

Zero to Five Challenge Refinement Q&A - MECPU

Responses to Questions from the Amplify Team

Question: Are you planning to send messages and recordings that are accessible using feature phones?

Answer: The approach will rely on basic mobile phones and use our organization's experience in working with mobile platforms in rural areas. The messages sent will be short reminders or quick activities that can be completed with the child and thus will not require a feature or smart phone.

It should also be noted that the ICT component will not work in isolation. It will complement our existing VHT and community-level C4CD programming and provide an additional layer of tools, reminders and short strategies targeted at fathers.

We are encouraged by the reception of health sensitization campaigns (HIV, malaria) utilizing simple mobile SMS technology to foster voluntary behaviour change and by the rising uptake of m-services, such as mobile money (1 in 5 households currently have a mobile money user; FITS Uganda 2013).

Any additional training that may be needed for this campaign in the use of mobile phones can be supplemented by the VHTs and through our radio programming.

Question: How can you incorporate feedback from fathers to ensure that your idea engages them?

Answer: In order to ensure fathers' active engagement and feedback in the activities, MECPU will partner with local radio shows to launch an interactive program covering key C4CD themes and encourage fathers to call in to speak about their experience with raising children, share best practices and provide their feedback on C4CD ideas.

Fathers will also be filling out basic surveys as part of the initial signup for SMS delivery where there is opportunities for fathers to share their thoughts on the campaign, their preferred or favourite activities and also ways in which the activities can be improved.

The use of SMS will be two ways through encouraging "voting" (yes or no) on the feasibility or ease of activities, so that fathers play an active role in shaping the direction of the campaign as it is rolled out in the target communities. Additionally, as our idea is built on an existing community level program, we will draw on the resource of the VHTs to monitor fathers engagement in the campaign and conduct assessments and collect

feedback / participant data when making face-to-face visits in the community using our locally developed monitoring and evaluation tools.

Question: What would these recordings (oral stories) and radio programs be about?

Answer: The radio show – one of the most widely accessible mediums - would be an opportunity to elaborate further on C4CD interventions to a wider audience and present fun and innovative ideas which promote children’s early development. Using a talk-show format, fathers will be encouraged to call in and speak openly about raising of children and the C4CD campaign. During the radio show, leaders in parenting (i.e. health care staff, MECPU staff, ECD specialists, “best practice dads,” etc) will be brought in to lead an interactive session where fathers are encouraged to call in – or appear live - and share their experience on topics such as:

- Early bonding and attachment and its implications on fathers
- Why fathers are crucial components in early emotional, social and intellectual development
- How and when fathers can be involved - telling stories, making toys, involve in children`s play etc.
- How fathers can talk so that children can listen and how children can talk so that fathers can listen

Additionally, the radio-show will place the spotlight on prominent fatherhood role-models (both Ugandan and international) to demonstrate that successful, talented, powerful and “masculine” men can be nurturing fathers too.

The radio program would not be limited to fathers, as mothers and even older siblings would be encouraged to listen and call in with their feedback and experiences. The main purpose of the radio program will be to serve as an awareness-raising initiative to get more parents engaged in their children’s early development.

Stories featured will be around traditions, modernized morality plays, or stories of family or community lineage and be used to help develop concepts e.g. counting, colours, size, classification, increase vocabulary and early neural stimulation.

Question: An interesting thing you mention at the beginning of your submission is that you’d like your idea to address gaps in father’s confidence and motivation. How will you do this?

Answer: C4CD is a proven, results-oriented model already designed to increase the confidence of end-user caregivers through easy-to-use activities, accessible messaging and expert-designed pedagogy (Unicef 2012). Evaluative studies have demonstrated that both the confidence and motivation of fathers can be significantly increased

through basic home-based training modules similar to the C4CD approach (Fatherhood Institute's Dad2Dad; UK's Family Nurse Partnership).

In the above models, as in C4CD, multiple home visits are used to reinforce messaging and observe the first-time usage of new activities. However, since the C4CD trainer – the VHT in MECPU's case – cannot always be present in the household at the same time as the father, ICT will act as an "extension," providing reinforcement, motivation and encouragement from a distance when and where VHT's cannot.

We combined C4CD with the most basic forms of ICT4D to keep the focus on building parenting skills, not technology skills. ICT4D literature reveals that the simpler and more recognizable the technology is in an intervention, the more self-confidence that will emerge through its continued use (Supriya and Sebastian, 2014).

Our model will use ICT to encourage and coordinate peer-led parenting groups (i.e. sharing of best practices; father's support groups) which has been proven to significantly increase the retention of positive parenting practices (Michelson, 2012).

Finally, through the use of community-based role-models ("Best Practice Dads") in our radio-shows and spot-lights on well-known nurturing dad, MECPU will build confidence in the role of males as caregivers.

Additional Sources:

Michelson, Daniel, et al, "Evaluation of a peer led parenting intervention for disruptive behaviour in children: community based randomized control trial," *BMJ*, 344:e1107 2012, <http://www.bmj.com/content/344/bmj.e1107>

K. K. Supriya, "Towards a Model for User Technology Readiness in ICT4D Initiative," presented at 25th Australasian Conference on Information Systems in Auckland, New Zealand, Dec 2014.

McAllister, Fiona and Burgess, Adrienne, "Fatherhood: Parenting Programmes and Policy – A Critical Review of Best Practice," Policy paper prepared for Fatherhood Institute and Pro-Mundo, 2012.

Evans-Rhodes, Debra, "Dads Matter Performance Measures: 2009-2010 – Preliminary Results for Confidence and Knowledge," Report Prepared for National Fatherhood Initiative, 2010.