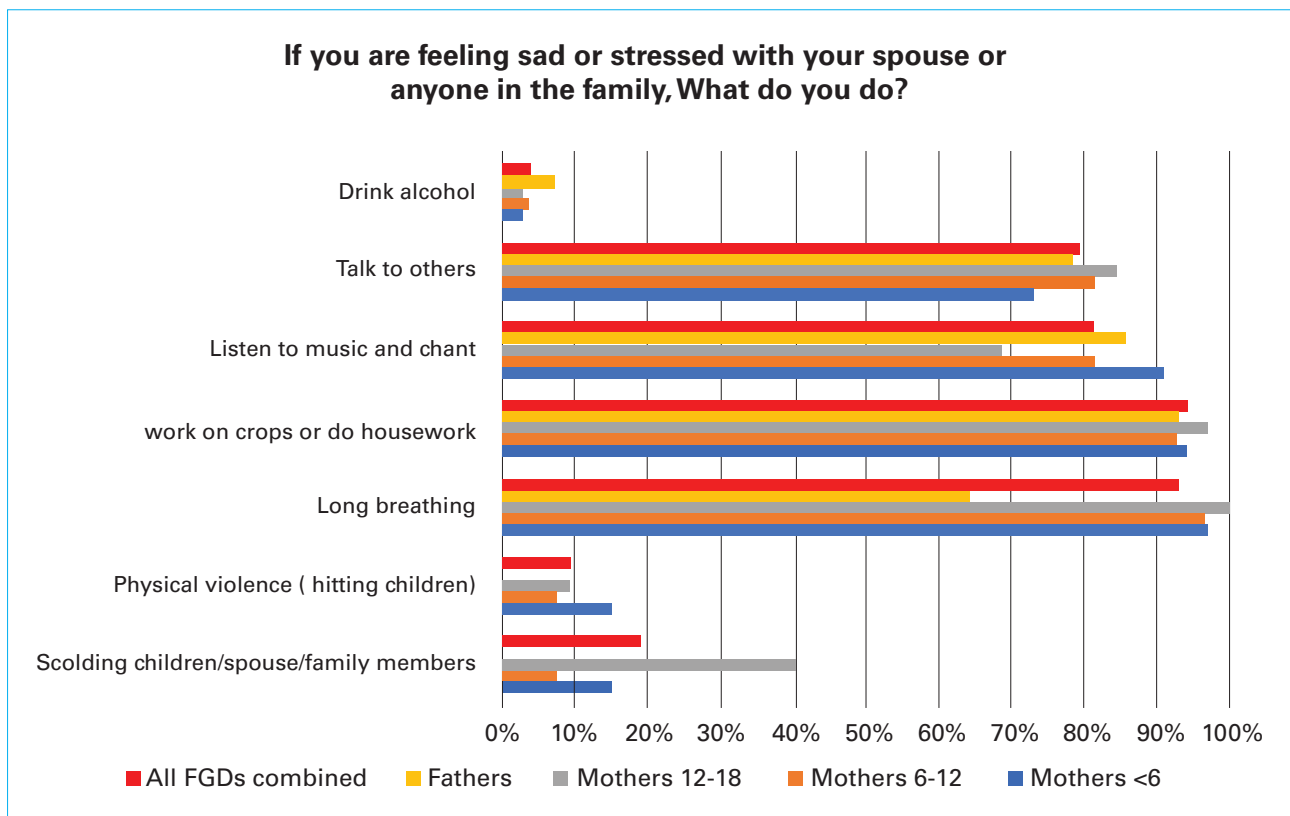
Stress and anger management

Of participants in the KAPB survey, 75 per cent strongly disagreed with the statement that: "Parents can relieve their stress by drinking alcohol, gambling, and hitting or yelling at their children." In the training pre-test, 63 per

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[9]   A parent of children aged 6-12 years, Siem Reap.
[10] A parent of a child under 6 years, Kandal.

If you are feeling sad or stressed with your spouse or anyone in the family, What do you do?

Legend: All FGDs combined · Fathers · Mothers 12-18 · Mothers 6-12 · Mothers <6

cent had correct answers to the question on stress management, while 86 per cent had correct answers during the post-test. In the FGD follow-up tests, 96 per cent of parents participating provided correct answers. This shows that knowledge gained on stress management through the ICS-SP training had increased, as well as been sustained.

As shown in Figure 5, generally parents participating in the FGD study were using stress management techniques that aligned with those promoted by ICS-SP's training materials. Overall, long breathing and doing

chores were viewed by the largest number of participants as good strategies for overcoming stress. However, it is important to note that 40 per cent of mothers of children 12–18 years who participated in this study agreed that scolding their children, spouse or family members was an appropriate response to stress or sadness.

Community members in the FGDs agreed that anger and stress should be managed by relaxing or using timeouts when parents were frustrated with their children's behaviour.

No matter how angry you are, just step back and relax. Because the children are too young to be able to do the work like us.[11]

Knowledge on roles and responsibilities as parents

With regard to parents' knowledge towards their roles and responsibilities as parents, according to the KAPB survey, 68.18 per cent of participating parents did not agree that a parent's role was only to provide accommodation, food and clothes, and send children to school, while 63.63 per cent strongly disagreed that parents should not need to teach children about communication, morality and discipline because children would learn this by themselves when they grew up.

Data from the follow-up test question on parents' roles and responsibilities during FGDs shows that the majority of parents saw their primary responsibility as providing material or basic needs for children. This includes food, health care, legal documents and schooling. All of these were recommended obligations for parents to their children in the ICS-SP training materials. The results showed that providing warmth and love was also considered an important responsibility for many parents, such as mothers of children aged 6–12 years (100 per cent) and fathers of children of all ages (100 per cent). A smaller percentage of mothers of children aged 12–18 years and mothers of children under 6 years appeared to perceive this as an important responsibility.

Some indications from the FGDs showed that parents perceived their roles and responsibilities as providing emotional and social support and guidance to their children.

I know that giving my love and affection to my child is important. By doing so, my children are willing to be more open with me.[12]

I want them to study... I want my children to grow up and have a good personality and get along well with other people. I think taking good care of them and giving love and affection is necessary.[13]

According to the quotes above, parents are aware of the importance of providing warmth and love for children and that it is important for children to be confident and to get along well with others. Through providing affection and warmth, parents see themselves as fulfilling the social and emotional needs of children.

Expectations of children

In the pre-test, 62 per cent of beneficiaries answered the question on children's responsibilities correctly, while 87 per cent answered correctly in the post-test. In the follow-up test, 84 per cent of parents had correct answers. This suggests relatively sustained knowledge on expectations of children since the training.

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[11] A community member, Siem Reap.
[12] A parent of children aged 6-12, Siem Reap.
[13] A parent of children aged 6-12, Siem Reap

According to the specific answers to this question in the follow-up test during FGDs, on average parents or caregivers across all age groups saw children's main obligation as telling parents when they were sad (96 per cent for all FGD groups). The majority of parents, both mothers and fathers, who have children across the age groups also expect children to take care of their own hygiene (95 per cent), get advice to protect themselves (95 per cent) and study (94 per cent). On average, across all FGD groups, 89 per cent of participating parents noted that they expected their children to obey their advice and help in the household. There were slight differences between each of the FGD groups

on these latter expectations, which can be seen in Figure 6. Overall, these expectations correspond to the recommended duties for children that ICS-SP promotes in the positive parenting training material.

Play and leisure are less likely to be mentioned as a child's duty across parents of all age groups, even though ICS-SP's training materials promote playing as a duty/activity for children, particularly for those under 6 years. A noticeable number of parents responded that they expected their children to help earn income and to not discuss any problems with their parents.

Figure 6: Results of tests during FGDs on parents' expectations of children
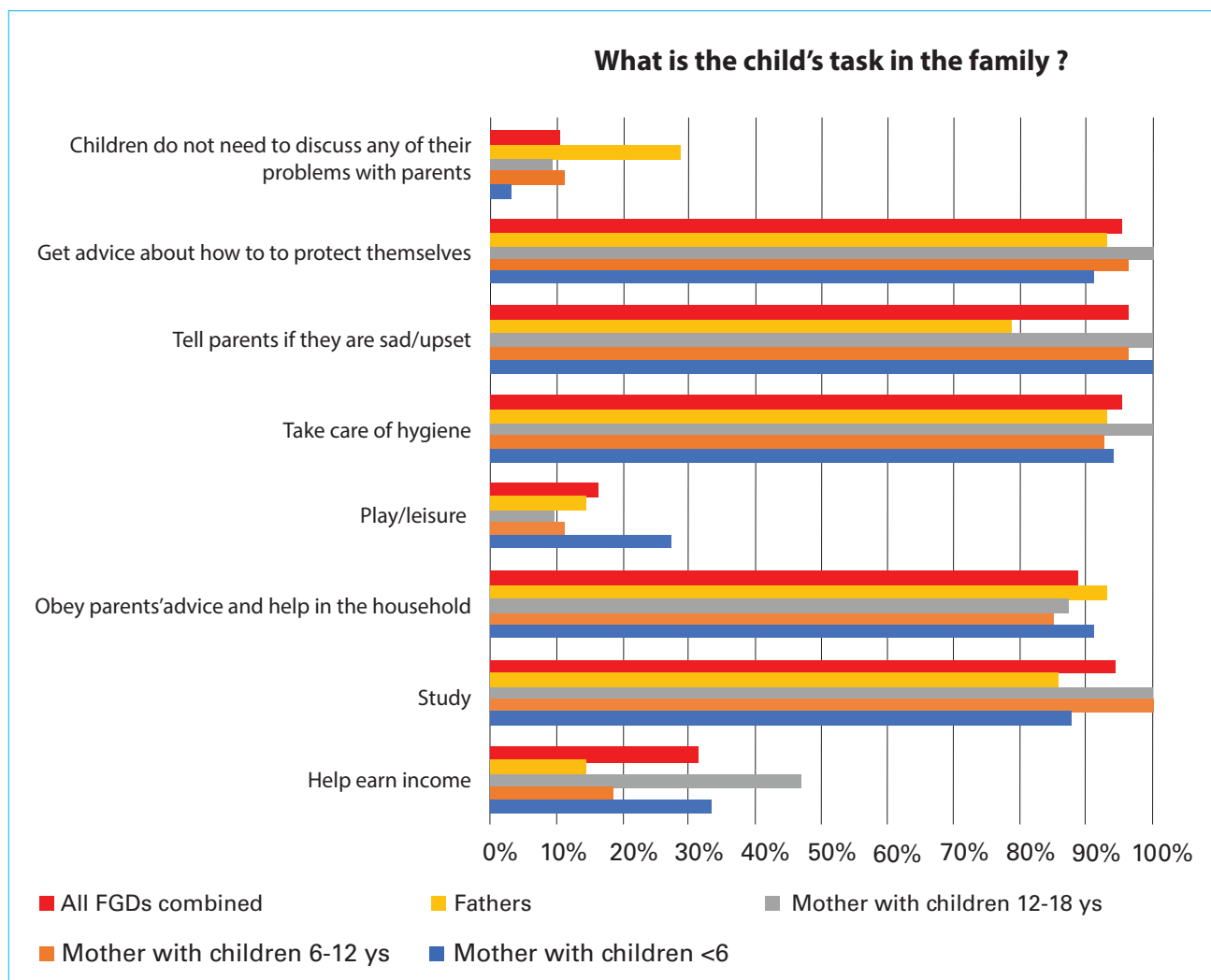
According to children's responses to the KAPB survey, being a good child means listening to parents and following their guidance and advice (64.7 per cent), supporting with housework (58.82 per cent), making parents happy (35.3 per cent), and being grateful to parents (29.41 per cent). As seen in the selected quotes below, in FGDs with children the majority of children confirmed that they listened to their parents' orders to help with household chores when parents needed support.

I listen to my parents' guidance by helping to wash dishes, cook rice and take care of young siblings.[14]

As children, we have to be obedient and do what our parents told us to do… so, I feed the cows and chickens. I wash the dishes and cook.[15]

According to the results of this study, parents tended to expect children to obey their guidance, advice and requests. However, play was mentioned less often as an expectation for children. In fact, in the KAPB survey, 41 per cent strongly agreed that playing was not useful for growing and developing.

Knowledge on parent-child communication

The majority of parents in the KAPB survey reported that parent-child communication was necessary for maintaining healthy family relationships and dealing with family problems and conflicts: 77 per cent of respondents believed in the necessity of family communication, 80 per cent believed that discussion was important in dealing with family problems and conflicts, 73 per cent reported that listening to children's issues was important, and 86 per cent noted that parents should explain to children when they did not want children to do something.
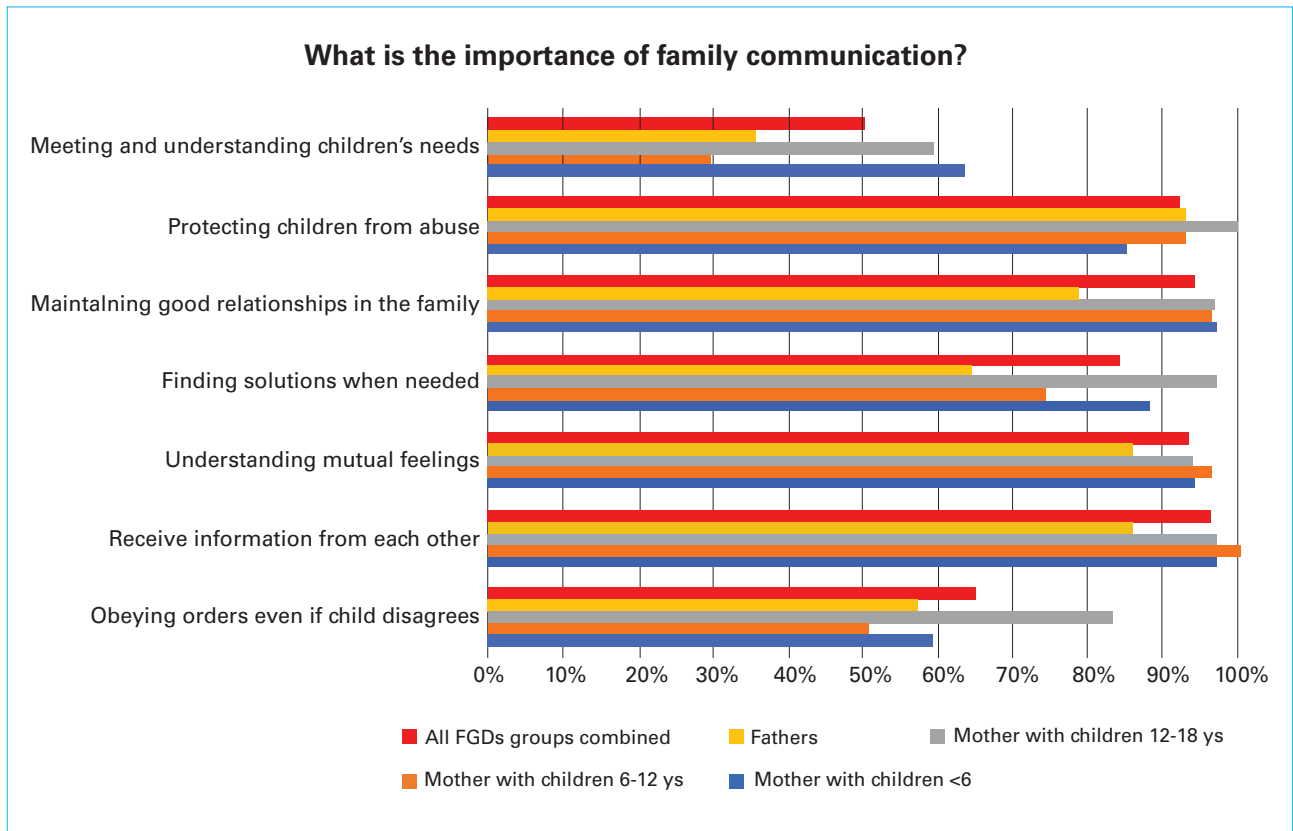
The pre- and post-tests from ICS-SP's training showed that 35 per cent of parents provided correct answers to the question on the importance of communication, which increased during the post-test training to 60 per cent. During the FGDs, 35 per cent answered this question correctly. The specific results from the test during FGDs illustrated that parents across all FGDs saw parent-child communication as a useful way to exchange information with their children (96 per cent), ensure good relationships in the family (94 per cent), promote mutual understanding (93 per cent), protect children from abuse (92 per cent), and find solutions to problems (84 per cent). As seen in Figure 7, a relatively high percentage of parents also viewed communication as a way to gain obedience from children. Only 50 per cent of parents across the FGD groups saw communication as a means for meeting and understanding children's needs.
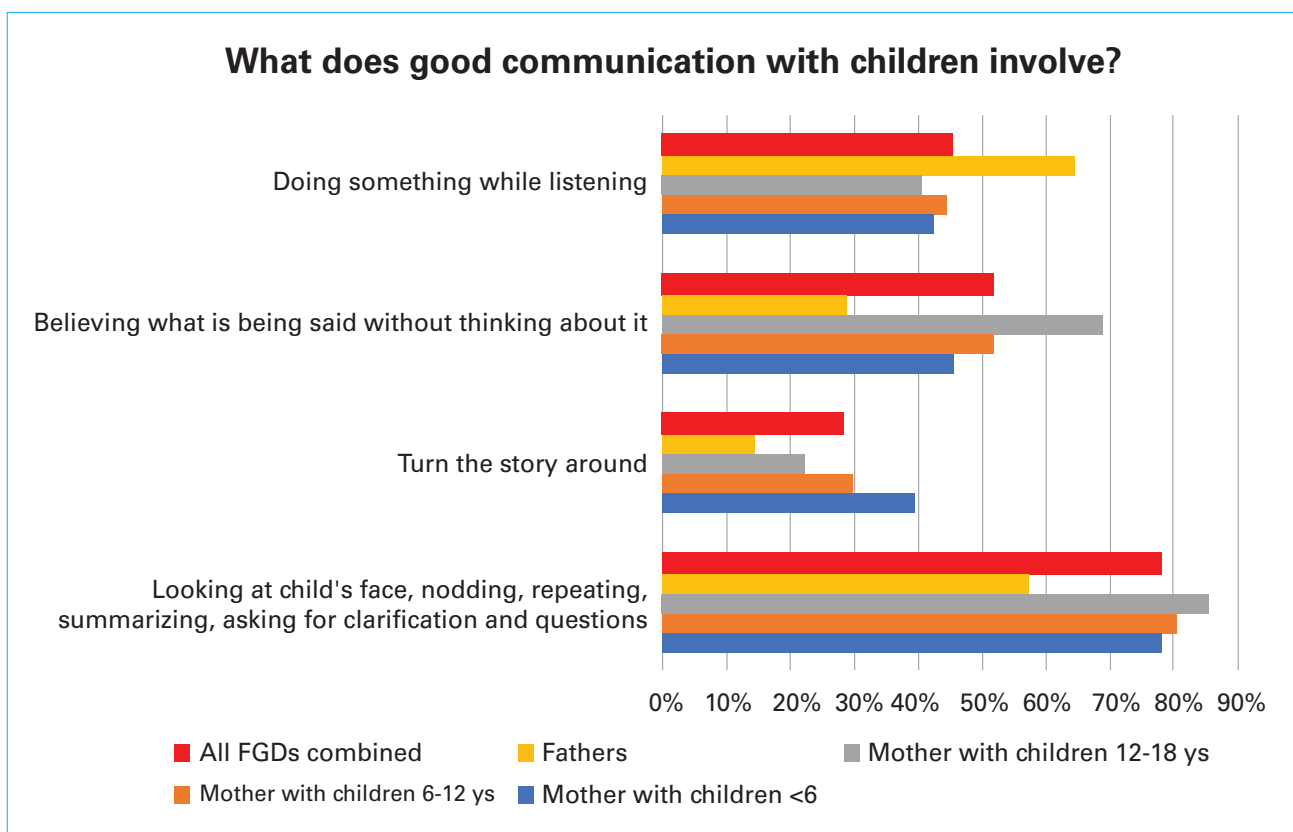
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14 Child aged 14-18 years, Siem Reap.
15 Child aged 14-18 years, Siem Reap.

Figure 7: Results of tests during FGDs on the importance of communication

What is the importance of family communication?

Legend:
- All FGDs groups combined
- Fathers
- Mother with children 12-18 ys
- Mother with children 6-12 ys
- Mother with children <6

Categories:
- Meeting and understanding children's needs
- Protecting children from abuse
- Maintaining good relationships in the family
- Finding solutions when needed
- Understanding mutual feelings
- Receive information from each other
- Obeying orders even if child disagrees

Figure 8: Results of tests during FGDs on effective communication methods

What does good communication with children involve?

Legend:
- All FGDs combined
- Fathers
- Mother with children 12-18 ys
- Mother with children 6-12 ys
- Mother with children <6

Categories:
- Doing something while listening
- Believing what is being said without thinking about it
- Turn the story around
- Looking at child's face, nodding, repeating, summarizing, asking for clarification and questions

The majority of parents during FGDs reported that effective listening included looking at their children's faces, nodding while listening, repeating words, summarizing, and asking questions for clarification (Figure 8). These tactics follow those promoted in ICS-SP training guidelines on effective communication. However, a significant number of parents still said that they thought it was ok to "**believe in what is being said without thinking**", which denotes inactive listening. A large number said "**doing something during conversation**" was acceptable.

Knowledge on child abuse

During the pre-test, 31 per cent of beneficiaries correctly answered the question on child abuse, which increased to 56 per cent in the post-test, after the training. In the follow-up test during FGDs, 45 per cent answered the question correctly. When looking at parents' responses to the test question about "**what

is considered child abuse**", data from the FGDs shows that many parents see child abuse as sexual, physical and verbal forms of abuse. However, when looking individually at the FGD groups, the data shows that a significant number of parents do not see these latter forms of action as child abuse. Many parents agreed that neglect (such as leaving children alone at home) and calling children names were also considered child abuse, but were less likely to be understood as a type of child abuse than sexual touch and physical violence. Interestingly, many parents, particularly mothers of older children (aged 12–18 years), stated that children helping in the household and earning income could be considered acts of child abuse (see Figure 9). The results on knowledge of child abuse show that parents may not understand the full range of types of child abuse that were instructed during ICS-SP's training.

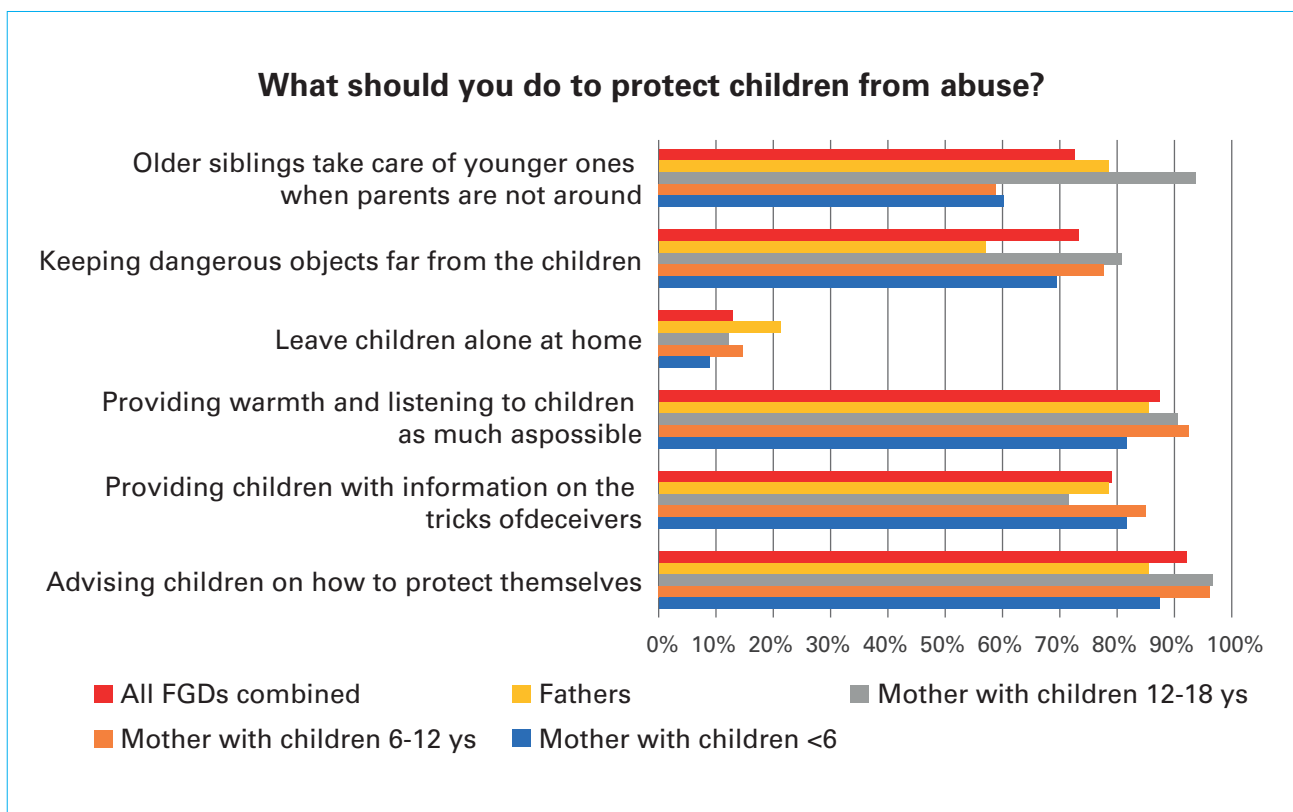**Figure 9: Results of tests during FGDs on knowledge of child abuse**
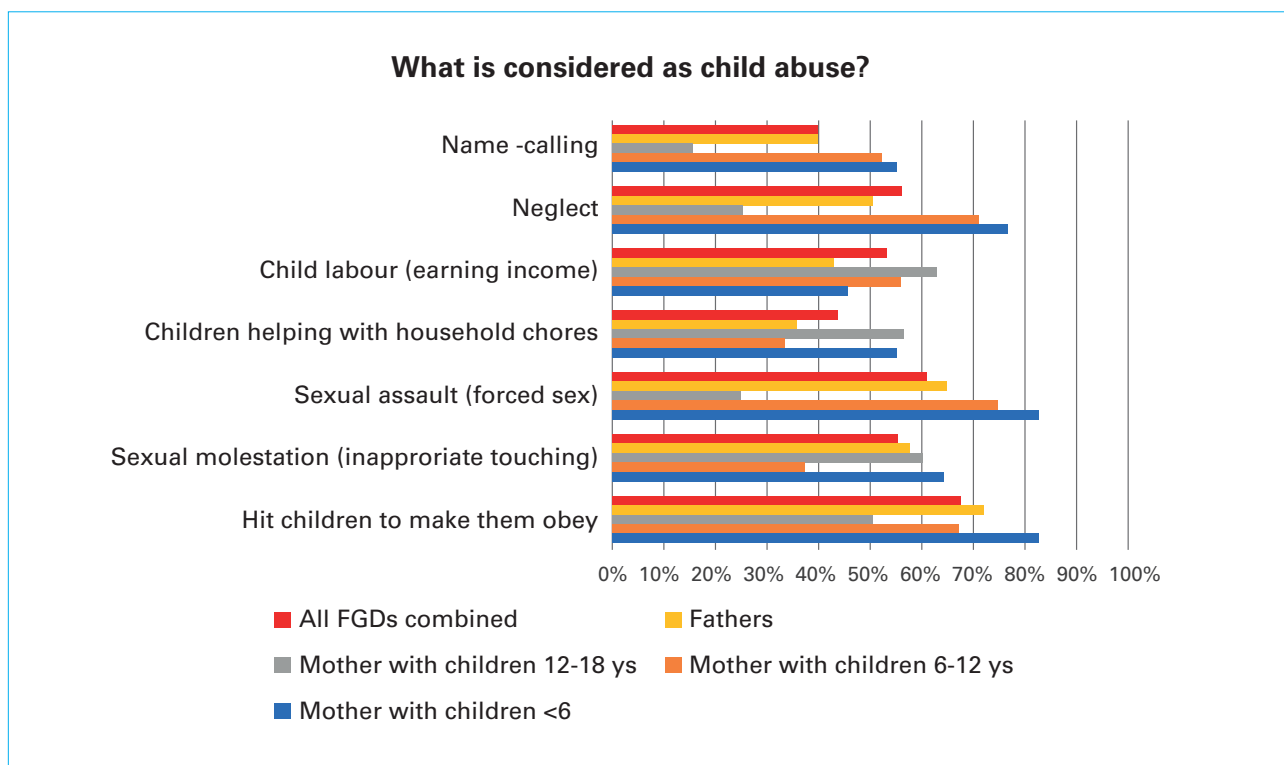
Knowledge on child protection

According to the pre-test on positive parenting training, 53 per cent answered correctly on child protection. This increased after the training to 76 per cent. During follow-up tests in FGDs, 87 per cent of parents provided the correct answer to this question. Results from tests during FGDs with parents revealed that a large percentage of parents of children across all age groups perceived that child protection primarily included: providing children with advice on how to protect themselves (92 per cent), providing children with warmth and listening to them as much as possible (88 per cent), sharing with children information about abuse and techniques to deal with abusers (79 per cent), keeping dangerous objects away from children (74 per cent), and having older children take care of younger siblings when parents are not at home (73 per cent) (see Figure 10). Differences in perspectives between mothers, fathers, and mothers of different age groups can also be seen in Figure 10. Overall, parents' understanding of child protection is consistent with ICS-SP's training guideline on child protection methods, including understanding child abuse (as indicated in the Knowledge on Child Abuse section).

Figure 10: Results of tests during FGDs on knowledge of child protection

What should you do to protect children from abuse?

Legend:
- All FGDs combined
- Fathers
- Mother with children 12-18 ys
- Mother with children 6-12 ys
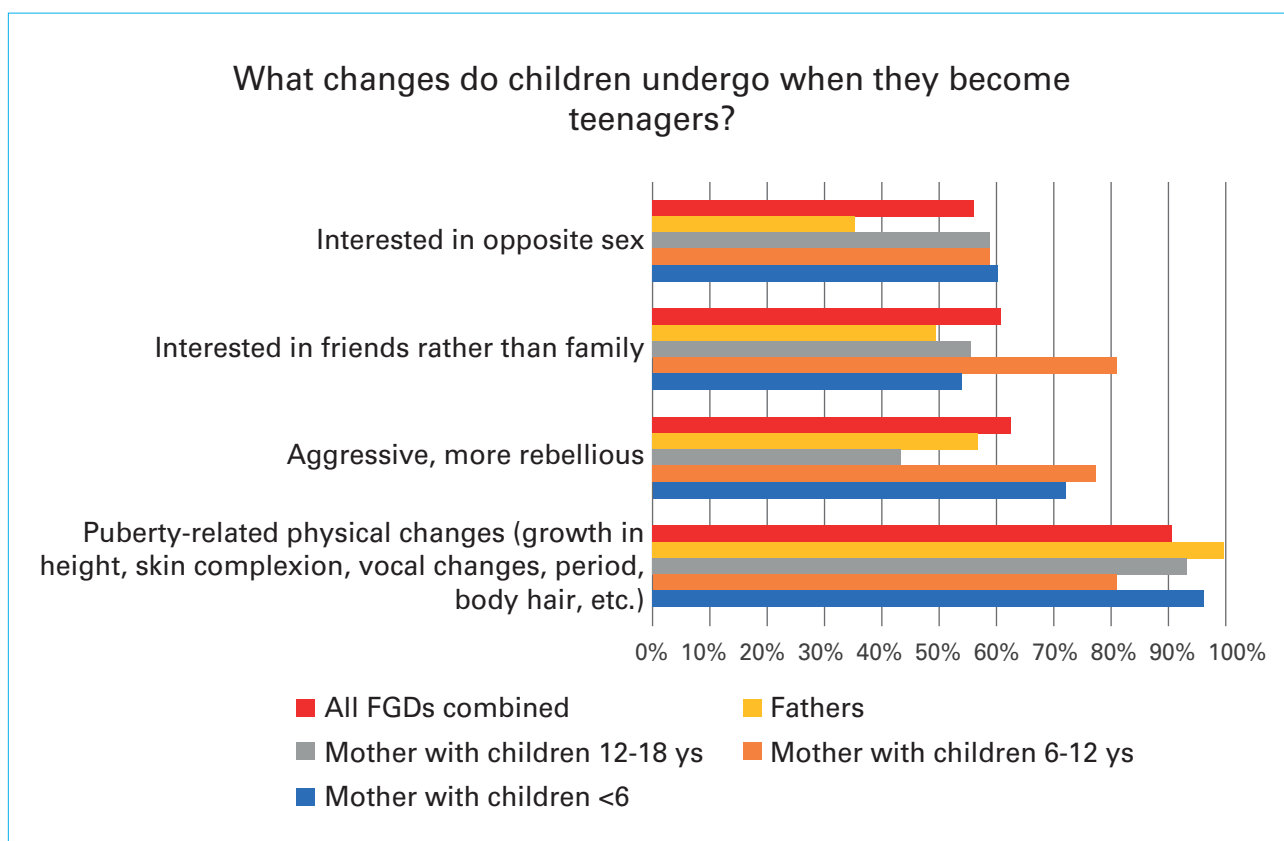- Mother with children <6

Knowledge on child development

As revealed in the KAPB survey, 40 per cent of participating parents said they believed that playing was not important for children's growth and development, and 59.09 per cent agreed that parents must only focus on attending to the physical aspects of child growth. Pre-tests from the ICS-SP trainings reported 24 per cent giving the correct answer on child development, which increased to 52 per cent in post-tests. In the FGDs, 37 per cent of parents had correct answers to this test question. These results suggest that parents' knowledge of child development needs to be strengthened.

The findings from tests during FGDs showed that parents' understanding of teenagers' development largely focused on their physical development, including changes in their height and voice, and other physiological changes, and much less on emotional and social changes (see Figure 11). Parents' knowledge on physical development of teenagers is in line with ICS-SP's training materials. Conversely, knowledge on a child's social and emotional development was not significantly discussed by parents, even though these aspects were highlighted in ICS-SP's training.

Figure 11: Results of tests during FGDs on knowledge on child development – teenagers

What changes do children undergo when they become teenagers?

Legend:
- All FGDs combined
- Fathers
- Mother with children 12-18 ys
- Mother with children 6-12 ys
- Mother with children <6

The section above discussed parents' knowledge of positive parenting methods, roles and responsibilities, parents' expectations, communication, child abuse and protection, and child development. The results were extracted from the KAPB survey, pre- and post-tests of ICP-SP's training, surveys during FGDs, and FGDs.

Figure 12 illustrates parents' knowledge by comparing results of pre- and post-test training and the follow-up scores from the FGDs. The figure shows that, in general, knowledge on all components of positive parenting significantly increased from the pre-test, and is in line with ICS-SP's training guideline. Knowledge was sustained for some of the positive training topics, but decreased for others, which could be due to differences in the sample between the training and the FGDs. Overall, however, the results show that the FGD scores (except for the importance of child communication) did not drop to or below pre-test scores.

Figure 12. Comparison of results from pre- and post-tests, and follow-up tests of positive parenting training

Comparison of results from pre- and post-test trainings and follow up with FGDs

Follow-up test score n=106 — Post-test score n=973 — Pre-test score nr 973
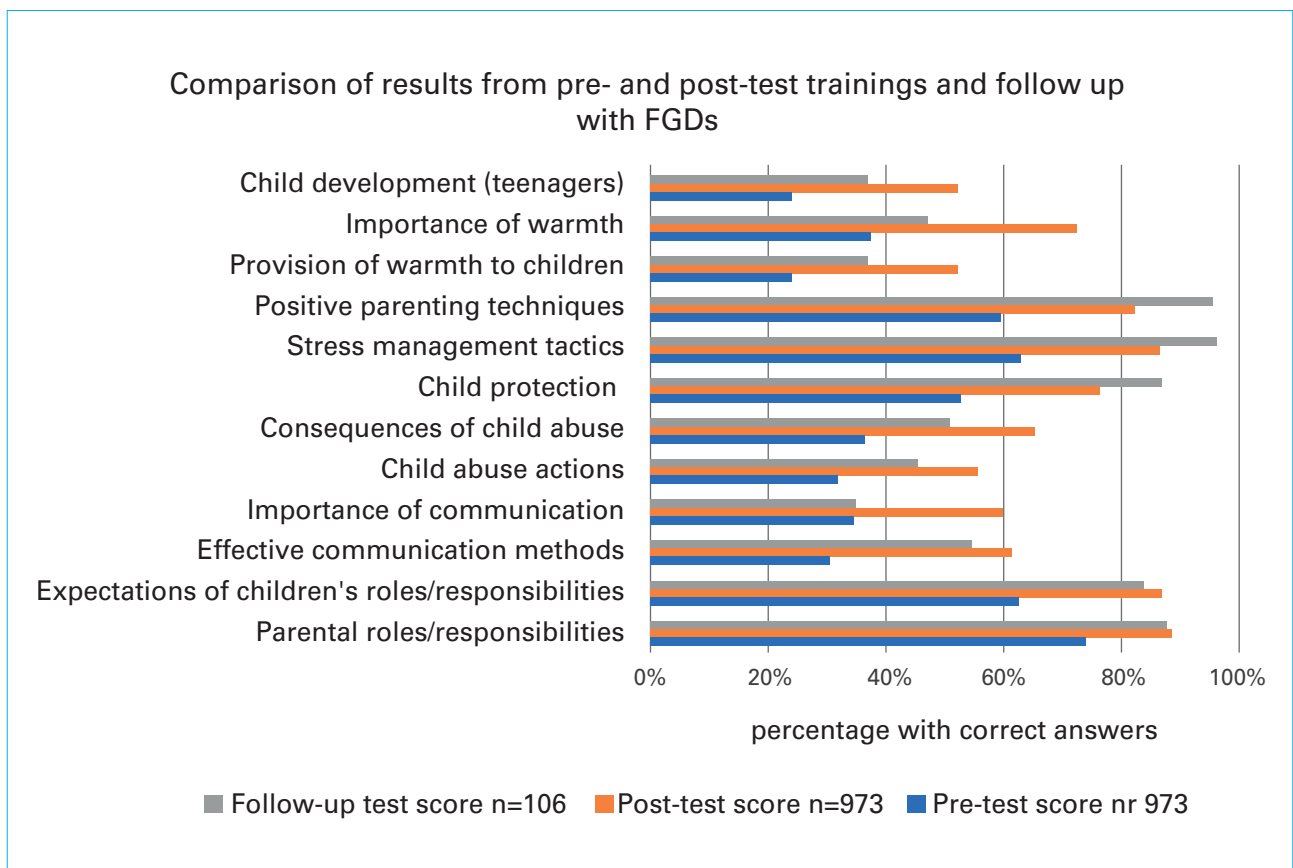
Practices of positive parenting/behavioural change

This section will discuss behaviour changes and practices of positive parenting techniques, which may be influenced by increased knowledge of positive parenting among the beneficiaries, as well as family members and community members. It will discuss six main themes of behaviour change, including positive parenting practices, parents' expectations of their children, the roles of parents, parent-child communication, child protection and child development.

Positive parenting practices, positive discipline and positive parenting techniques

According to the KAPB survey, 73 per cent of parents used explanation and discussion rather than blame to respond to children's misconduct, and 45 per cent noted that they gave advice in response to children's misconduct. The KAPB survey revealed parents interacted daily with their children through playing (63.64 per cent), having dinner together (84.1 per cent) and chatting or discussing with children (45.45 per cent). The survey with children during FGDs also found that more than half of children (63 per cent) reported doing leisure activities every day with their parents.

The FGDs with parents revealed that the majority performed positive parenting methods which included showing love and care, comforting, listening and understanding their children. As encapsulated in the example statements from FGDs, below, many parents acted in ways to ensure children would feel comfortable seeking the guidance and security of their parents. Parents across the FGD groups also frequently mentioned "encouragement" and "guidance" as two actions that they did to support their children.

Mostly, I comforted my younger child. I believe they feel my care and love. If they don't want to talk with me about things, I told them I would be all ears when they need someone. So, they will be able to be open and talk.[16]

I give them courage and tell them that they are doing great. Whenever kids hear this, they put more effort into their work later.[17]

It is also important to note that, as a consequence of gaining knowledge of positive parenting methods from ICS-SP's training, parents expressed their happiness at improvements in their children's behaviours. They noted that positive parenting allowed them to discipline their children without using violence and to improve communication with their children. Below are select quotes from

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[16] A parent of children aged under 6, Siem Reap.
[17] A father from a fathers' FGD group, Battambang.

the FGDs, which show parents' descriptions of their improved positive parenting behaviours:

I learned how to use positive parenting and my children listen to me more, and their behaviours have improved in a better way. I wish the programme would spread the positive parenting lesson to more people in my community. I learned about child protection, family communication and family welfare. It is important for me because I can be more in control and calm and treat my children well.[18]

I know I am able to raise the children well, I learned about self-control and this helped to improve the family communication. Child discipline is possible without having to use violence. I learned about child protection, family welfare, communication in the family, parent obligations and positive parenting methods. Children feel free and open to talk to parents.[19]

Parents and caregivers participating in the FGDs emphasized their reduced use of harsh and violent parenting tactics, including harsh discipline. The reduction in harsh parenting methods reflects new knowledge on the importance of adopting affirmative parenting tactics and effective communication towards children, as illustrated in the Knowledge and Attitudes section. Across all FGD groups, parents pointed to their reduced use of violence, as described in the selected quotes below.

I stopped using violence in my family. I want to be a good role model for my children. I was a bad parent. After I reduced violent behaviour, my children tended to listen to me more.[20]
My children did not help me with the housework, and they went out a lot... when I was angry with them for this reason, I often stepped back and did some housework to calm down my anger. My family members are happy about it because I stopped using violence towards my children when I am angry.[21]

In the FGDs with community members, study participants indicated that they observed a decrease in parents' use of harsh punishment when disciplining children, which parents achieved by controlling their anger and trying not to respond to children aggressively.

However, children participating in the FGDs noted that their parents continued to use certain forms of harsh discipline and blame, mostly through verbal discipline such as "**scolding**" or "**shouting**". One child said this made him feel terrified. Some children noted that their parents would blame them but also guide them at the same time to overcome their mistakes or to do things correctly. Only two children said that they were beaten when they did chores incorrectly or made mistakes. Overall, this suggests that violent discipline might have decreased, but harsh verbal discipline might remain. As the following section on parents' expectations of children

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[18] A parent of children aged under 6, Phnom Penh.
[19] A parent of children aged under 6, Siem Reap.
[20] A parent of children aged 6-12, Battambang.
[21] A parent of children aged 12-18, Battambang.

will discuss, harsh verbal discipline seems to result from parents' high expectations of their children to obey their orders, requests and advice. Numerous beneficiaries also claimed to use rewards as a way to encourage children's positive behaviour, to resume communication when children refused to talk with parents, to encourage children to help with housework, and to gain children's obedience. These tended to be material rewards, while some parents also used praise to reward their children.

I want my children to clear the grass and cook. As a reward, I buy them new clothes every month.[22]

My children help washing the dishes and clothes, and with cooking, because these tasks will be part of their daily duty in the future. I encouraged my children to do it by buying them a new bike.[23]

Stress management

Common coping strategies among parents in dealing with emotional distress are discussing problems with their spouse and relatives (33 per cent), other parents (32 per cent), and neighbours (15 per cent). Very few talked with a counsellor (3 per cent) or religious person (1 per cent). In the FGDs, numerous parents across all FGD groups reported using stress relieving techniques, including taking a deep breath or taking a shower to calm down, and "hanging out" and talking to other family members, neighbours or friends.

Importantly, these activities were used not only to mitigate stress but in response to children's misbehaviour, as a way to prevent the use of violence. Distraction (through stress-relieving techniques, such as listening to music, walking away, doing chores, meditating, talking to friends, and taking deep breaths) was a common practice that parents or caregivers used to deal with their children's emotional distress and their own emotional distress and anger. Instead of using verbal and active communication, parents tended to distract themselves with other activities to overcome their anger and distress. This same practice was applied when dealing with their children's emotional distress.

I take deep breaths and do my housework to distract myself from being angry, and [my family] totally agrees [with this behaviour] because it doesn't cause violence in the family.[24]

When my children do the opposite of what I told them to do, I step back and calm myself down by doing other housework or walking to another place.[25]

My children made a mess at home... I took a cold shower to cool down my anger. It is an effective way for me because the weather is hot. The water helped me reduce my anger.[26]

These stress management techniques are part of those recommended in ICS-SP's training guideline, indicating that they have translated into positive parenting practices among parents or caregivers.

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[22] A parent of children aged 12-18, Kandal.
[23] A father in Siem Reap.
[24] A parent of children aged 6-12, Siem Reap.
[25] A parent of children aged under 6, Battambang.
[26] A mother of a child aged 6-12, Siem Reap.

When asked about the skills they had gained through ICS-SP, the most common response that parents gave was that they learned techniques to ease their anger and reduce their use of violence towards family members, particularly children.

My behaviour is different from before. I have less anger towards my child. I can contain my anger now.[27]

I used to raise my children like my parents raised me. It was very bad parenting because they used lots of violence. Now I have learned a new way from the organization and it's very effective.[28]

I was always getting angry easily. Now I have become steadier and calmer. And I used to lie to my children a lot. After I know how bad it is, I stop doing it.[29]

As indicated above, parents are using less-violent disciplinary tactics. They are using affirmative parenting styles and offering explanations and advice when dealing with children's misbehaviour. The FGDs with children show, however, that parents may still be using verbal discipline. Parents reported that they were using praise and incentives to encourage children to act obediently and complete household chores.

Roles and responsibilities of parents

The majority of parents or caregivers saw their responsibility as providing their children with basic needs such as food, birth certificates, clothes, hygiene, health care and schooling, as shown in the FGDs. These practices correspond with the fact that parents primarily understand their responsibility as facilitating the healthy development of their children and

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[27] A mother of a child aged 6-12, Kandal.
[28] A mother of a child under 6, Siem Reap.
[29] A father from Siem Reap.

providing material support to their children (as discussed in the Knowledge and Attitudes section). The type of support parents provided to their children was based on their children's current developmental stage. For younger children, parents concentrated on attending to children's physical growth, and were more likely to focus on providing food, health care, and caring for the children's personal hygiene. As shown in the quotes below, many parents of children under 6 years acted on their responsibilities to provide children with basic needs:

I take good care of my children's health and breastfeed them because I want them to grow up healthy. I expect them to do well in the future.[30]

I registered their birth because they won't be able to enrol in school if they don't have a birth certificate. I also guide my children to eat and sleep properly.[31]

In FGDs, fathers also revealed that they worked hard to fulfil their responsibility of offering their children healthy food, clothes, a good education and toys. Only a few mentioned providing affection and warmth to their children.

We (parents) provide them nutrition and food, e.g., the four meals, in order to help them grow up strong and smart. And then we enrol them in school.[32]

I bought them shoes and a school uniform to cheer them up. When they are happy, they grow well. When I am free from work, I take my children to the park to make

them happy. I enrolled them in school to get a good education.[33]

Many community members participating in the FGDs agreed that providing basic needs to children, such as personal hygiene, food and legal documents, is a primary responsibility of parents. Quality time and affection seemed to be secondary.

Personal hygiene is necessary for children's wellbeing. Parents have to provide children with enough food to help them grow and register the birth certificate for them. Also, they should provide love and affection to children.[34]

…like to spend time with children and give them the opportunity to try new things. I want them to do schoolwork and also housework.[35]

In addition to providing their children with basic needs, some parents act to fulfil their responsibility and role of supporting their children's social and emotional development. They do this by spending quality time with children and comforting them when they are upset. As the quotes below from the FGDs describe, parents and caregivers may also spend quality time with their children and provide children with affection and warmth. However, in comparison to basic needs provision, these practices may potentially be less prioritized.

I want my children to study and obey my guidance. I want them to avoid doing bad things that could destroy their future. I also spend quality time with my children.[36]

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[30] A parent of children aged under 6, Battambang.
[31] A parent of children aged under 6, Kandal.
[32] A father in Siem Reap.
[33] A father in Kandal.

[34] A community member in Kandal.
[35] A community member in Siem Reap.
[36] A parent of children aged 6-12, Siem Reap.

I provide my children with healthy food, enough sleep, and spend more time with them. I also comfort them when they are not feeling good.[37]

For older children, many parents or caregivers stated that they tended to focus on supporting their children's success in school and guiding their social development, as expressed by the selected quote below. In the KAPB survey, 76 per cent of children said that they were getting support with homework from their parents.

I want them to study. I want my children to grow up, have a good personality, and be able to get along well with others. I take good care of them and give them love and affection.[38]

In the FGDs with children, the participating children expressed that they admired and appreciated the efforts of their parents in working hard to provide basic needs, as shown in the selected quotes below.

[My father] is trying hard to find income and take a good care of the children.[39]

I admire [my parents'] effort for the family, they are good at solving problems and they never give up[40]

This confirms that parents are acting on their responsibilities to provide children with basic needs in ways that align with children's different developmental needs. A number of parents of children with disabilities noted that they provided additional attention and care to support this child. Overall, the primary role

that parents take is the provision of basic needs, and support in the form of guidance towards success in school and in society. Socio-emotional support (affection) and the quality of time spent together are often less prioritized. This practice was consistent across mothers, fathers and community members, as shown in this study.

Parents' expectations of their children

As discussed in the Knowledge and Attitudes section, the majority of parents and caregivers expect children to obey their orders and advice. The expectation of obedience in children is a way for parents to ensure that their children are protected and are taking care of themselves.

I want my child to obey my guidance. I ask them to do dishes because I want them to learn to do things in life.[41]

I want my children to be obedient to parents. I want to them to avoid using drugs. I told them to take care of themselves and eat healthy food.[42]

Parents also expected their children to do household chores and care for their siblings. The KAPB survey showed that the common housework-support children provided was washing clothes (88 per cent), cooking/washing dishes (65 per cent), cleaning (76 per cent) and sibling care (35 per cent), while 76 per cent of children reported that they had received support from their parents when doing homework.

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[37] A parent of children aged 6-12, Siem Reap.
[38] A parent of children aged 6-12, Siem Reap.
[39] A child aged 14-18, Siem Reap.

[40] A child aged 14-18, Battambang.
[41] A parent of children aged 6-12, Kandal.
[42] A parent of children aged 6-12, Battambang.

In the surveys with children during the FGDs, 59 per cent said they were responsible for household chores, 31 per cent reported that they were responsible for taking care of siblings, and 16 per cent supported their family in earning an income. These tasks were performed voluntarily, as well as when their parents' asked. Nevertheless, some children reported being beaten, scolded, or receiving complaints from their parents when they did not perform the household chores.

I cook. I feel happy to be able to help my parents. It is not hard to do, and I like doing it for them. I get my younger sister to help me out sometimes. I would get scolded if I refused to do it, and I ended up upsetting my parents.[43]

I washed dishes. Sometimes I had fun, but sometimes I feel overwhelmed. I would get beaten when I did not do the work.[44]

This shows that parents' expectations of their children's obedience may sometimes lead them to use hostile punishments in responding to children's disobedience, mistakes and refusals to follow parents' orders and advice. Interviews with children in the KAPB survey revealed that parents still used hostile responses such as threatening or hitting. A large percentage of children (76 per cent) reported their parents or caretakers scolded and hit them instead of using positive discipline. During the KAPB survey, 53 per cent of children said they felt dissatisfied with the way their parents and/or caretakers guided them. One of the children noted, "**It hurts me, my hands were swollen, and my body was burned by biting. I feel sad and afraid.**" Another child said, "I cried and feel threatened. My mother did not listen to my

explanations that I argued with other children because they looked down on me and my family." Of children surveyed, 65 per cent said they did not dare tell parents about their mistakes for fear of being hit or scolded in response.

As mentioned in the analysis of positive discipline and positive parenting techniques, children reported during the FGDs that parents tended to use harsh discipline to respond to children's disobedience, refusal to do homework or to look after siblings, or when they were arguing with others. However, this was often harsh verbal discipline rather than physical violence.

I have the responsibility to do some housework as my parents appointed me to do it. I washed the clothes. Usually, my older sister helped me out with housework. When I did not do as my parents asked, I would get scolded badly.[45]

I have to wash the dishes and cook for my parents. My older sister is working to support the family. Though I am happy to help my parents, they would scold me if I did not do it.[46]

Some children reported receiving guidance and support from parents, as shown in the selected quotes below.

I help my parents by feeding ducks and chickens, cooking and washing. I feel happy to help them. Sometimes my mother and my siblings supported me. They would blame me if I did not do it, but they also teach me to do it.[47]

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[43] A child aged 14-18, Phnom Penh.
[44] A child aged 14-18, Battambang.
[45] A child 14-18 years, Kandal.

[46] A child 14-18 years, Kandal.
[47] A child 14-18 years, Siem Reap.

In the FGDs, some parents reported that they motivated their children to complete chores with praise and rewards.

I ask my children to do housework and tell them to study hard. I want my children to get an education and have a good job, but also learn to do the housework. I try to talk to my children nicely when I ask them to do anything.[48]

I let them study and also ask them to do housework. I make them an offer. If they do not do it, I would not take them out for a walk or buy things for them.[49]

A few parents reported threatening their children to complete the housework, yet none mentioned using harsh forms of verbal or physical discipline.

I let them (children) cook rice and wash clothes because they can learn from that and use it in their future living. I just threatened them a bit, but not much.[50]

These results show that although many parents adopted positive discipline methods, many others were still using some forms of hostile punishment (particularly verbal discipline), especially in response to their expectations of children's obedience and support with household chores. This may be because parents do not recognize or observe verbal punishment as a type of harsh discipline that impacts their children. Parents' demand for obedience from their children and their use of punishment to gain respect may impose the *basic mechanism of motivating by*

guilt.[51] As a result, rather than acting out of a true understanding of the situation, children changed their behaviours and followed their parents' orders as a way of pleasing parents and avoiding being punished (Marshall, 2015). Overall, these results suggest that parents' expectations remain somewhat unrealistic and that parents require more information on the effects of harsh verbal discipline on children.

Parent-child communication

The FGDs with parents showed that parent-child communication was performed through mutual understanding and active listening: parents were tactical about finding the appropriate timing to discuss personal matters with their children. Overall, these parents noted that their communication tactics helped them address their children's issues.

When my children were sad, I asked them [why]. Usually, they don't obey or listen to my advice, but they tend to make less mistakes because they start to know what is right and wrong… Usually, I comfort my child until they stop being angry.[52]

In the FGDs with children, the majority of children reported feeling comfortable communicating with parents about their feelings and experiences, and generally sought advice, comfort and encouragement from their parents. As shown in the selected quote below, children reported feeling happy and relieved while communicating with their parents, and generally trusted the advice of their parents.

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[48] A parent of children aged 6-12, Kandal.
[49] A parent of children aged 12-18, Battambang.
[50] A parent of children aged 12-18, Battambang.
[51] The basic mechanism of motivating by guilt is to attribute the responsibility for one's own feelings to others. Read more at Marshall, B. (2015). Nonviolent communication: A language of life. 3rd edition.
[52] A parent of children aged under 6, Battambang.

...because I want to let them know about my feelings and that I need their help. They told me to talk to them when I'm not sure about something, to avoid making mistakes. I trust them and I feel happy.[53]

In the surveys with children during FGDs, children reported feeling comfortable when talking to their parents or caregivers about school-related issues (84 per cent), friend-related issues (81 per cent), interests and hobbies (75 per cent), fear and worries (84 per cent), health and their body (83 per cent) and future dreams (81 per cent). They felt least comfortable talking to their parents about the opposite sex (54.76 per cent) (see Figure 13). Children reported feeling most comfortable sharing their worries with their mothers (38 per cent), followed by fathers (20 per cent), siblings (16 per cent) and other relatives (14 per cent).

As the previous section on Parents' Expectations of Children discussed, many children participating in the KAPB survey

and FGDs reported feeling scared to talk to their parents about mistakes they had made because of fear of their parents' reactions. In the FGDs, the responses of many children showed that fear of their parents' reactions led to barriers in communicating with parents about mistakes.

I expressed my feelings to my mother and father because I trust them. I feel happy to tell them. They cheer me up. However, I am terrified when I know I made a mistake because when I told my parents about the mistakes I made, my parent would scream at me.[54]

A few children reported feeling comfortable asking their parents for advice and revealing their mistakes to their parents.

I talk to my parents because I trust them. They would always give me advice. Even if I made a mistake, I felt okay to tell them because they always speak nicely to me.[55]

Figure 13:Children's reported comfort in communicating with parents

Children's responses about communication with parents (%)

School related issues	Fear and worries	Health and body	Friend related issues	Future dreams	Interests and hobbies	Opposite sex
84.44	84.1	83.33	80.95	80.48	75	54.76

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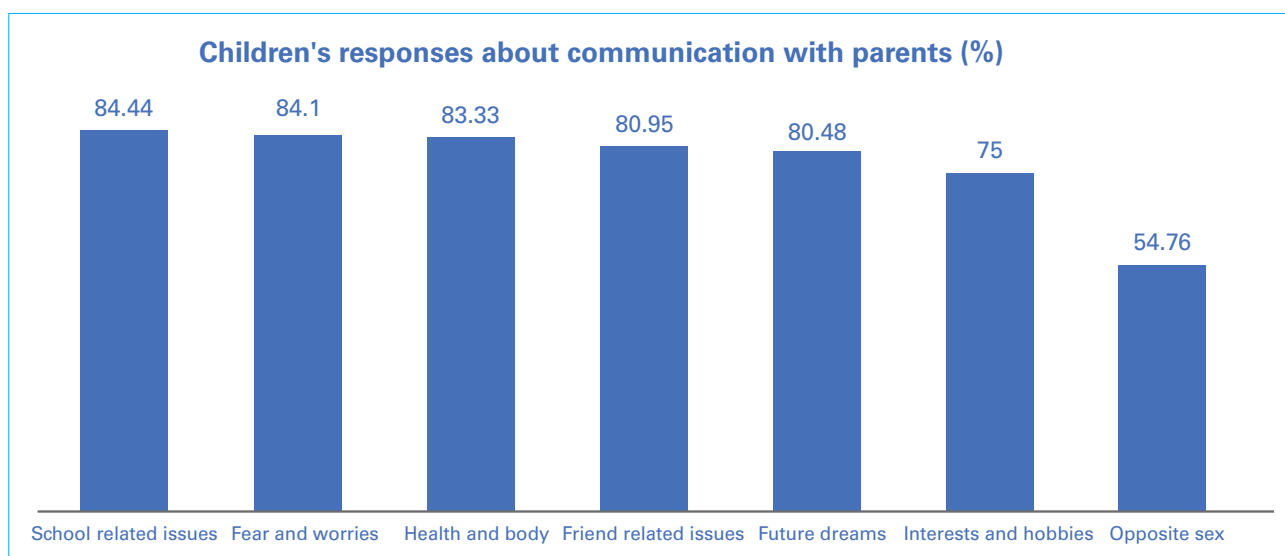
[53] A child aged 14-18 years, Phnom Penh.
[54] A child aged 14-18 years, Siem Reap.
[55] A child aged 14-18 years, Siem Reap.

When asked about the important lessons they took away from ICS-SP's Positive Parenting Programme, a large number of parents noted that the programme helped them improve their communication with children, as well as with other family members. As represented by the selected quote below, many people also suggested that this improved communication had allowed them to deepen their relationships with their children.

I see improvements in communication with children. I reduce using bad words and it increases my confidence and creates bonds with my children.[56]

The practice of parent-child communication among parents and caregivers reflects the knowledge on communication that they gained from ICS-SP's training. Nevertheless, while overall communication improved, many children still felt that they could not discuss their wrongdoings with parents because of fear. This shows that communication may be limited due to parents' expectations of their children, as well as their previous harsh methods of responding to mistakes and disobedience.

Child protection

The majority of parents used advice-oriented communication to effectively communicate with children and inform them about self-protection, and how to recognize tricks of deceivers. These are methods that they gained from ICS-SP's training. Notably, a few parents offered their children affection as they believed it contributed to child protection.

In general, and as shown by the selected quotes below, parents participating in the FGDs noted that they provided protection for older children in the form of offering guidance, information and rules to prevent their children from encountering danger and abuse.

I warn and advise my children to avoid going out to places that are far away from home and never hangout at night. I tell them about self-protection.[57]

I told my children to stay away from strangers. I tried to prevent my son from watching adult films. This way, I believe it can prevent them from abuse.[58]

For younger-aged children, in the FGDs parents reported that they protected their children by avoiding leaving them alone at home, attending to their children, and keeping dangerous objects out of their reach. Sibling caregiving is one child protection method that many parents used frequently. These different protection methods for younger and older children align with ICS-SP's training material. Nevertheless, when asked about areas where they needed more support, numerous parents suggested that they needed more help with positive parenting topics related to child protection and child abuse.

Gender differences and disability in positive parenting practices

Many parents participating in the FGDs reported that parent-child communication tended to be different between parents and their sons or daughters. With sons, parents

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56 A parent of child aged 6-12 years, Siem Reap
57 A parent of children aged 12-18, Siem Reap.
58 A parent of children aged 6-12, Battambang.

tended to communicate in a serious tone, while using a softer approach when talking to their daughters. This was based on their understanding that male and female children had different emotional needs.

When my children did not perform well at school, I would start by asking them how they do in school. I tried to comfort them. I used different methods because my daughter and son have different feelings.[59]

For sons, we talk in a serious manner because they are men, so we have to be serious with them else they would not be afraid of us. Daughters like sweet tone.[60]

Many mothers noted that they communicated more easily with their daughters than their sons, while only a few mothers said daughters were more challenging to talk to. Mothers in the FGDs believed sons did not obey or listen to parents' advice. As a result, parents reported spending more time talking to and advising their sons.

I talk to the sons more because they do not seem to understand me. Somehow, they ignored what I said. It is way easier to talk with my daughter.[61]

I put more effort into teaching my sons because they don't really listen to me.[62]

In the way parents protect their children, many parents noted that they tended to pay more attention and effort to daughters than sons. Parents also tended to provide different protection methods, in accordance with the gender of the child. Parents revealed guiding their daughters on protection against sexual abuse, while protecting sons from social pressures, drugs and bullying. This practice is consistent in both mothers and fathers, as shown in FGDs.

I teach them the protection method and tell them about the deceiver. I tell my daughter a lot about sexual abusing, and I tell my son about not using drugs.[63]

I (mother) warned my children about going out of my sight. I told my daughter not to trust anybody quickly, and I told my son not to get involved in any fights.[64]

I (father) have to tell them (sons) to not go to neighbour houses that use alcohol, they might use violence or sexually abuse other children. They should avoid using drugs... For daughters, I told them to not hang out with other boys, because boys might touch their body.[65]

It is important to note here that parents' knowledge on child abuse and protection seems to reveal a misunderstanding about the relationship between gender and child abuse: parents in this study tend to (falsely) believe that only females suffer from sexual abuse, whereas males more likely suffer from peer pressure, bullying, physical violence and drug use. This misconception on the relationship between gender and child abuse can put both boys and girls at higher risk, given that child abuse is rarely gender-specific.

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[59] A parent of children aged 6-12, Phnom Penh.
[60] A father in Siem Reap.
[61] A parent of children aged 6-12, Kandal.
[62] A parent of children aged 12-18, Kandal.

[63] A parent of children aged under 6, Kandal.
[64] A parent of children aged under 6, Phnom Penh.
[65] A father in Kandal.

While the FGD groups did not have a large sample size of parents who had children with disabilities, those who did noted that they provided extra attention, support and protection to their child with a disability.

One father of a child with a disability from Battambang said this extra attention and care was important as a means of integrating the child into society.

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Home environment and social impact of ICS-SP's positive parenting

Positive parenting knowledge and practices appear to be creating a safe home environment for children. The majority of children who participated in the FGDs (95 per cent) reported that they felt safe at home. These children described the home environment and the family as warm, caring, safe, fun and happy:

I love my parents so much and they don't use violence. They teach the children to love each other. My parents always give good advice. My family talks about problems and finds solutions instead of using aggressive actions.[66]

Because all my family members live in the same house, we do things together, talking, eating, guiding and solving problems. My family helps and teaches each other, and we have fun. My parents help me out with my homework, and I love it when they bought me clothes.[67]

These results seem to confirm the statements made by parents where they noted that increased knowledge and practices of positive parenting had led to deeper connections in relationships with their children and family members. It shows that changed parenting practices are leading to changed relations between parents and their children, and may even encourage greater trust and affection within the family.

We feel more joy, and we get a deep connection in the family. In the past, I didn't know how to raise my children properly, but now I know how to parent my children using positive methods.[68]

Parents (mothers and fathers) participating in the FGD noted that the Positive Parenting Programme had resulted in reduced use of violence and harsh punishment, leading to increased love and understanding within the family. Parents reported receiving more respect and obedience from children as the violence reduced.

I can communicate and connect deeply with my children, and they become more respectful. My children obey me and I'm so happy about it.[69]

This programme helps me to build more strength and the way I communicate with my children is more appropriate and effective.[70]

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[66] A child aged 14-18, Siem Reap.
[67] A child aged 14-18, Siem Reap.
[68] A parent of children aged 12-18, Siem Reap.
[69] A parent of children aged under 6, Phnom Penh.
[70] A father of a child in Battambang.

In the FGDs with parents, parents and caregivers (mothers and fathers) expressed satisfaction with ICS-SP's Positive Parenting Programme. They mentioned that they improved their methods of parenting, self-control and family communication as a result of participating in ICS-SP's programme.

The lesson I learned from the programme is on parent obligation. This training is important for me because I really need the lesson to treat my family better.[71]

I learned to raise my children properly. I have learned self-control and improved communication in my family. I learned about child protection, family welfare, communication in family, parent obligations and parenting methods.[72]

In the FGDs with community members, community members stated that ICS-SP's training had influenced their own parenting methods, particularly through improved communication with their children and methods for controlling their emotions. Community members noted that the ICS-SP training programme had had an impact in their community, particularly in terms of reducing the use of violence in families and in the community.

I noticed the violence in my family and in the community had reduced. The children are obedient and listen to the parents. People talk about positive parenting in my family/community by mentioning that parents need to understand the children's behaviour or feelings in order to raise them properly.[73]

When people joined the positive parenting training, they found out that they had been making lots of mistakes in the past in disciplining their children.[74]

Challenges

As shown in Figure 14, all parents who participated in the KAPB survey noted that one of the challenges they faced was difficulty disciplining their children. Almost half of the respondents (45 per cent) reported either health issues or economic constraints, respectively, as the main barriers that they faced. Some parents also found it difficult to deal with children who had left school (11 per cent) or those who had become involved in gambling or drug misuse (14 per cent). As noted here, economic challenges and the lack of basic needs are the main barriers to the effectiveness of parenting. This shows that economic improvement programmes may be integrated or implemented alongside the existing parenting programme to promote socio-economic stability through income-generation activities and skills development, etc. among beneficiaries. It is important to note that this study was conducted during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, therefore many participating parents may have been facing socio-economic as well as parenting challenges specific to the pandemic situation.

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[71] A parent of children under 6, Battambang.
[72] A parent of children under 6, Siem Reap.
[73] A community member in Siem Reap.
[74] A community member in Siem Reap.

Challenges of parents/caretakers in raising children

from KAPB survey (n=44)
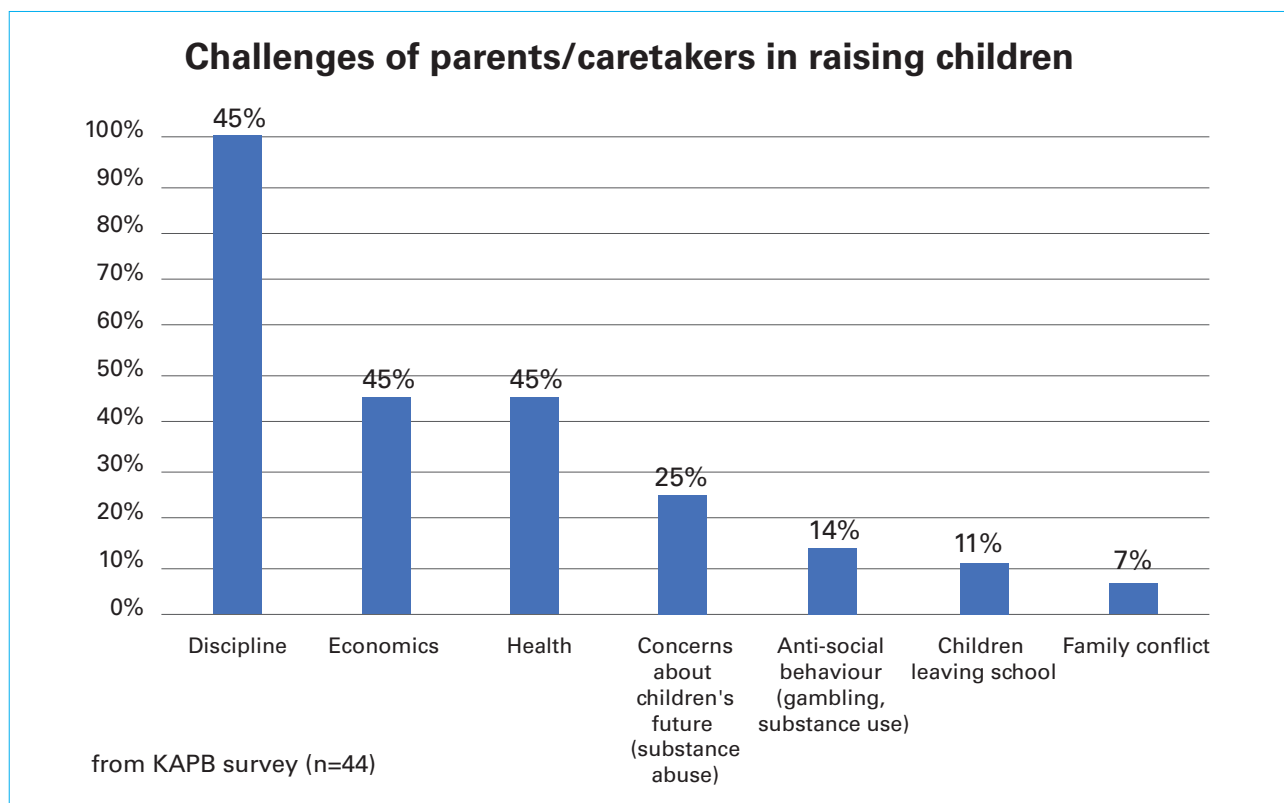
Another parental challenge that parents faced is related to the gender of the child: parents participating in both the KAPB survey and the FGDs found it challenging to discipline boys as opposed to girls, as they perceived girls to be more obedient than boys. However, parents also claimed that they believed protecting girls was more challenging than protecting boys.

When asked about the positive parenting topics that they still needed support with, numerous parents pointed out that they wanted more training on how to reduce violence and how to deal with stress-related anger and aggression. Other topics that were mentioned included: improved family communication, particularly communication between husband and wife; women's rights; addressing mental health; and more information on child sex abuse. Some parents suggested that more positive parenting should be taught in rural areas

and that fathers should be encouraged to attend more sessions. In Kandal, fathers from the FGD group said that more frequent training could help them to better retain the information:

"I want ICS-SP to come and teach frequently because the citizens will forget the lesson."

"I want the children to learn the programme too."

Many of these recommendations are for topics already covered by ICS-SP's training through its Level 1 and 2 Positive Parenting Programme. The fact that parents continue to require more lessons suggests that they may face challenges in retaining the information, or that they may need more support to implement skills they have learned.

Figure 15: Summary of findings and achievements at outcome level (C-1)

Mid-term Outcomes C1

Parents or caregivers provide children with affectionate, responsive, and non-discriminatory support	Parents have realistic expectations about children's behaviour and development

Parents adopted positive parenting, and non-violent parenting styles and discipline	Parents and children engage in effective and open communication including sex, sexual reproductive health, and rights, other personal issues	Parents or caregivers identify, respond to and prevent violence against children

Behaviour Change & Practice

Positive Changes in Parenting Practices

Parenting practice
- Positive parenting tactics including affirmative parenting, active communication, affection and care
- Quality of time with children
- Reward and praise
- Fulfilling needs of children

Child protection practice
- Sharing knowledge and information on abuse and techniques
- Promoting parent-child (listening & sharing information on abuse, advising)
- Sibling caregiving support to protect younger children
- Different method of child protection for sons and daughters

Communication practice
- Effective parent-child communication (active listening and understanding)
- Children feel comfortable talking & sharing with parents about personal problems
- Adopted different methods of communication with sons & daughters

Child development
- Performing parenting role and offering support appropriate to child's developmental stage
- Parent's expectations and communication are suitable to child's development

Undesirable Parenting Practices

Harsh discipline
- Child's disobedience
- Child's mistakes

Basic need-oriented parenting
- Meeting physical/basic needs of children, less focus on social and emotional needs

Physical factors in child development
- More focus on physical growth of children, and less on the social and emotional development

Child abuse and protection
- Less focus on abuse in family
- Gender specific to child abuse and protection

Knowledge Level

Positive parenting
- Affirmative parenting
- Family communication as child discipline method
- Quality of time with children

Communication
- Effective parent-child communication
- Exchange and sharing of information
- Solutions to problems
- Children can express distress and sadness

Child protection
- Knowledge on types of child abuse
- Child protection: mutual communication, sharing information & techniques to deal with abusers

Child development
- Knowledge on child growth (physical and emotional development)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section will discuss the extent to which the positive parenting modality is reaching its envisioned outcomes. The findings from this study help to better understand what aspects of its design and approach are working or what can be improved in future. Specific attention is given to impacts on behavioural change (Mid-term Outcomes C1) among parents or caregivers.

Knowledge and attitudes

› Effective parent-child communication was perceived as an important way to exchange and share information, solve problems, and for children to express their emotional distress.

› Parents understand praise and rewards to be acceptable forms of positive discipline, as a means for positively reinforcing children's obedience and good behaviour.

› Parents perceive their responsibility as parents is primarily to meet children's basic physical needs (birth registration, food, protection, hygiene) whereas socio-emotional needs (e.g., quality time, affection and care) were less prioritized.

› Parents expect obedience from their children, which they view as a way of protecting them. Parents sought to protect children from abuse by providing advice, guidance, and information on techniques to deal with abusers. Nevertheless, parents appear to have limited knowledge about the range of practices that count as child abuse.

› Parents' knowledge of child development largely focuses on physical growth, while other aspects of child development, including social and emotional development needs are less likely be considered knowledge that parents or caregivers gained from ICS-SP's training.

The knowledge and perspectives of parents or caregivers show overall increased knowledge of topics that align with ICS-SP's positive parenting training. However, there were certain areas where parents may require further support in retaining correct and comprehensive knowledge of positive parenting, such as in socio-emotional support for children, information about child abuse, and realistic expectations of children. Based on their testimonials, the areas where parents appeared to gain the greatest knowledge were in child protection, stress management and communication, however they still expressed their need to deepen their knowledge on these topics.

Practice of positive parenting and behavioural change

In accordance with the knowledge gained, parents or caregivers (mothers, fathers, community members) appeared to translate the knowledge they had gained from the programme into practice, which aligns with positive parenting, the prevention of violence against children, and family separation (as illustrated in Figure 15).

Positive parenting techniques and disciplinary methods

› Parents are using guidance and encouragement to respond to children's misbehaviour. The use of violence and physical discipline appears to have been reduced (primarily as a result of better stress management). However, children report that they still experience harsh discipline from their parents, primarily through verbal discipline (scolding, yelling) especially when parents demand children's obedience and when parents confront children's wrongdoings. In general, parents seem to view harsh punishment as a way to discipline their children rather than recognizing such actions as a kind of child abuse.

› Parents appear to enforce obedience and respect from their children. This sometimes leads to the use of harsh discipline when children do not obey orders or when they make mistakes. Numerous children noted that they were less likely to open up and discuss mistakes with their parents out of fear of harsh punishment. The study shows that this level of obedience may be an unrealistic expectation on children, which may result in inappropriate parenting practices.

› Noticeably, parental praise and rewards were used widely to reinforce children's obedient behaviour. Discussions around the dangers and usefulness of this practice may be incorporated into future positive parenting programmes.

Communication

› Active communication, through the application of many of ICS-SP's recommended effective communication tactics, was used when dealing with children's emotional distress and needs, and in solving problems, as well as dealing with family conflict. As a result, children reported increased confidence and comfort in communicating with parents and in seeking their help to cope with emotional distress and other problems. Providing advice is very common in child discipline and parent-child communication practices.

Child protection

› Parents use advice-oriented methods to protect their children from child abuse (particularly older children), concentrating on advising children about self-care and guidance on techniques for dealing with abuse.

› Parents' child protection practices primarily concentrate on protecting children from harm or abuse foreseen outside the house and committed by strangers. Parents in this study appear to overlook child abuse occurring both inside and outside the family. Child abuse happening at home can lead to impacts that are as severe as, and even more traumatic for a child than abuse done by an outsider.

Gender- and age-specific parenting methods

› Based on parents' reported differences in parenting boys and girls, girls seemed to experience more positive parenting than boys. Parents noted that they used softer disciplinary methods with daughters, claiming that daughters were more obedient than sons. Parents also used gendered child protection methods, which showed that parents and caregivers seemed to believe that certain types of child abuse, e.g., sexual abuse, is more likely to happen to girls than to boys. Thus, parents appear to be less aware of the need to protect boys against sexual abuse and less likely to be practicing protective techniques.

› The findings do not show great differences between mothers' and fathers' parenting practices. Given the small sample size of fathers (n=14) plus the fact that this study did not include fathers of children from various age groups, the difference in parenting practices among fathers and mothers may be hard to discern from this study. However, the limited number of male participants in this study reflects the lower participation of fathers in the Positive Parenting Programme.

› Parents used different parenting methods in accordance with the ages of their children: parents of children under 6 years focused on fulfilling children's basic needs and providing a safe environment as a way of ensuring child protection, while parents of older children concentrated on their children's education and communication as a child protection method.
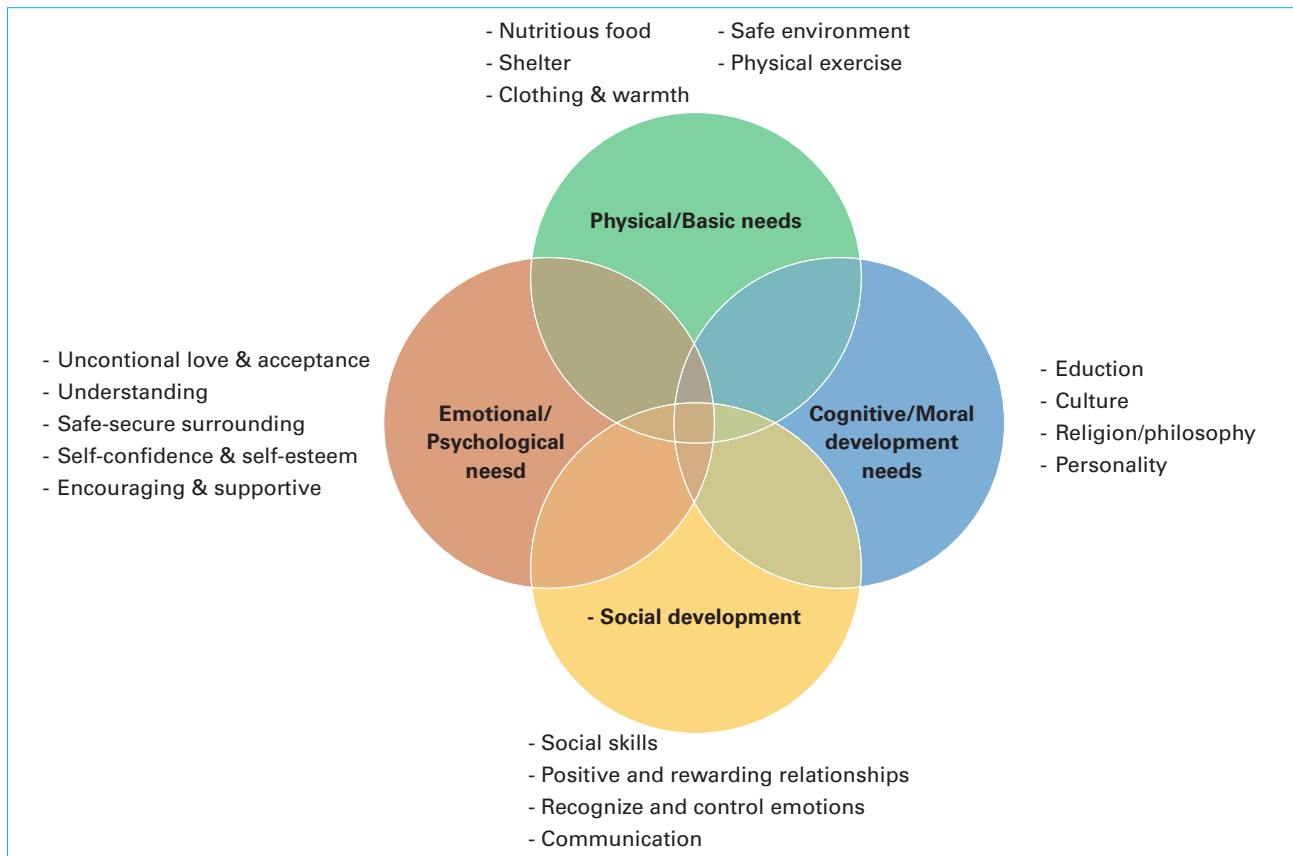

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emerged from the findings of this study and may help to address the barriers to positive parenting practices and the sustainability of the Positive Parenting Programme. These recommendations may also be incorporated into plans for scaling up the ICS-SP Positive Parenting Programme.

Increase understanding of children's social and emotional/psychological development

Current knowledge and practices on child development predominantly focus on the child's physical growth and meeting the basic needs of children in order to support their growth. Support for social and emotional development is still missing from parenting practices both at the knowledge and practical level, according to this study. Supporting children's development requires parents to concentrate on all four main dimensions of child development, including children's physical/basic needs, cognitive/moral development needs, social development needs, and emotional/psychological needs (see Figure 16). As noted in this study, parents generally focus on meeting the physical needs of children. Addressing children's overall development needs in the Positive Parenting Programme is essential for parents to fulfil the different needs of children.

Figure 16: Theoretical framework on child development needs[75]

- Nutritious food   - Safe environment
- Shelter   - Physical exercise
- Clothing & warmth

Physical/Basic needs

- Uncontional love & acceptance
- Understanding
- Safe-secure surrounding
- Self-confidence & self-esteem
- Encouraging & supportive

Emotional/ Psychological neesd

Cognitive/Moral development needs

- Eduction
- Culture
- Religion/philosophy
- Personality

- Social development

- Social skills
- Positive and rewarding relationships
- Recognize and control emotions
- Communication

[75] Adapted from Murage (2019).

Promoting parenting strategies according to the different needs of children at various developmental stages

Parents and caregivers in this study appear to be commonly using advice-oriented methods in their parenting practices. It is recommended that parents adjust the parenting styles they apply to children at different ages, when it is appropriate. The Positive Parenting Programme may better emphasize the specific parenting approaches for different age groups and according to children's specific developmental stages.

Obedience and expectations of children

This study has shown that parents' high expectations of obedience from their children may still lead to the use of harsh verbal and sometimes physical discipline in response to disobedience or bad behaviour. These expectations of obedience may sometimes provoke fear of punishment from children who feel that they are unable to discuss mistakes with their parents. Realistic expectations of children may be emphasized in ICS-SP's positive parenting training as a separate learning module and/or as part of materials on positive discipline.

Gender differences in child discipline practices

Parents tend to raise their sons and daughters based on gender roles, where daughters seem to experience more positive parenting from both parents, compared to sons. Hence, it is necessary for the parenting guideline to introduce and integrate knowledge on gender differences in a child's development (physical, moral, social and emotional development), and to encourage differences in parenting

styles and practices that are suitable to the child's gender.

Child abuse and protection

Parents' current knowledge of child abuse and their practices of child protection largely focus on preventing abuse that occurs outside the house by strangers. The abuse of children at home by parents may be more clearly addressed in the ICS-SP training programme. Broader methods of child protection for girls and boys may be applied to the training materials to help parents address a wider range of gender-specific forms of child abuse.

A couple-focused parenting programme

Studies have shown that shared knowledge and practices of positive parenting among mothers and fathers may enhance family relationships and promote effective child-rearing (Zemp et al., 2015). ICS-SP may respond to this opportunity by offering couple-focused approaches in positive parenting training, where both parents take part in the training at the same time. This may encourage greater participation of fathers in positive parenting and also provide a space for both parents to learn more strategies for managing family conflict.

Community awareness raising on positive parenting

Through their testimonials, community members who participated in this study reported that the positive parenting programme has started to have a wider social impact on parents in the community. Community awareness-raising may be conducted prior to and during the implementation of positive parenting programmes to help generate

wider interest among community members for learning and sharing positive parenting methods. The participatory approach to community-awareness raising is encouraged in addition to collaboration with local authorities and commune committees as part of the awareness-raising process.

The ICS-SP programme might consider extending its size/scope to other provinces[76] in Cambodia where there are higher rates of parent-child separation, and where the grandparents and/or relatives have been identified as primary caregivers for children in the absence of their biological parents. A nationwide survey in 2019 on the impacts of parental migration confirmed that in migrant households where mothers had migrated either internally or internationally due to economic crises, the majority of children were left behind with their grandparent(s). Those children were shown to be less attached to caregivers and experienced significant psychological problems (IOM et al., 2019). Thus, the promotion of a positive parenting programme among migrant households is highly recommended.

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[76] According to IOM et al. (2019) Prey Veng, Banteay Meachey, Kampong Cham, Kampot, Takeo, Tboung Khmum, Kampong Thom and Svay Rieng showed higher rates of family separation due to domestic and international migration of parent(s).

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