Editor's Note

Dear CRPF family and new readers,

Hope you are all doing well in these trying times and that you are keeping safe! Our lives have been drastically affected and changed by COVID-19, and due to this we are not holding our monthly seminars until further notice while hoping the situation will improve. It is our sincere hope that we will get through this soon and resume our normal lives. In the meantime we are considering the feasiblity of holding online meetings.

Though we are unable to hold the monthly seminar, we have produced this quarterly newsletter in April 2020. This edition presents news on new funding for CRPF and funding for Round 6 Young Lives survey. It also comprises summaries of research papers presented at the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth CRPF monthly seminars. These include summaries from the National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C 2020–2024, Collaborative Parenting in Ethiopia, and Relations between Executive Functions and Early Literacy and Numeracy of O-Class and Grade-One Students.

We look forward to your comments, suggestions and contributions. For more information, please contact us via crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com or +251 (0)1 1154 0121.

News

New funding for CRPF and Round 6 survey of Young Lives

The CRPF which has been active for ten years has been funded by various donors. It was started with funding from OAK foundation with a grant to Young Lives, that was renewed three times. We are grateful to Gender and Adolescence Global Evidence (GAGE) which funded the CRPF for 2019, which was very critical to the continuation of the forum.

For this year, 2020, funding for the CRPF has been secured jointly from UNICEF Ethiopia and DFID Ethiopia's Strategic Research Fund through Young Lives.

Young Lives has also secured funding from DFID UK to carry out the Round 6 survey in the four Young Lives countries – Ethiopia, India, Vietnam and Peru. However, the survey which was planned to take place in the coming November, has been postponed by a year because of the current COVID 19 situation. Nonetheless, there is an agreement to carry out within the next few months a mobile phone survey across the four countries.

Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C 2020–2024
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Women, Children and Youth

The National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage (CM) and Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C) (National Roadmap) 2020-2024 is an evidence-based, multi-sectoral costed plan which outlines key strategies, packages of interventions, expected results, targets and milestones to end CM and FGM/C by 2025. It also embodies Ethiopia's efforts to achieve SDG 5 Target 5.3 to "eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation."

The Rationale

The National Roadmap is prepared to articulate the strategic and programmatic actions required to achieve the Ethiopian government's target or commitment to end CM and FGM/C by 2025, its cost and monitoring framework.

CM and FGM/C still prevalent, but declining

Ethiopia has made significant progress in the last two decades in reducing CM and FGM/C. Despite this progress many girls are still at risk. Though CM is declining overall, there are variations across and within regions. Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) 2016 shows that 40.3% of young women aged 20-24 were married before the legal age of 18, and 14.1% were married before the age of 15.

Likewise, the rates of FGM/C are dropping across age cohorts keeping in mind regional variations. The age at which women are cut also varies by region. EDHS data shows that 65% of women aged 15-49 have been cut, and 47% were aged 15-19. Of those that have been cut amongst the 15-19 years, almost two thirds had flesh removed, and 7% have been sewn closed.

Compared to the last ten years, progress would need to be six times and ten times faster to eliminate CM by 2030 and by 2025 respectively. For FGM/C progress needs to be a little over seven times faster to eliminate the practice by 2030.

Drivers of CM and FGM/C are complex

There are many social, economic, religious and cultural drivers of CM and FGM/C. Fear of girls' premarital sexual activity and especially girls' premarital pregnancy, coupled with lack of opportunity to facilitate alternative life options for girls like secondary education, marketable skill training and employment, have been found to be the largest drivers of CM across "hot spot" sites.

FGM/C is also primarily driven by gender norms. These norms are tied to religious beliefs and are embedded in cultural practices. Even when the people believe it should be eliminated, they engage in FGM/C for fear of social sanctions.

CM and FGM/C are rights violations

Various international, regional and national human rights instruments and laws determine that CM and FGM/C are violations of the rights of women and girls.

For many girls who are married off at a young age, it is the end of their education, they are at increased risk of early pregnancy and its complications, gender-based violence (GBV) and are often socially isolated. FGM/C also has short-term consequences and long-term medical complications.

Both CM and FGM/C may lead to unstable marriages and family life, issues with family planning and management, and mental

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1 This summary is prepared based on the summary of the Roadmap and the CRPF presentation slide that was used in August 2019 CRPF. https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/media/1711/file/Roadmap%20summary%20.pdf

health issues. CM and FGM/C also have economic implications for the girls and significant costs for the country.

The Roadmap will build on the momentum from efforts to-date

Ethiopia has implemented several policy and institutional measures to end CM and FGM/C. Besides, the country has ratified many international and regional human rights instruments which consider CM and FGM/C as violations of human rights.

Based on the Constitution of the country, the criminal and family laws have been revised to protect girls and women from CM and FGM/C. The National Policy on Ethiopian Women, the Ethiopian Women's Development and Change Package, and the National Strategy and Action Plan on HTPs against Women and Children in Ethiopia have addressed HTPs.

Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) mentions HTPs including female genital mutilation, early marriage and childbearing, gender-based violence and forced marriage; and the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MoWCY) GTP II Setoral Plan aims to reduce CM and FGM/C in Ethiopia by 50% by 2020.

Ethiopia has attracted global and regional support in its efforts to end CM and FGM/C. It is supported by UNFPA, UNICEF, and other partners. It also enjoys the support of the African Union Campaign to End CM in Africa.

A significant step in the fight against HTPs has been the endorsement by different religions through the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) consisting seven faith-based organizations (FBOs).

Pillar Strategies and Outcomes for Ending CM and FGM/C

The drivers of CM and FGM/C are multidimensional, and the National Roadmap therefore requires multi-sectoral interventions, underpinned by well-coordinated responses from various actors. To achieve this the Roadmap identifies five pillar strategies:

1. Empowering adolescent girls and their families;
2. Community engagement (including faith and traditional leaders);
3. Enhancing systems, accountability and services across sectors;
4. Creating and strengthening an enabling environment;
5. Increasing data and evidence generation, and use.

Core approaches

The following core approaches will be used to strengthen these five pillars in designing and implementing programmes:

Social norms approach: to address collective behaviour changes, foster community empowerment, and create positive social norms.

Gender transformative approaches: to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Multi-sectoral approach: to strengthen health, education, child protection and legal system and services.

A social ecological approach: "girls at the centre", families, community structures, service providers and policy makers.

Outcomes

The National Roadmap has five targeted outcomes:

Outcome 1: Adolescent girls at risk of and affected by CM marriage and FGM/C are empowered to express and exercise their choices, and families are empowered to protect their children from child marriage and FGM/C.

Outcome 2: Increased social action, acceptance, and visibility around investing in and supporting girls, and generating shifts in social expectations relating to girls' education and elimination of child marriage and FGM/C.

Outcome 3: Enhanced systems, accountability and services across sectors that are responsive to the needs of girls at risk of or affected by CM and FGM/C.

Outcome 4: Enhanced enabling environment that protects the rights of girls and supports national efforts to end child CM and FGM/C.

Outcome 5: Increased generation and use of a robust data and evidence based on girls for advocacy, programming, learning and tracking progress.

Costing, Funding Mechanisms and M&E

The National Roadmap costing is undertaken using medium-term expenditure framework principles and amounts to Ethiopian Birr (ETB) 2.72 billion for the five-year duration. It is expected to be funded through different resource mobilization mechanisms including federal and regional government sectors' recurrent budget allocations; partner commitments, private sector involvement, community mobilisation or resources, and by the implementation of other mechanisms such as a national lottery and tax deduction. The National Roadmap has a participatory M&E process that includes joint monitoring and review with responsible agencies for each intervention.

A call to action

Mainstreaming budgeted action and tracking progress to eliminate CM and FGM/C across all relevant sectors (including education, health, justice and other sectors) is vital. Efforts on prevention, protection and response require collaboration and effective leadership, commitment and coordination of the Government, with trusted partners including from civil society, UN agencies, donors, international organizations, the private sector, communities, families, and girls and boys themselves – especially girls at risk of or who have survived CM and FGM/C■

Research Summaries

Collaborative Parenting in Ethiopia

Azmeraw Belay (PhD candidate AAU)[2]

Introduction

Ethiopia is a country having diverse cultures. Each ethnic group or community has its own unique culture and way of living, views about children, and culture specific child rearing practices.

Parenting in Ethiopia is not solely the responsibility of biological parents, it is also the responsibility of relatives, older children, grand parents, neighbours, and community members - it is a social and collaborative exercise.

Collective parenting provides a number of supplementary and alternative provisions of care and support and services at times when biological parents are temporarily or permanently absent.

Objectives of the Study

This research tries to describe the existing collaborative practices that exist in different ethnic groups of Ethiopia.

- Explore the existing good collaborative parenting practices that exist in different ethnic groups/cultures of Ethiopia.

- Describe the roles of elders, older children, extended family members, and the community in collaborative parenting practices in different ethnic groups/cultures of Ethiopia.

- Provide practical recommendations both at programming and policy levels to support the strengthening of families and communities to sustain the existing collaborative practices.

Methods

Research Design: A qualitative approach with a descriptive focus to identify and describe existing good parenting practices.

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2   Azmeraw currently works for Save the Children International in Ethiopia, and he is a PhD candidate at Addis Ababa University, in Applied Developmental Ps psychology. This paper is part of a course work requirement in his PhD undertaking. Azmeraw can be reached at: belayazmeraw2@gmail.com.

Study areas: Amhara (Goncha Sisso Enesse and Feresbet town), Oromia (Bishoftu, Arsi Bekejo, Bule Hora, Woliso, and Adama); SNNPR (Wolkite, Hammer/Tourmi, Bensa and Konso Special Wereda); Addis Ababa (Wereda 3 in Addis Ketema Sub-city, and Wereda 2 in Yeka Sub-city), Somali Region (Jigjiga); and Afar (Semera).

Respondnets: Children/adolescents aged 12-18 years, parents (women and men) community leaders, religious and cultural leaders, and government officials. A total of 64 participants 42 males, and 22 females).

Major Observations

The following are the major observations of the study.

Community parenting: Parenting here is taken as collective survival and interdependence mechanism. Where kin and social network of supports between households and families are neither a unitary phenomenon nor closed social entities, but which are intricately intertwined with the wider social networks of support. As mentioned by Poluha (2004) as '*mahiberawi noro',* one must take part in order to be a meaningful member of the community. *Iddir*, *Senbete, Equb, Mahiber, Debo* and other community network systems are seen as providing care and support for the needy.

Cultural and religious influences: A child in Ethiopia cannot be seen as lonesome individual, but as someone who is connected into the social and emotional ties and fulfils obligations and participates in communities, starting with the family, kin and peer groups. Across all the cultures in this study, there is a progression of child care from the mother, to others in the family, to extended family members and to the community at large. And religious institutions mobilise resources from members to help destitute children and youth.

The role of the elderly: The elderly in Ethiopia are not merely dependents on others. They are rather highly respected people, whose opinions are consulted in many ways. Elders are the custodians of cultural information, and they pass first hand cultural knowledge and norms to the younger generations. The elderly teach children and young people on how to continue 'positive' traditions, and about socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. In Ethiopian parenting, more emphasis is given to equipping children with knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities and less emphasis on their rights.

Extended family system: According to EDHS (2011), the majority (88%) of Ethiopian children live with their biological parents, followed by those who live with extended family members. Of those living with neither parents, 88% were living with relatives, showing the important role of the extended family system. Extended family members fill the family's resource (financial and material) gaps, and provide support and guidance for children.

The role of older children: Older siblings help their parents in caring for their younger siblings when parents are not in the house. They also act as mentors, tutors and council for their younger siblings and teach them about good behaviours. There are also those older children who assume total responsibility for the care of their younger children in the absence of their parents. The majority of these child-headed households are cared for mostly by girls, between the ages of 14-18.

Kinship care practices: According to a study about kinship care giving by Save the Children (2015) , 95.5% of the children aged 11-17 lived with relatives, aunts taking the lead with 38.6%. Only 4.5% of the children were living with non-relatives. *Guddifachaa* is a good example from Oromia, and *Adera* from Amhara is another example whereby children who lost their parents will get protection and shelter from a close kin or somebody entrusted by their deceased parents (Mebratu 2010).

Alternative community based child care options: Here the resources and indigenous knowledge are mobilized from the community with the ultimate goal of addressing the needs and rights of vulnerable children. Children without parental care are provided with care in the child's own community and within a family like setting. According to MoLSA (2017), it is possible to fulfil the emotional, social and spiritual needs of orphan and vulnerable children thorough community based children care, and effectively protect them from abuse and exploitation. This program proved to have positive impacts for improving the livelihoods and psychosocial wellbeing of targeted beneficiaries; and facilitate the building of social capital in the target communities.

Summary and Implications

- Culture and religion have strong influence on parenting. Religious institutions play significant role in parenting and this has been appreciated by government officials and community leaders.

- Elders assume increasingly important role in parenting.

- Two important community or cultural practices widely practiced in Ethiopia can be mentioned as examples of best practices that could be scaled up: *Gudifecha* and *Adera*.

- There is a need to build capacity of child headed households and extended family members on positive parenting; mentoring/supportive supervision; and helping in their education.

- Design interventions to prevent unnecessary family separation and placement of children in kinship care; improve access to quality education, health care and livelihood opportunities.

- Strengthen family and community based protection systems to ensure the protection of children.

- Improve data collection and management on children living in the informal care arrangement including kinship care■

Research Summaries

Relations between Executive Functions and Early Literacy and Numeracy of O-Class and Grade-One Students

Belay Hagos (PhD)[3]

Introduction

Early childhood experiences are critical for rapid brain, cognitive and language development. Early Learning Programme (ELP) has been considered crucial as it is the right time for optimal investment for later individual and societal success.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes are set up with the purpose of enhancing children's readiness for the formal school. They focus on socio-emotional development, fine and gross motor skills and pre-literacy and numeracy skills with play-based and active learning methods.

What is Executive Function?

Executive Functions (EF) are the cognitive abilities needed to control and regulate our thoughts, emotions and actions. They are skills necessary for learning, solving problems, coping and adapting with emerging challenges. EF include: *behavioural control* (including response inhibition, and shifting or flexibility); *cognitive control* (including task initiation, working memory, planning or prioritization, organizing materials and monitoring); and *emotional control* (including self-regulation).

EF is very important in predicting developmental outcomes such as academic achievement, health behaviours and social adjustments. EF can be developed through the support of parents and teachers by allowing more opportunities for children to do a variety of age appropriate real life exercises and problem solving activities through play-based approaches.

Problem statement

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is provided in a two to three year kindergarten (KG) and a one year O-class programme. Child to Child, and Accelerated School Readiness (ASR) programmes are provided where there are no other options. The purpose of ECE is to prepare children with foundational schools for them to be ready to formal education. EF is a foundational skill that needs to develop during early childhood. Hence, optimizing school readiness programme is possible if we understand the contributions of EF.

The purpose of this study is to explore the link between EF and academic skills such as pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills.

Research questions

Based on the purpose mentioned above, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any gender difference between the performance of boys and girls enrolled in O-Class and Grade-One on pre-literacy, pre-numeracy and EF?
2. Do children enrolled in O-Class perform differently from those enrolled in Grade One on pre-literacy, pre-numeracy and EF?
3. Do skills on EF, gender and grade level predict pre-literacy and pre-numeracy performance?
4. What lessons can we learn from the contributions of EF?

Method

Design: cross sectional survey method was employed (Quantitative).

Study sites: Amhara (Amharic, N=192), Benishangul-Gumuz (Gumuz, N=192), Oromia (Afan Oromo, N=190), SNNP (Sidamuu Afoo N=187), Somali (Af Somali, N=191), and Tigray (Tigrinya, N=192).

Grade: O-class (N=571) and Grade 1 (N=573).

Gender: Boys (50%), Girls (50%).

Age: 4 years (N=30), 5 years (N=150, 6 years (N=399), 7 years (N=127), and 8 years (N=127)

Tool of data collection: Measure of Early Learning Quality and Outcome (MELQO) - Measure of Development and Early Learning (MODEL) - Child Direct Assessment, which was adapted for the Ethiopian context was used. This includes: pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, and EF.

Results

- There was no statistically significant relationship between gender and performance on pre literacy, pre-numeracy and EF.

- Children's EF and grade level (or age) significantly predicted performance on pre-literacy tests.

  ◇ About 37.1% of the variance in EF is associated with performance on the pre-literacy test.

  ◇ About 5.5% of the variance in grade level is associated with performance on pre-literacy test.

- Children's EF and grade level (or age) significantly predicted performance on pre-numeracy tests.

  ◇ About 44.4 % of the variance in EF is associated with performance on the pre-numeracy test.

  ◇ About 3.7% of the variance in grade level (or age) is associated with performance on pre-numeracy test.

Implications

- MELQO is a valid measure of school readiness in the Ethiopian context

- EF is a good predictor of performance of children on pre-literacy and pre-numeracy scores – considering EF in the curriculum of ECE.

- To develop the skills on EF, active learning pedagogical approaches need to be considered by educators, teachers and even parents.

- Designing early intervention by integrating EF might yield better developmental, behavioural and social outcomes■

Interested to know about CRPF?

The Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF) was established in 2010 to promote work on child research, policy and practice. CRPF makes use of monthly seminars, quarterly newsletters and annual publications as a means to achieve its objectives. The publications are also available at the Young Lives Ethiopia website.

The CRPF has been funded by OAK foundation until 2018, and by GAGE in 2019, and by UNICEF and DFID Ethiopia in 2020. The coordination work is currently funded by Young Lives. CRPF is functioning with collaborative financial and technical support from MoWCY, UNICEF, Young Lives and other national and international NGOs. The publication of this newsletter is funded by UNICEF through an agreement with Young Lives.

If you want to know more, please contact us via crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com.