

Progress Report

Global Parenting Initiative

University of Oxford

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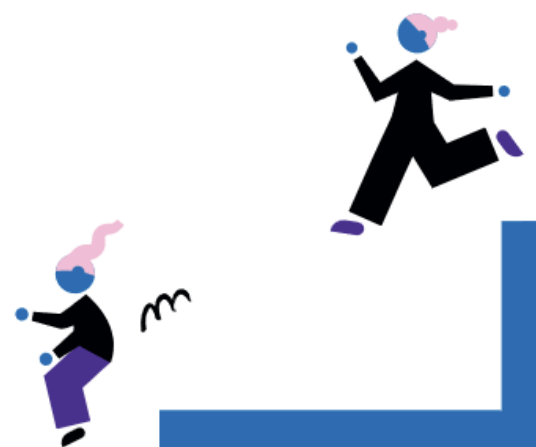


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SUMMARY OF PROGRESS: KEY GRANT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We're delighted to submit our second annual progress report for the Global Parenting Initiative (GPI) to the LEGO Foundation. Twenty-one months into our five-year journey, we continue to make headway towards our ambitious goal: to provide every parent, everywhere, with free, evidence-based, playful parenting support.

During this time, the GPI has seen significant advancements across all workstreams: Evaluate, Innovate, Facilitate, Advocate, Accelerate, and Generate.

Evaluate Summary

Our nine core research studies and one research methods innovation study are progressing well. At this stage, we are pleased to report no major concerns regarding the overall implementation of the research. The first phase of GPI studies, initiated in the programme's first year, is now yielding valuable results, insights, and lessons. These are being integrated into the second batch of studies that began this year. We're also delighted to see the scope and impact of GPI research expanding into new areas. The GPI Emerging Trends Fund is supporting a wide range of strategic opportunities covering research, evaluation, and capacity-strengthening topics. Additionally, the GPI core research team is supporting 13 Satellite Studies that utilise, test, or adapt PLH tools for parenting research in new areas. To date, six papers from these GPI core studies have been published or accepted for publication this year, with four of these led by our Future Leaders. In addition, over the past year, 23 papers from GPI researchers have been published. These papers span a wide range of projects, focusing on parenting interventions across childhood and adolescence. This work represents a massive contribution to the literature on parenting programmes in the Global South and beyond. Looking forward, we anticipate a steady flow of results to emerge from GPI studies over the next 12 months, and we are excited to share these results.

Innovate Summary

This year, our Innovate team has made significant progress in developing the front-end and back-end features of digital and hybrid-digital parenting tools across GPI's core projects. This includes streamlining the design-to-development process for new digital content, which has expedited the rapid development and launch of the new FacilitatorApp in Malaysia. We've created a single flexible app infrastructure with features that can be easily adapted for parents, teens, young children, or facilitators, and have thoroughly revamped ParentText 2.0 to enhance functionality and user experience. As we enter the final year of Innovate funding, our focus is on addressing "technical debt" to ensure the sustainability of these tools. Other priorities include updates to the App and ParentText infrastructure and improving data monitoring and visualisations for implementers.

Facilitate Summary

Community of Practice

The GPI has established itself as a key thought leader in playful parenting research and implementation. Over the past year, we've launched the GPI Open Webinar Series, hosted numerous Research-in-Progress events, and convened a global event on scaling up playful parenting interventions. These successes have positioned GPI to lead a Global Community of Practice on Scale-up, supported by GISP and ISPCAN. Nationally, our teams have effectively engaged government partners in the co-design and delivery of playful parenting programmes, notably initiating a new Thai community of practice to bring together policymakers and implementers.

Capacity Sharing

We are proud to support 94 GPI Future Leaders, 70 of whom are from the Global South. This year, we introduced the Future Leaders Training programme, offering a curriculum that provides unique learning opportunities, particularly designed for researchers in the Global South. In 2024, we aim to fully roll out the GPI's mentoring programme, offering each GPI Future Leader professional mentorship from experienced professionals both within and external to the GPI network.

Additionally, our Capacity-sharing Fund supports Future Leaders with a broad range of career development opportunities, including conference attendance, training courses, and research-related travel. This past year, the fund has supported the research activities of 10 Future Leaders, nine of whom are from the Global South. The capacity sharing team has also facilitated one-to-one executive coaching for five GPI study Principal Investigators from the Global South, strengthening the programme's overall governance and management.

Advocate Summary

GPI advocacy activities continue to shape the global parenting agenda at both global and local levels. At the global level, the GPI maintains its core advocacy role in the Inter-Agency Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP). This year, the team has been working closely with Global Leaders from USAID and the World Bank to influence the global agenda on parenting support. Notable advocacy activities include leading the campaign to secure the re-authorisation of PEPFAR; using evidence-based advocacy to influence the creation of a World Bank fund supporting family-based care for children in crises; and contributing to the development of WHO's Parenting Intervention Guidelines. At the regional and national level, our project teams have engaged government stakeholders effectively in the early phases of our research. As studies begin to produce results in the coming year, we anticipate a substantial increase in advocacy activities around GPI research at both the global and national levels. This will require close coordination among the advocacy, accelerate, and communication teams, especially at the country level. These teams are currently developing a strategy for sharing resources and coordinating activities.

Generate Summary

In the last year, GPI teams have secured funding to support the scale-up of playful parenting research. This year's funding has been primarily directed towards supporting the institutionalisation and/or scale-up of PLH programmes in various countries, including Uganda, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Accelerate Summary

Since the start of the programme in 2021, GPI has reached over 14 million parents/caregivers and children with playful parenting programmes. Beyond these headline figures, our efforts to institutionalise playful parenting programmes across GPI countries are progressing well. In Tanzania, collaboration with the government and funding from the Wellspring Foundation have led to the establishment of a national parenting consortium. In Uganda, the expansion of the PfR programme is underway across five new provinces. Thailand's PLH for Young Children programme is reaching an extensive network of parents and caregivers, and in the Philippines, the successful nationwide scaling of MaPa content through government systems continues at pace. The core Accelerate team continues to provide technical assistance to country teams: leading scaling assessments, supporting the development of scale-up strategies, and convening in-country scale-up workshops.

PROGRESS UPDATES ACROSS GLOBAL PARENTING INITIATIVE (GPI) WORKSTREAMS

Each of the nine Core Projects within the GPI is an integrated programme designed to deliver impactful results across all six key workstreams: Evaluate, Innovate, Facilitate, Advocate, Generate, and Accelerate.

The sections below summarise the progress of each workstream across the entire programme. The [Annex](#) provides detailed reporting of individual projects towards each of these workstreams.

EVALUATE

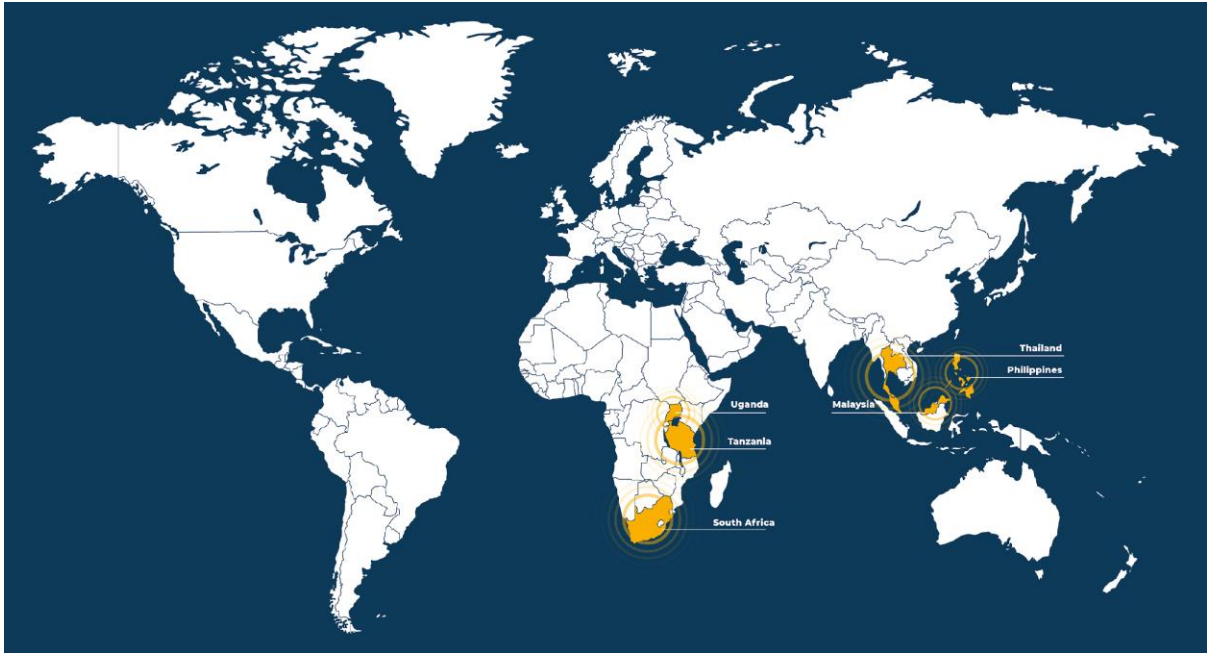
Workstream aim: To implement an ambitious programme of research across multiple countries in the Global South to rapidly advance knowledge on how human-digital playful parenting support can best help children realise their learning potential and reduce family violence.

Measure of success: Increased evidence on effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and transferability of Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) human-digital playful parenting programmes.

Workstream structure: The GPI's Evaluate workstream consists of **nine core research studies** and one **research methods innovation study** conducted in six countries across sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia. Additionally, GPI researchers are implementing a growing number of smaller research projects focussing on **emerging trends** in playful parenting research. The GPI also supports **13 satellite studies** that use, test, or adapt PLH tools in different contexts.

To maximise research insights, the GPI core research team supports all GPI studies by providing technical guidance on research design and power calculations, ethics, fieldwork, data management, and quantitative and qualitative analysis. This team also ensures measures across studies are harmonised and supports knowledge sharing and learning between projects. To maximise local ownership and, ultimately, policy relevance and impact, GPI teams work closely with local stakeholders as research partners to co-design interventions and support with project direction and dissemination of results.

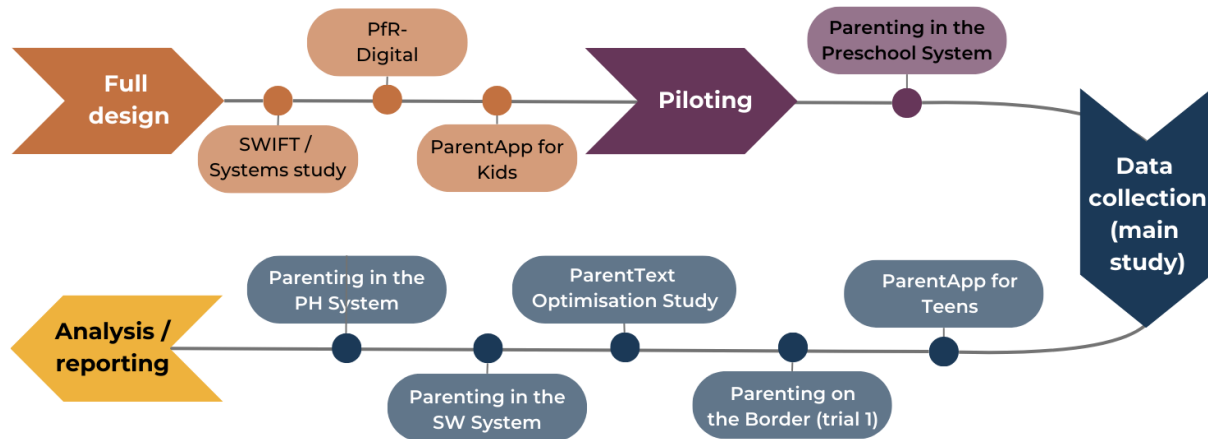
The core team also aims to build researcher capacity in the Global South through the technical support it provides both through the Future Leaders Programme (see Facilitate) and through direct support to partner research administrative and operations teams. Additionally, the team is working to develop research management infrastructure by supporting teams to house their research data on servers within their own country instead of having data stored primarily in Oxford.



GPI core study countries.

Progress on Research Studies

All nine GPI core research studies are underway and progressing well. In line with the design of the overall programme, the studies are at differing stages of development. This variation in progress is intentional, with core studies being rolled out in two distinct phases. This phased approach is designed to allow the integration of lessons learned from the initial set of studies into the second tranche.



Phase 1 Studies

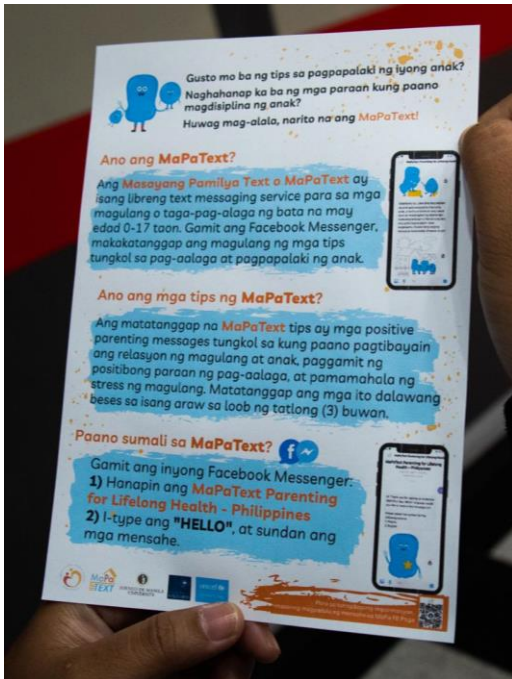
Within the first tranche of studies, **ParentApp for Teens (Tanzania)** and **Parenting on the Border (Thailand/Myanmar)** have moved onto their main trial phase. In these studies, the interventions, namely ParentApp (Tanzania) and a population-level media campaign (Thailand), have been designed, tested, and implemented; baseline data collection has been completed; and follow-up data is being collected and analysed. For Parenting on the Border, planning for their second trial, which will focus on developing and testing a trauma-informed adaptation of PLH for high-need caregivers, has commenced, with data collection starting in mid-2024.

The **ParentText Optimisation study** in South Africa has recently completed its data collection for the main factorial trial. This trial will assess and test the optimal delivery models of the adapted ParentText content and delivery modalities. The research team plans to evaluate a five-day user experience at a population level (approx. 14,000 recruited through social media) in 2024.

The **Philippines Parenting within the Social Welfare System study** team is working with government counterparts to use implementation science methods to monitor and evaluate the PLH components of the **government's conditional cash transfer programme delivered to over four million families**. At the same time, the team is also working to evaluate and test other scaling pathways. These include an upcoming randomised controlled trial (RCT) of the nine-session version of the in-person 'MaPa Teens' programme in partnership with the Joy Nostalg Foundation, as well as assessing the effectiveness and feasibility of the 'MaPaChat'

programme delivered by community facilitators, supported by the GPI's Emerging Trends Fund.

In Thailand, the Parenting within the Public Health System team has made good progress on several studies. These studies include the first economic analysis on the cost-effectiveness and social return on investment of the PLH for Young Children programme, discussed further below. Preparations are also underway for an RCT to evaluate the impact of ParentChat for caregivers in Udon Thani. This trial, focusing on various positive parenting and child maltreatment outcomes, is also part of a new Emerging Trends application submitted to the LEGO Foundation.



Phase 2 Studies

The second-phase studies are advanced in their intervention design and are rapidly moving towards pilot testing. Over the last 12 months, the **Parenting within the Preschool System** (Malaysia) team has worked closely with government stakeholders to finalise an intervention design aligned with the needs and capabilities of the teachers who will implement the



programme. Baseline data collection and onboarding have now been completed for the factorial trial (N = 167 caregivers of children ages 2 to 6 years enrolled in the government rural preschool system).

Facilitator training in Uganda in 2022.

The **Supporting Wellness through Integrated Family Training** (SWIFT) study in South Africa, formerly known as the Systems Study, is completing their research design and planning phase. The design process has involved in-depth consultations within the Western Cape’s health sector, significantly influencing the intervention’s development.

The **ParentApp for Kids** (Tanzania) and **Parenting for Respectability-Digital** (PfR-Digital; Uganda) studies have both benefited from insights and digital developments from the ParentApp for Teens study. The ParentApp for Kids team has also incorporated innovative features into the app, such as a repository of open-source books linked to various ParentApp modules/themes. These themes include playful parenting, discussing emotions, positive parenting, and fostering independence. A pilot of this intervention is scheduled for 2024, with the full trial set for 2025. Similarly, the PfR-Digital team is finalising plans for a feasibility and initial effectiveness evaluation of an app-based intervention. This study has been expanded to include an increased focus on early childhood development outcomes made possible by funding from ELMA Philanthropies, Echidna Giving, and Wellspring Philanthropies. The effectiveness evaluation – planned for mid-2024 – will test three delivery options, including digital-only and hybrid approaches, and inform plans for the full trial in 2025.

The GPI also includes a research methods innovation study: **Identifying and Measuring Playful Parenting Using Machine Learning**, led by Prof Mark Tomlinson and Dr Caspar Addyman (Stellenbosch University) together with Dr Daniel Statmate (Goldsmiths, University of London). In 2023, the team published [initial research](#) on a computer model trained to predict high and low synchrony in a dataset of expert-coded parent-child interaction videos. The model has a mean accuracy of 72% and a mean specificity of 83%, representing an 83% detection rate for dyads with low synchrony. This finding is an encouraging first step towards the team’s goal of automating assessments of parent-child interactions. A model such as this could help identify priority cases for parenting interventions, improving their effectiveness.

Core study results timeline

Below is an overview of the **timeline for expected results** from the GPI core studies:

Table 1 – GPI Core Studies preliminary results

<i>GPI study</i>	<i>Expected dissemination of preliminary results, by study component</i>
Parenting within the Public Health System (Thailand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SROI study and cost-benefit analysis study: Feb 2024 - Opportunities & challenges for scaling up PLH in public health system: March 2024 - Male engagement study: May 2024 - Process and impact evaluations of scaled up PLH for Young Children: August 2024 - Cluster RCT of ParentChat: October 2024 - Formative evaluation of digital strategies: October 2024
Parenting on the Border (Thailand/Myanmar):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Film-based intervention RCT: March 2024 - Mental health + parenting intervention RCT: August 2025
ParentApp for Teens (Tanzania)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-post results from RCT: May 2024 - One-year follow-up results from RCT: May 2025
ParentText Optimisation (South Africa)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preliminary quantitative results from factorial trial: May 2024 - Preliminary qualitative results from factorial trial: June 2024 - Final results from factorial trial: September 2024
Parenting within the Social Welfare System (Philippines)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MaPa scale-up in electronic Family Development Sessions (quantitative and qualitative findings): June '24
Parenting for Respectability-Digital (Uganda)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feasibility pilot: October 2024
ParentApp for Kids (Tanzania)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative work (consultations and pilot activities) – December 2024. - Final RCT results: October 2026
Parenting within the Preschool System (Malaysia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pilot: July 2024 - RCT: mid-2025
SWIFT (South Africa)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pilot: June 2024 - Main study: June 2025

Over the past year, GPI research teams have encountered various challenges in research management and implementation. These have included climate disasters, political, and institutional issues. The continued progress of all research studies, despite these hurdles, is a testament to the creativity, expertise, and perseverance of each in-country research team and their supporting teams. Their ability to adapt to new challenges and devise solutions has been remarkable. This year's challenges have included a Marburg virus outbreak in Tanzania and extreme weather conditions coupled with ongoing security threats and escalating violence on the Thai/Myanmar border. In every instance, our study teams have swiftly and effectively responded to these obstacles, taking decisions that safeguard both staff wellbeing and the integrity of our research.

Flooding during data collection in Thailand.



Emerging insights and lessons

GPI studies are beginning to generate meaningful insights about the design, implementation, and effectiveness of hybrid-digital playful parenting interventions.

1. Enhanced engagement with the app and chatbot when they are combined with human-led elements: Initial findings from the ParentApp for Teens study suggest that a hybrid-digital format offers great potential for scaling up. The ParentApp Optimisation Trial showed significantly higher engagement levels with the app when complemented by remote, human-led support via WhatsApp groups. Engagement was further boosted by the provision of person-to-person technical support. These findings reinforce the importance of building human-to-human engagement and interaction even within a primarily digital programme. These insights have also informed the design of subsequent GPI studies in South Africa and Malaysia. They have also provided important input into the development of the FacilitatorApp (see Innovate). Identifying the most effective balance between human and digital engagement and its implications for intervention effectiveness, cost, and scalability remains a key research theme for all study teams for the rest of the GPI.

2. Preliminary findings suggest the cost-effectiveness and social return of investment of the PLH for Young Children in-person programme in Thailand: A central objective of the GPI is to understand the cost-effectiveness of both human-led and hybrid-digital PLH programmes. Building on the evidence showing the effectiveness of the PLH for Young Children programme in Thailand (paper forthcoming), the Parenting within the Public Health System project has explored the cost-effectiveness of this programme through a social return on investment (SROI) analysis conducted by Sal Forest Consultancy. This analysis incorporated existing RCT evidence and first-hand accounts and experiences from key stakeholders to calculate the costs and benefits of the intervention based on social, environmental, and economic criteria. The preliminary results are striking, indicating an SROI ratio of 4.76:1. This means that for every one Baht invested in the PLH for Young Children programme, a social value of 4.76 Baht is generated. Such findings suggest that there is significant positive social and economic impact of the face-to-face programme but also highlight the enormous potential societal benefits which could be realised through an effective, cost-effective, and scalable hybrid-digital approach. These results will be finalised during the first half of 2024.

3. Involvement of local stakeholders is critical for real-world testing: Across GPI projects, we have seen the benefits of proactive and early engagement of stakeholders in research planning and design. The relationships we have built with governments, research partners, and the wider local stakeholder network have helped strengthen the relevance of our intervention designs. It has also helped project teams navigate unforeseen opportunities and challenges, which may have been more difficult if key stakeholders did not share project ownership. These relationships will be instrumental in disseminating research findings as they emerge, ensuring our work remains impactful and grounded in real-world contexts ([Box 1](#) below).

Box 1: Working closely with government to design appropriate interventions

A. Understanding of the needs and capacities of government partners in Malaysia: Collaboration with government stakeholders is central to the design and implementation of the Parenting within the Preschool System project in Malaysia. In July, the team hosted an intensive four-day in-person co-design workshop with government representatives from the National Population and Family Development Department (LPPKN), the Community Development Department (KEMAS), and others. This workshop provided valuable insights, leading to adjustments in the structure and delivery of ParentText content and modifications to the study design and protocol. A crucial outcome was understanding KEMAS's preference for a programme that demands minimal time commitment from their staff, such as teachers, and minimises out-of-pocket expenses for schools. This understanding enabled the team to create a more concise and acceptable intervention, with sessions designed to be brief enough to negate the need for schools to provide meals to parents.

B. Benefits of extensive stakeholder consultation with local government and health sector stakeholders in the Western Cape, South Africa: The 'SWIFT' project (previously the Systems study) has spent nearly a year engaging with diverse stakeholders, including government departments and NGOs within the Western Cape. The insights from these interactions have informed the design of the SWIFT intervention and fostered awareness and support for the first phase of study implementation. These engagements have enabled the team to uncover new collaborative opportunities between government agencies and the exciting prospect of a partnership with the Provincial Mental Health Steering Committee.

4. Exploring the opportunities and challenges of moving into the digital space: Adopting a hybrid-digital format for parenting programmes can introduce complexities around design, delivery, and evaluation. For instance, programme teams must navigate accessibility and delivery challenges for both in-person and digital delivery. In-person sessions continue to face logistical issues like transportation, provision of refreshments, and venue suitability, while digital components confront challenges including participants' digital literacy, internet connectivity, device availability, and mobile data access. It is often difficult to anticipate the specific hurdles users may encounter with digital tools, highlighting the critical role of small-

scale piloting and testing. Such iterative testing in real-world conditions is invaluable in identifying and addressing issues related to the accessibility and usability of digital tools, as well as rectifying any bugs.

In terms of intervention design and management, transitioning towards digital and hybrid-digital tools necessitates developing new capabilities beyond the realm of traditional parenting research. These skills encompass adapting and condensing evidence-based content into an engaging and accessible digital format, understanding the planning and budgeting for digital adaptations, and mastering the management of iterative digital tool development. The role of IDEMS/INNODEMS, serving as the digital innovation lead for all GPI teams, has been instrumental in supporting research teams through this transition. Their contributions include providing training, sharing resources, and developing technical solutions that lower the barriers to digital development. They have also provided critical support in terms of data monitoring and analysis on GPI studies.

5. Building consistency and connectivity across GPI studies: The experience gained over the past year has validated the GPI's approach to research support where a centralised core research team supports the delivery of parenting research across various countries. The GPI's core research team has pivotal in fostering connectivity across our studies, ensuring not only the high-quality design, delivery, management, analysis, and write-up of research but also promoting knowledge exchange and collaborative learning between projects. A concrete example of the benefits of this connectivity is how lessons from the ParentApp for Teens optimisation study have been integrated into the ParentText Optimisation study in South Africa and the Parenting within the Preschool study in Malaysia.

As we move into Year 3, many projects are transitioning into their analysis and reporting phases. We anticipate the emergence of a plethora of new research results and implementations insights, which promise to enrich the existing knowledge of playful parenting research. These findings will be critical in supporting our Advocate, Generate, and Accelerate activities, which will become increasingly important in future years of the initiative.

Progress of GPI satellite studies

We have been proud to expand our research portfolio to include 13 GPI satellite studies. These studies, often led by GPI Future Leaders, share the GPI goals and objectives. By expanding the GPI in this way, we are building an ever-wider network of studies and a community of parenting researchers who can share and learn together.

Three of these satellite projects have been made possible through the support of GPI's Emerging Trends Fund. These include the adaptation of the **Malezi Bora Project** to involve street-connected fathers in Eldoret, **Kenya**; the development and preliminary testing of an **Early Family Maths App in Kenya**; and an RCT of 'Hope Groups', an initiative supporting parents in Ukraine.

Box 2: Parenting at Scale in Mexico

A new satellite study building on the GPI's research and innovation is the **Parenting at Scale in Mexico** project, which is focused on a pre-post study and scaling up an adapted version of the ParentText chatbot intervention with the government system. The team has been through an intensive formative evaluation phase with practitioners, experts, and government officials to determine the content adaptation needed to improve adolescent and caregiver mental health outcomes and align ParentText with the Mexican cultural context. They will now test the adapted version of ParentText in intensive user-testing focus group workshops with parents and facilitators. Following any further adaptations, the intervention will go through a pilot outcome and process evaluation in early 2024. Funding for this project is from UNICEF to PLH and the National Institute for Psychiatry.

All satellite studies are reaping the benefits of new database of research and implementation support resources. Over the past year, the core research team has completed an extensive mapping and indexing of research-related resources from across the GPI network. This includes research protocols, measures, outputs, presentations, and more. In early 2024, these resources will be migrated to a newly created GPI Digital Asset Management platform. This platform will serve as a crucial open-access resource for our internal GPI community and for the wider network of playful parenting researchers and implementers.

Detailed narrative summaries of the progress of all **GPI satellite projects** can be found in the [Annex](#) of this report.

GPI Emerging Trends Fund

Over the last year, the GPI has firmly established the Emerging Trends Fund as a flexible funding mechanism for the GPI Executive Team to support strategic opportunities arising from GPI projects. During this period, the GPI Executive Team and the LEGO Foundation have approved **eight emerging trends projects**. These projects have a wide range of research, evaluation, and capacity-strengthening themes:

- 1. Developing new digital tools and approaches** – e.g., FacilitatorApp in Zambia and Early Family Maths App in Kenya.
- 2. Supporting new and innovative research studies in new contexts** – e.g., Malezi Bora in Kenya and the Hope Group RCT in Ukraine.
- 3. To extend the scope and reach or to strengthen the inclusivity of existing research studies** – e.g., ParentChat Feasibility Trial in the Philippines and the Disability Inclusive Youth initiative in Uganda.
- 4. Supporting research training for GPI Future Leaders in playful parenting research** – e.g., supporting Jonathan Klapwijk's (Senior Research Assistant, ParentApp for Teens in Tanzania) scholarship for a DPhil on Playful Parenting at the University of Oxford.

The investments from the Emerging Trends Fund are already yielding tangible results. A notable success is the development of the new FacilitatorApp, which is being adapted for use in Malaysia and is poised to support the implementation of numerous other GPI projects in the next year (see [Box 3](#)).

INNOVATE

Workstream aim: To build a cohesive ecosystem of agile, adaptable, and scalable evidence-based human-digital parenting interventions.

Measures of success (outcomes): The creation of a unified and flexible ecosystem encompassing agile, adaptable, and scalable evidence-based human-digital parenting interventions.

Workstream structure: Our innovation work involves direct support to project teams, facilitating the co-creation of digital tools in close collaboration with researchers and local stakeholders, addressing both research and implementation requirements. Additionally, we dedicate substantial time and resources towards constructing a robust digital ecosystem and architecture. This infrastructure is designed to enable the straightforward adaptation and reuse of GPI's digital resources, thereby accelerating the global scale-up of playful parenting programmes.

Progress on developing hybrid-digital playful parenting tools

Digital innovation at GPI is led by IDEMS International Community Interest Company (IDEMS), working in close collaboration with INNODEMS, Cogent Labs and the solutions team at the PLH charitable social enterprise, the latter supported by co-funding from the Playful Parenting for All grant to PLH. Over the past year, this digital development hub has made substantial progress in building out the front-end and back-end features of digital and hybrid-digital parenting tools across GPI's core projects. These innovations have been tailored to meet the needs of GPI's research partners and their implementation collaborators. Key achievements include:

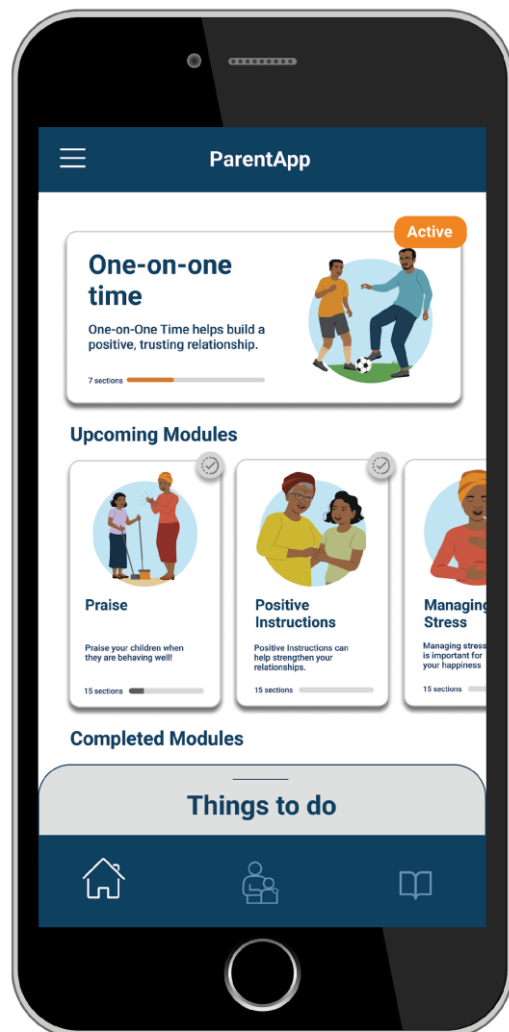
- The creation of a **single flexible app infrastructure** with features that can be incorporated or not to create bespoke tools for specified end-users – be they parents, teens, young children, or facilitators.
- Considerable progress in streamlining the process from **design to development for new digital content**, as demonstrated by the rapid development and launch of the new FacilitatorApp in Malaysia and in 2024 Mexico (detailed in [Box 3](#)).
- A comprehensive revamp of ParentText 2.0, enhancing both functionality and user experience.

The App

Building on the extensive development work from the ParentApp for Teens project, the Innovate team has crafted a flexible app infrastructure that can be applied in various contexts, with features calibrated for different users. This infrastructure is being utilised in bespoke deployments in Tanzania and Uganda for parents of teens and young children, and in Malaysia, Zambia, and Mexico for facilitators of hybrid parenting interventions. The single underlying architecture for all versions of the app greatly simplifies the transportability and adaptation process for different contexts and enables new updates and innovations to be pushed out across all deployments.

The process of developing and adapting content for the app has been streamlined, reducing the need for heavy external support and lowering barriers to content creation. The team has devised templates for every potential page format within the app or chatbot architecture, simplifying content structuring and ensuring consistency and predictability in user interactions. These templates also provide helpful guidelines for content creation.

Moreover, the content authoring process has been greatly simplified with the introduction of the “Sidekick” Google Sheets/Google Docs add-on for our digital tools. This integration means that changes made in the Sidekick document are reflected almost instantly in the digital interface. This innovation has expedited the design-to-development process and proven invaluable in co-design workshops, allowing partners and government stakeholders to see their suggested changes implemented in the tool almost immediately.



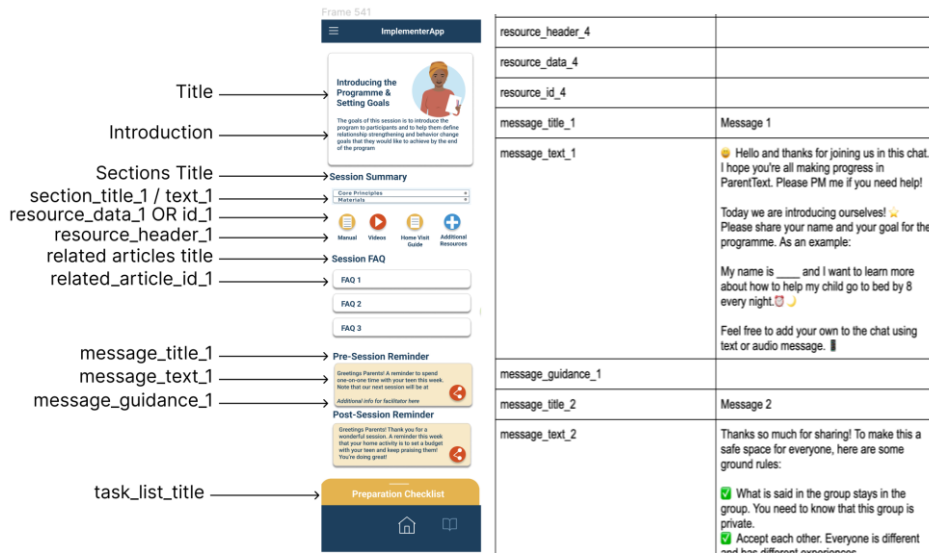


Figure 2 – Using template authoring to increase local ownership and customisation of digital solutions led by IDEMS and PLH.

Box 3: The accelerated development of the FacilitatorApp

The development of the FacilitatorApp was catalysed by an in-person design and development workshop with a group of community-based facilitators of the PLH programme from the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia, an initiative supported by the GPI Emerging Trends Fund. Led by Dr Ohad Green from Oxford, Laetitia Christine from INNODEMS, and Laurie Markle from PLH, this workshop played a crucial role in shaping the early design of the FacilitatorApp, a new digital tool designed to provide structured, real-time support to facilitators engaged in various forms of in-person or hybrid delivery.

In a remarkably short period of just 4.5 months following that workshop, the collaborative efforts of the GPI Innovate team, the PLH solutions team, and the Parenting within the Preschool System team culminated in the December 2023 launch of “FaciNK” in Malaysia. This fully developed and tested app is tailored for preschool teachers and facilitators implementing a chatbot-led hybrid parenting intervention in Malaysia and features completely revised content and visuals. This milestone is in addition to the design of FacilitatorApp for implementers in Zambia. Additional applications of FaciNK are now being deployed in Mexico in 2024 as part of a PLH-led satellite study.

The swift development and deployment of both versions of the FacilitatorApp are testament to the significant progress made in refining our digital development process. It also validates our decision to move toward a single, flexible, app architecture which can be adapted to different contexts.

Innovations and adaptations at the project level have helped expand the global repository of open-source content, making it available for application in new contexts. For example, in September 2023 the Innovation Team introduced four new modules of post-RCT additional content for ParentApp for Teens. These modules cover a range of new topics, including learning through play, sexual reproductive health, sexual violence prevention, and bereavement. The engagement with these modules will be the subject of forthcoming research by GPI Future Leaders, including Jonathan Klapwijk's research on learning through play, Lauren Baerecke's (Research Manager, ParentApp for Teens in Tanzania) work on sexual violence prevention and app engagement, and Nicole Chetty's (Research Assistant, ParentApp for Teens in Tanzania) research on self-care and relaxation content.

Re-use of app infrastructure has enabled the development of additional apps. The Innovate Team have also employed PLH digital infrastructure in the development of Early Family Math app which is now being tested in the Early Family Maths pilot. Moreover, Early Family Maths content is being integrated into the Malaysia and China deployments of ParentText 2.0 (including future deployments for children ages 2 to 6).

ParentText 2.0

The complete overhaul of ParentText to improve user experience and engagement. In close collaboration with the PLH Chief of Solutions and informed by research from our various ParentText deployments, this past year has seen the development and launch of "ParentText 2.0". This updated version is a) more user-friendly, featuring intuitive navigation and predictable interactions; b) more engaging, incorporating Synthesia-produced AI videos/audios and transitioning to human illustrations from the original blue blob characters; and c) streamlined for the user, with concise messaging, reduced frequency of messaging, and increased emoji use. ParentText 2.0 is already operational in **South Africa** (for teens), **Malaysia** (for young children), and **Mexico** (for young children and teens) and will soon be adapted for the SWIFT study. Additionally, the PLH charity is facilitating further deployments in **China, Kuwait, Sri Lanka**, and various crisis settings.

Innovation within ParentText deployments continues at pace, with new research planned to test a purely digital chatbot delivery at large scale. The team is exploring the possibility of developing, deploying, and evaluating a purely digital five-day user experience of ParentText in South Africa. The digital format of this intervention and its data collection methods will allow for a large-scale RCT at a relatively low cost. This evaluation will be critical to determine the degree to which a purely digital intervention can increase playful parenting and learning through play. This is a key interest for both research and policy and has important implications for scale.

ParentChat

ParentChat for parents and caregivers is at various stages of delivery in Thailand and Malaysia, with facilitator support being scaffolded by the app for facilitators. In Thailand, the ‘Parenting within the Social Welfare System’ team are planning for an RCT of an adapted ParentChat programme in Udon Thani. Collaborating closely with Dr Jenny Doubt and Deepali Barapatre from PLH, the team is fine-tuning the ParentChat programme to suit the Thai context.

Additionally, the president of the Thai Young Filmmakers Association, through his company ‘Fong Mek’, has been engaged to create a series of video vignettes featuring Thai actors. These videos are set to replace the illustrated stories, adding a culturally resonant dimension to the programme. Demonstrating how GPI projects support each other, facilitators from the Philippines will be providing capacity training to the Thailand implementing team on the delivery of ParentChat.



Video shooting in Thailand.

Innovate priorities for the coming year

We are now entering the last year of funding for work on the Innovate workstream. During this time, the Innovate team will focus on further enhancing app and chatbot features and strengthening the digital ecosystem across the suite of PLH hybrid-digital tools. Specific priorities include:

1. Feature and systems updates for the app

The Innovate team is committed to releasing their digital infrastructure as sustainable global public goods, a strategic move to ensure its longevity and relevance. This priority is part of their broader vision to guarantee the continuous development and adaptation of digital initiatives beyond the scope of the GPI project.

The team aims to further develop the standard layout of the app's pages to ensure a more consistent and user-friendly experience. This improved layout will be implemented in various versions of the app, catering to diverse programmes and user needs. Further work is planned to streamline the update and management processes of the app. The aim is to automate and optimise these processes, making it easier for partners to engage in the app's development and enhancing storage solutions for improved app performance.

2. Feature and systems updates for the chatbot

The team is focusing on simplifying content customisation and distinctly separating it from the technical aspects. New features are planned for better data handling and customisation for diverse applications, including managing activities for multiple children and creating personalised completion certificates.

3. Improving data management and visualisation

The Innovate team will focus efforts on improving the accessibility, presentation, and visualisation of data for programme implementers and researchers. Their objective is to create interfaces that are not only quicker but also more intuitive and user-friendly. Alongside this, the team will continue to contribute to global open-source projects.

4. Addressing accrued 'technical debt'

As we extend our playful parenting digital tools to new countries, we are gaining deeper insights into the opportunities and challenges of scaling up. Adapting these tools for varied contexts and service delivery systems has brought to light various unforeseen demands. These include the need for new functionalities in our digital tools to tackle emerging technical issues, meet stakeholder needs, and align with governmental system requirements. Often, these demands necessitate modifications to both the front-end and back-end digital solutions.

In efforts to meet research and implementation deadlines, the Innovate team has frequently had to prioritise short-term fixes for immediate demands, leading to the intentional accumulation of **'technical debt'**. This means that while immediate needs were met, the solutions implemented were not always optimal for long-term sustainability. Over time, this technical debt has built, and it is important these areas of debt are identified and addressed.

Some examples of our **technical debt** include:

- **Single consistent format for content authors** – the team has made progress in creating a single, consistent format for content authors, converging the code base so that ParentApp and ParentText now utilise the same code across our tools. This approach enhances sustainability and flexibility, offering similar functionalities across different applications. However, there is still significant work to be done to develop a unified system that would allow for more efficient future deployments.
- **Building systems to manage version control of content** – as our number of deployments increases, the need for a system to efficiently track and manage updates and revisions becomes more critical. This system is essential for ensuring consistency and reliability in content delivery. Currently, due to the urgency of deployment needs, we've had to rely on duplicating Google Drive sheet folders. This interim solution has highlighted the necessity of creating a more integrated structure where edits in individual deployments can easily feed into a global system. Developing such an infrastructure will undoubtedly require a concerted effort but promises to bring about long-term efficiencies.
- **Improved back-end page rendering** – As we have started authoring more complex content with deeper nested structures and extended display mechanisms (for instance full screen pop-ups), limitations of the current implementation have emerged which we have not been able to address. We need to re-visit the core systems in place for page rendering, re-evaluating the original technology choices and potentially rebuilding the system from the outset based on the evolving needs of our partners as well as their requirements and specifications.

Over the next 12 months, the Innovate team will focus on identifying and prioritising the main issues that need addressing within the remaining year of their innovation work. Any remaining issues will be catalogued to be addressed as part of anticipated future funding for further digital innovation, evaluation, and scale-up activities.

FACILITATE

Workstream aims: The core objectives of the Facilitate workstream are twofold. Firstly, to nurture the current and upcoming generation of world-class researchers and professionals in playful parenting. Secondly, to foster a culture and network that encourages shared learning and enquiry within this research field. These elements are fundamental in expanding our reach, influence, and sustainability beyond the GPI.

Measure of success: Shared learning environment amongst the wider field of implementers, researchers, and policymakers engaged in parenting and violence prevention.

Workstream structure: The Facilitate workstream employs an integrated approach. On one hand, it focuses on developing dynamic communities of practice across playful parenting research, implementation, and policy influence. This involves initiatives such as the [GPI Open Webinar Series](#), [GPI Research-in-Progress sessions](#), and [GPI Playful Parenting Groups](#). On the other hand, there is a strong commitment to the professional development of GPI research and professional staff in the Global South. Key initiatives in this area include the [Future Leaders Training Programme](#), the [GPI Mentorship Scheme](#), the [GPI Capacity-sharing Fund](#), and the launch of [Executive Training](#) for GPI leaders in the Global South. In addition, institutional support is provided in programme management and financial reporting through institutional visits and the GPI Admin and Operations Forum.

Workstream 1: Developing the current and next generation of playful parenting researchers

Providing capacity-sharing opportunities to our exceptional global team of research- and research-related professionals is a fundamental GPI principle. The GPI Future Leaders Programme brings together 94 incredibly talented early-career researchers and research-related staff from around the world (70 from the Global South) to provide valuable opportunities for training, shared learning, mentorship, and networking. The programme aims to create a thriving global community of next-generation research and implementation leaders equipped with the skills to realise the vision of providing evidence-based parenting support to all parents ([Box 4](#)).

Box 4: GPI Future Leaders

GPI Playful Parenting Scholars: Masters and PhD-level students receiving scholarships from the GPI. These scholars work on GPI core or satellite studies, with their thesis topics focused on the GPI and LEGO Foundation priorities of learning through play, child development and learning, playful parenting, and preventing family violence. The GPI directly support 11 Playful Parenting Scholars from the Global South.

GPI Playful Parenting Fellows: Early career researchers with a PhD. In some cases, researchers with significant career experience who are enrolled in a PhD programme and working on GPI core studies or cross-cutting thematic areas, such as male engagement and disability. The GPI supports 17 Playful Parenting Fellows, 13 of whom are from the Global South.

GPI Playful Parenting Professionals: Postgraduate students, and research-related professionals, such as research managers. The GPI supports 66 Playful Parenting Professionals, with 47 of them from the Global South.

The GPI Future Leaders Programme was formally launched in September 2023, at the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) Congress in Edinburgh. Future Leaders were invited to review and the revise the training programme structure and to explore ideas of how to strengthen social and network opportunities across the GPI Future Leaders community.

The event also featured a keynote address from Prof Catherine Maternowski, Professor of Violence Prevention for Young People at the University of Edinburgh. Her address was titled 'A Pracademic's Pathway.'



Future Leaders event at the ISPCAN Congress 2023 in Edinburgh.

The final training programme reflects the diverse needs and interests of GPI Future Leaders (see [Table 2](#)). The overall curriculum is divided into four topic areas: research skills, professional development, research into use, and personal development. To deliver the training, the GPI team will harness the broad experience and expertise within the GPI community, as well as the resources and training available from both Global North and Global South institutions.

Eight Future Leaders sessions have been delivered since our launch in September. These sessions have covered diverse topics pitched at different levels. In terms of research skills, through our GPI partner, the University of Cape Town, we were able to offer Future Leaders access to an 11-week course on Prevention Science, introducing participants to the science of preventing mental and physical health and social problems. The team has also convened a Journal Club to review and discuss parenting research and set up weekly *Shut-up and Write* sessions to support academic writing. Other sessions have focused on professional skills, such as *Hosting a Webinar*, or policy impact, such as a session on *Writing for the Conversation*.

In 2024, the Facilitate team will convene a regular Future Leaders training day on the last Tuesday of the month on topics of broad interest and relevance. In addition to the monthly training day, additional training sessions will be convened to cater for more specialised areas of interest.

Table 2 – Capacity-building themes

Core topics	Themes
Research skills	Intervention development Research methods Data management Data analysis Ethics Safeguarding
Professional development	Grant proposal writing Project management Career growth Leadership
Research into use	Communication science Publication Advocacy Cost-effective analysis
Personal development	Personal leadership Managing yourself

This upcoming year will see the launch of the **GPI Mentorship Programme for our Future Leaders**. This programme is designed to ensure that every category of GPI Future Leader receives opportunities for career mentorship or peer support within the GPI network. Recognising the wide range of interests, roles, and experiences within GPI, the Facilitate team is introducing five distinct models of mentorship to cater to these diverse needs:

1. **Academic-based mentoring**, resembling a supervisor-student or postdoc relationship.
2. **Project-based mentoring**, involving guidance from one's line manager.
3. **Needs-based mentoring**, offering targeted support over shorter periods for work- and study-related issues.
4. **Peer mentoring**, integrated within existing playful parenting learning groups.
5. **One-to-one mentoring**, pairing Future Leaders with senior mentors from either within the GPI or external sources.

Currently, the Facilitate team is engaged in the careful process of matchmaking mentors and mentees across the Future Leaders network.

Capacity-sharing Fund

The GPI has established a **Capacity-sharing Fund** as an extension of its training support, catering to a variety of development opportunities for Future Leaders. This fund is essential to elevating the profile and opportunities of researchers in the Global South by offering

financial support for activities such as conference attendance, training courses, and other research-related travel.

In the past year, the fund has facilitated the research endeavours of ten Future Leaders:

- *Francisco Calderon* utilised the fund to attend the Advanced Techniques for Longitudinal Data Analysis in Social Science course at Bielefeld University in Germany.
- *Dr Samantha Mendez, Dominiq Reyes, Dr Bernice Mamauag, and Jennel Reyes* from the Philippines team attended the 2023 International Conference on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology in Malaysia.
- *Dr Betty Okot and Kija Nyalali* received funding to attend the ISPCAN Congress in Edinburgh. Kija presented her PhD study findings on ParentApp, while Betty showcased a poster on the findings from the UPRISE cluster RCT of the PfR programme.
- *Andrea Casas* was supported to attend the 59th Annual Convention of the Psychological Association of the Philippines, where she presented her master's thesis findings on positive parenting in residential care.
- *Irene Uwerikowe* received funding for her PhD scholarship to work on the Quantum Leap Africa programme, which is part of the African Institute of Mathematics (AIMS). Irene's work will be supervised by Dr Caspar Addyman, Dr Ulrich Paquet, Dr Daniel Stamate and Prof Mark Tomlinson. Ulrich is the director of AIMS South Africa and research scientist at Google DeepMind.

The fund has also enabled us to offer one-to-one executive coaching to GPI study PIs from the Global South. This coaching, provided by Kim Edwards, an experienced leadership development coach based in South Africa, comprises a bespoke programme of ten sessions tailored to each leader's specific needs.

Work Stream 2: Establishing systems and avenues for knowledge sharing and learning

External and internal knowledge sharing is essential for advancing understanding and interest in playful parenting research. Over the last year, we have successfully established effective mechanisms to facilitate this exchange of knowledge.

Internal monthly Research-in-Progress sessions: These sessions have become a regular touchstone for our study teams to come together and engage and discuss their research. We have held 10 Research-in-Progress sessions thus far in which teams share their progress, challenges, and lessons learned from implementation. These sessions also provide an opportunity to explore in-depth topics relevant to our research areas. Notable themes covered include economic evaluation, disability inclusion, and child rights. In some sessions, study teams have presented detailed aspects of their studies, such as study protocols, fostering a deeper understanding among all members.

Table 3 – Research-in-progress sessions

Theme or topic of session	Month	Presenters / participants
Developing and testing the ChattyCuz chatbot in South Africa	January 2023	1. Prof Abigail Hatcher (University of North Carolina & University of Witwatersrand) 2. Alexandra De Filippo (Poda Innovation Space)
GPI Core Study Presentations	February 2023	All GPI core study teams
No session due to GPI Open Webinar Series launch	March 2023	None
Pause, re-asses and reconnect: Reflection on what is working and what support is needed in Community of Practice and Capacity Sharing of the Facilitate Brick	April 2023	1. Genevieve Haupt Ronnie (GPI Community of Practice Lead) 2. Nondumiso Mginywa (GPI Capacity-Sharing Lead) 3. Dr Peter Burr (Head of Programmes)
GPI Research Seminar: Cost Analysis	May 2023	Dr Hernando Grueso Hurtado (University of Oxford)
GPI Core Study Presentations	June 2023	All GPI core study teams
Future Leaders Presentations	July 2023	1. Rowland Edet (Chiang Mai University, Thailand) 2. Roselinde Janowski (University of Oxford) 3. Kija Nyalali (National Institute for Medical Research, Tanzania)
GPI Satellite Study Presentations	August 2023	1. Adaptation of PLH for Young Children for schools in Zimbabwe 2. Book-sharing for fathers in South Africa 3. Co-parenting to reduce conflict in the family in Zimbabwe 4. Cultural adaptation of PLH for Young Children in Latin America 5. Evaluation of Parenting in Crisis (EPIC) study 6. Malezi Bora na Maisha Mazuri: "Good parenting for a good life" in Kenya 7. PLH scale-up of parenting research (SUPER) 8. PLH (Book Sharing) for community health workers in South Africa 9. Strengthening the protection and reintegration of children (SPARC) implementation Study 10. Ugandan parenting for respectability implementation science cluster trial
ISPCAN Congress Presentation Dry-Run	September 2023	1. Alexandra Blackwell (University of Oxford): Changes in outcomes for families in conflict: Using negative controls to evaluate a family-based intervention with a non-experimental, multi-country study

		<p>2. Natalie Davidson (University of Cape Town): Can a programme to support parents reduce violence against women in the family?</p> <p>3. Anna Booij (Clowns Without Borders South Africa): Adaptation to strengthen parent training interventions to prevent VACW</p> <p>4. Prof Cathy Ward and Genevieve Haupt Ronnie (University of Cape Town): Effectively taking child maltreatment prevention to scale on the African continent: The Parenting for Lifelong Health SUPER Study</p>
GPI Core Study Presentations	October 2023	<p>1. Parenting for Respectability (Digital)</p> <p>2. Parenting within the Public Health System</p> <p>3. SWIFT study</p> <p>4. ParentApp for Kids</p> <p>5. Parenting on the Border</p> <p>6. Parenting within the Social Welfare System</p> <p>7. ParentApp for Teens</p> <p>8. Parenting within the Preschool System</p> <p>9. ParentText South Africa</p>
GPI Reflection Session: core study teams to reflect on their key lessons learnt over the last 18 months	November 2023	All GPI members

External GPI Open Webinar Series events: Initiated in March 2023, this bi-monthly series creates a platform for engaging with diverse stakeholders, from researchers and independent experts to NGOs and national governments. Through the GPI Open Webinar Series ([details in Table 4](#)), speakers from various fields are invited to share their research and expertise with a wide audience, both within and outside GPI. The topics selected for this series align closely with GPI priorities, showcasing a range of subjects from research and innovation to scale-up, advocacy, and implementation in parenting and the prevention of violence against children. To date, six events have been held, cumulatively attracting 716 attendees.

Table 4 – GPI Open Webinar Series

<i>Webinar Topic</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Presenter</i>	<i>Attendees</i>
<u>Parenting for Respectability Uganda: Lessons in Violence Prevention from a Home-grown Parenting Programme</u>	March 2023	Dr Godfrey Siu (Makerere University) Dr Betty Okot (Makerere University) Dr Jamie Lachman (GPI)	99
<u>Evidence and Policy: Exploring the WHO Parenting Intervention Guidelines to reduce child maltreatment and enhance parent-child relationships</u>	May 2023	Prof Frances Gardner (Oxford University) Dr Sophia Backhaus (Oxford University)	138

<p><u>SPECIAL WEBINAR: Parenting Month Panel: Supporting Parents in Crisis and Humanitarian Context</u></p>	<p>June 2023</p>	<p>Sabine Rakotomalala (WHO) Dr Isang Awah (GPI) Mari Ullman (GISP) Dr Caoimhe Nic a Bháird (UNICEF) Rebecca Smith (Save the Children) Genevieve Haupt Ronnie (GPI) Dr Aala El-Khani (UNODC) Anthony Guevara (War Child) Khayam Husain (Karachi Relief Trust)</p>	<p>138</p>
<p><u>Optimising Engagement for a Digital Parenting Intervention in Tanzania</u></p>	<p>July 2023</p>	<p>Roselinde Janowski (Oxford University)</p>	<p>154</p>
<p><u>Untapped potential: Addressing violence against children and women through parenting programmes</u></p>	<p>November 2023</p>	<p>Alessandra Guedes (UNICEF Innocenti) Beatrice Ogutu (ICS-SP) Christina Kolbe-Stuart (UNICEF) Clara Alemann (Equimundo) Dr Lina Digolo (Prevention Collaborative) Ruti Levtov (Prevention Collaborative)</p>	<p>112</p>
<p><u>Parenting programmes and the eradication of violence against women and violence against children</u></p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Natalie Davidson (UCT) Anna Booij (Clowns Without Borders South Africa)</p>	<p>75</p>

In September 2023, the Community of Practice (CoP) team convened a three-hour shared-learning event on ‘Scaling-up Parenting Interventions’ at an ISPCAN pre-conference event. Over 80 people attended this pre-conference event, with participants drawn from across the globe. There were representatives from each continent with over 25 Countries participating. Participating organisations ranged from academic institutions (i.e., National Institute for Medical Research, Sultan Moris Education University; Griffith University, University of Philippines Manila) to civil society (i.e., Childlight, Save the Children, Against Child Abuse), from NGOs (i.e., Empowering Children Foundation, Native child and family Services of Toronto) to governmental institutions (i.e., Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect-Michigan, Ministry of Health, Kuwait). As a continuation of this pre-conference workshop, the GPI CoP now co-runs an online forum *Working Group Parenting* under the ISPCAN Knowledge Hub which enables a continued dialogue with the participants of the pre-conference workshop to build lines of communication with one another, share ideas, skills, research, resources, multiple perspectives, and new information regarding this topic.

Following this workshop’s success, the GPI team was invited to lead the development of a new global CoP as a platform to bring together scaling experts, experienced implementers, and researchers to share knowledge and experiences of scaling parenting interventions. This CoP will be implemented in collaboration with the Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP) and ISPCAN teams, with the first session planned for February 2024. The GPI has also been asked to convene similar events at the next ISPCAN Congress in August and the Sexual Violence Research Initiative Forum in October 2024.



Other Facilitate highlights

In Uganda, the PfR-D team, with support from the Emerging Trends Fund, has brought on board four disability inclusive youth (DIY) interns. These [interns](#) are tasked with analysing and evaluating the inclusivity and accessibility of the adapted PfR-D programme. Their engagement is expected to provide valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by parents with disabilities and those parenting children with disabilities. This initiative will contribute significantly to the GPI's broader efforts in disability inclusive programming, a project under the leadership of GPI Future Leader, Dr Zuyi Fang.

The GPI team in Thailand has established a vibrant Positive Parenting CoP. In the last 12 months, the Thailand team has made amazing progress in building the momentum of the Thai Positive Parenting Community of Practice. In late 2022, the Peace Culture Foundation (PCF) and the National Institute for Child and Family Development at Mahidol University signed a memorandum of understanding to formally establish the CoP.



The CoP operates as a peer network for sharing experiences, lessons learned, research findings, programme materials, and strategies, as well as for identifying opportunities for joint advocacy on positive parenting. Since February 2023, three CoP webinars were organised by the co-chairs and two CoP newsletters were released. In December, the first in-person CoP network meeting took place on the theme 'Building strong partnerships for positive parenting: From community-based programmes to national policies.'

Also in Thailand, the capacity sharing partnership between PCF and Boromarajonani Nursing College Udon Thani (BCNU) continues to grow. Working closely with BCNU, a key institution under the Ministry of Public Health, is pivotal for building government ownership and leadership in the scale-up process. This collaboration is also crucial for upcoming testing and evaluation of ParentChat and ParentText. Over the past year, PCF and BCNU have successfully delivered four additional rounds of facilitator training. This training has reached 60 health workers, 24 nursing students, and 28 BCNU lecturers, significantly enhancing local capacity.

ADVOCATE

Workstream aims: Our advocate aims are twofold. Firstly, to raise awareness of and drive the demand for evidence-based human digital playful parenting programmes in the Global South. This is achieved by enhancing visibility and understanding of these interventions and their effectiveness, both globally and at the country level. Secondly, to strengthen advocacy capacity across the GPI study teams and build a Global South-powered advocacy hub in the GPI.

Measure of success: Policy environment at country-level supporting the sustained institutionalisation of parenting programmes.

Workstream structure: Advocate activities are split across global, regional, and country levels. The core advocacy team consists of Senior Advocacy Lead Prof Lucie Cluver, Head of Advocacy Dr Isang Awah, and part-time Advocacy Assistant Chisom Aina, with recruitment currently underway for an additional Global South-based colleague. This team leads on global advocacy efforts and seeks to support and strengthen advocacy capacity and implementation at country level. At the country level, advocacy efforts are driven by project teams, many of which have appointed either part-time or full-time advocacy officers. In addition to the core staff team, GPI's Global Advocacy is enhanced through a partnership with Dr Susan Hillis, and GPI's work with country teams on research-into-policy is supported by Dr Lina Digolo.

Progress at global level

At the global level, the core Advocate team has been extremely active over the past year with various presentations, webinars, workshops, publications, radio broadcasts, lectures, and panel discussions. Activities include delivering keynote addresses at high-level global conferences, with participation in over 50 different conferences and meetings worldwide, including USAID, World Bank, UNICEF, UNODC and others. Additionally, the team has continued to work closely with the Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP), contributing to planning meetings and policy engagements at both regional and country levels.

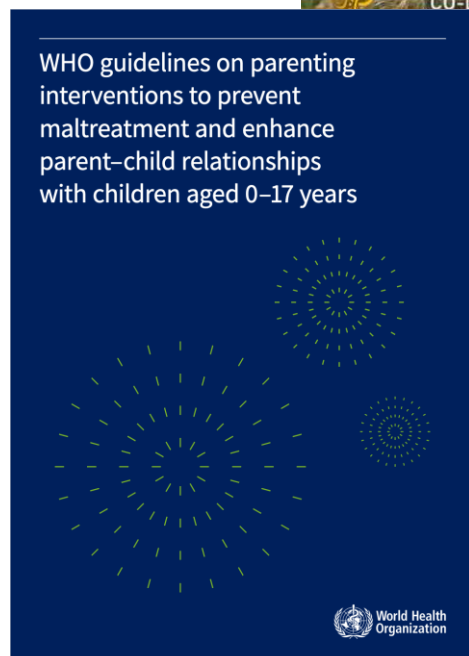
Specific highlights of our **global-level advocacy and policy influence** activities include:

- 1. Leading the campaign to secure the re-authorisation of PEPFAR (The U.S President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief).** A key highlight in our global advocacy has been leading the campaign to re-authorise PEPFAR, a vital funder of parenting programmes in Southern and Eastern Africa. Prof Cluver has played a central role in this campaign, working with global partners and utilising various strategies to safeguard PEPFAR. She co-authored a paper in The Lancet to show the impacts of PEPFAR on children and worked with lobbyists in Washington DC to ensure the paper reached all congress and congressional staff. In addition, she worked on modelling of impacts of the loss of PEPFAR, developed a policy brief which was distributed to the full US senate by a senior senator, and presented at the UN General Assembly with the Global AIDS Ambassador, Executive Director of UNAIDS, and Chair of the Global Fund.

2. Using evidence-based advocacy to influence the creation of the World Bank Fund supporting family-based care for children in crises. As key members of the Global Reference Group for Children Affected by Crisis, Prof Cluver and Dr Hillis have been using data and evidence-based action to advocate for the integration of ‘care for children’ affected by crises into mainstream emergency and crisis response planning.

This advocacy work has informed a new World Bank programme launched in July 2023: ‘Promoting Cash Plus Care Social Protection of Children Affected by COVID-19 Related Adversities’. This initiative aims to ensure comprehensive protection and family-based care for children at risk of, or experiencing, violence, abuse, loss of family care, exploitation, and severe neglect. The project, which extends to 12 countries, focuses on the rapid identification and expansion of effective ‘CASH + CARE’ models.

A key aspect of the ‘CARE’ component is advancing the evidence-based parenting programs, a testament to the exceptional work conducted by Oxford, the GPI, and PLH.



3. Informing the development of the WHO’s Parenting Intervention Guidelines, launched in March 2023. GPI’s senior research investigator, Prof Frances Gardner, led the systematic reviews for the 2023 WHO Guideline on Parenting Interventions. Prof Gardner and her team presented these guidelines at the [May 2023 GPI open webinar](#) with 273 registrants and 138 attendees. The successful launch of the WHO Guidelines has also led to the WHO commissioning PLH to develop a global handbook for implementers on the selection, adaptation, training, evaluation, and scale-up of parenting programmes.

4. Continued engagement with Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP) planning meetings, policy and public engagement to foster ongoing collaboration at a regional and country level. To mark the parenting month, the GPI team collaborated with colleagues from GISP to hold a panel discussion on ‘Supporting Parents in Crisis and Humanitarian Contexts’ (June 2023). In further collaboration with the GISP, several members of the GPI were actively involved in planning the GISP MENA Regional Conference (August

2023), and gave speeches, made presentations, and moderated sessions during the three-day conference. In addition, the team has been working with GISP colleagues towards the publication of a compendium of the presentations at the GISP Africa regional meeting that was held in 2022.

Advocate progress at national level

In the last year, GPI project teams have been actively engaged in country-level advocacy activities. Specific examples of their ongoing advocacy and government engagement work include:

- In South Africa, the SWIFT team has secured government buy-in from the Western Cape Department of Health Mental Health Division to scale-up playful parenting support on a provincial level.
- In Tanzania, ParentApp for Teens team members are deeply engaged with the Tanzanian government to accelerate efforts to scale parenting interventions. This has been supported by co-funding from the Wellspring Foundation to the Tanzanian National Institute for Medical Research.
- In Uganda, members of the PfR-D team have been collaborating closely with the Ugandan Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development as part of the Uganda Parenting Agenda Initiative, for full details see [Box 5](#) below.
- In Malaysia, the Parenting within the Preschool System team have conducted virtual co-design workshops with stakeholders and explored collaboration opportunities with the Ministry of Health for family support through the government healthcare system.
- In the Philippines, the Parenting within the Social Welfare System team held a hybrid meeting with a key policymaker and received requests from government for MaPa Teens training to prevent family violence.
- In Thailand, the Parenting within the Public Health System team have been engaged with policymakers and other stakeholders in their efforts to scale parenting within the public health system and have joined the Convention on the Rights of the Child Coalition for Thailand to enable the team to influence the national shadow report for Thailand.

- GPI Head of Advocacy, **Dr Isang Awah**, has continued to promote evidence-based parenting programmes and policy through a collaboration with colleagues from the Federal Ministry of Health in Nigeria on a positive parenting workshop organised for key policymakers, UN agencies, and relevant stakeholders in Nigeria. She continues to disseminate parenting tips to tens of thousands of parents and caregivers through a weekly parenting programme on Nigerian radio.
- Also, through a partnership with the Nigerian Federal Agency, [National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons](#), Isang Awah delivers weekly parenting tips to millions of parents and caregivers on the national television, [Nigerian Television Authority](#).



Dr Isang Awah (background) and Prof Fatima Waziri-Azi at an advocacy event in Nigeria in 2023.

During 2023, GPI core study teams also finalised their project-specific research uptake plans. With the support of Dr Lina Digolo, teams were guided through a series of workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions to help define their key research-uptake messages, activities, and target stakeholders. Each then developed a workplan to guide their activities. The implementation of this plan will be jointly supported and monitored by the Advocacy team.



As we move into 2024, country- and global-level advocacy activities are expected to increase significantly as results from the GPI studies emerge. The core advocacy team is currently refining its advocacy strategy and budget for the remaining years of the programme, adjusted to anticipated research study outputs. These will include extensive

financial and technical support for Global South researchers and advocacy officers to deepen relations with national and regional stakeholders to amplify the reach and impact of their findings.

GENERATE

Workstream aims: Creating a sustainable infrastructure to support scale-up and capacity building of PLH human-digital parenting programmes.

Measures of success: Successfully crowd-in additional resources to support the scale-up and sustainability of GPI activities.

Workstream structure: Following the successful establishment of the PLH social enterprise in 2022 and the subsequent 'Playful Parenting for All' grant received from the LEGO Foundation, Generate activities in the GPI are now focused on resource mobilisation to expand GPI's research, capacity sharing, and policy influence initiatives.

The GPI's lead Principal Investigator, workstream leads, the Head of Programmes, and the Head of Operations are actively involved in this resource mobilisation effort. Their responsibilities include leading and coordinating funding applications spearheaded by Oxford and assisting partners, especially those in the Global South. This support encompasses helping identify promising funding opportunities, supporting the preparation of winning submissions, and providing implementation support where necessary.

Generate progress

The GPI is committed to ensuring its long-term sustainability and aims to broaden and deepen its impact on playful parenting research both during and beyond the five-year initiative. Ongoing resource mobilisation is crucial for supporting country-level research initiatives and maintaining core research, innovation, and management support. Funding for both in-country activities, and global support functions, are vital for sustaining the interconnectedness of our studies, amplifying the insights of the GPI, and facilitating shared learnings across different projects.

Looking towards 2024, the Generate team is focused on enhancing grant writing, leadership, and management skills throughout the GPI. Through a combination of targeted training, mentorship, and sharing best-practice resources, our goal is to empower our partners, especially those from the Global South, to lead and secure substantial international grants successfully. This approach is designed to increase the overall capacity of the GPI to draw in funding from a wider and more diverse range of partners, to broaden the scope and scale of our research but also to establish a foundation for more sustained impact.

Box 5: Significant new funding to scale-up parenting programmes in Uganda

A signal marker of the ongoing impact of the programme has been the significant new funding for the expansion of the PFR programme in Uganda. ELMA Philanthropies, Echidna Giving, and Wellspring Philanthropies have jointly funded a three-year (2023-2026) project to scale up the Parenting for Respectability Programme and invest in national systems and capacity to support the ongoing standardisation of the Ugandan parenting landscape, with an emphasis on promoting early childhood development (ECD) and ending violence against children.

The project is being led by the GPI team at the Makerere University Child Health and Development Centre, in collaboration with local partners and the PLH charity. On the research front, the project builds on the encouraging results of the PFR cluster RCT and will conduct an effectiveness trial of the PFR intervention, focussing on ECD outcomes, as well as the scale-up of PFR through government systems across five districts in Uganda. The project has a strong emphasis on strengthening institutional capacity and systems to promote ECD and end violence against children in Uganda. These goals will be accomplished through implementer training, institutionalisation of national parenting standards, and support to the National Parenting Agenda Consortium. Overall, the project will reach 120 parenting practitioners trained in the science of parenting training, 30,000 parents and 80,000 children and seeks to influence 20 local organisations to adopt the PFR programme as their chosen strategy for reducing child maltreatment.

Table 5 – Successful funding applications

<i>Grant</i>	<i>Lead partner</i>
ELMA Philanthropies, Echidna Giving, and Wellspring Philanthropies funding for the scale-up the Parenting for Respectability Programme and invest in national systems and capacity in Uganda	Makerere University CHDC, Uganda
Wellspring Foundation to develop a scaling strategy within government and NGO services in Tanzania – PHASE 2	NIMR, Tanzania
The Human Safety Net, supporting scaling parenting in Malaysia	PLH / Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia
World Childhood Foundation to support capacity building for BCNU and the rollout of training for in-service and pre-service health workers in Thailand	PCF, Thailand
Thai National Research Institute to support PLH delivery and ChildShield/Primero development	PCF, Thailand
Wellspring Foundation to develop a scaling strategy within government and NGO services in Tanzania – PHASE 1	NIMR, Tanzania
Oxford University Fell Fund to support the integration of male engagement in the Malezi Bora parenting programme for street-connected families in western Kenya	Oxford, UK
UKRI Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF and Newton Fund Consolidation Accounts, GNCA) to evaluate the impact of our Parenting in Crisis activities in Ukraine and Pakistan	Oxford, UK

ACCELERATE

Workstream aim: Scale-up and institutionalisation of human-digital playful parenting programmes embedded into national governments and NGO service delivery systems.

Measure of success: Evidence-based human-digital playful parenting programmes embedded into national governments and NGOs.

Workstream structure: The GPI's scale-up efforts are led by the countries themselves, with dedicated support from Scale-up Manager, Saara Thakur, and Scale-up Assistant Amina Hamza. Senior technical backstopping and guidance is provided by Tim Reilly and Larry Cooley from Management Systems International through funding from the Oak Foundation.

Progress update

Since the start of the programme in 2021, the GPI has reached over 14 million parents / caregivers and children with playful parenting programmes. In addition, with the support of the PLH charity and their partners, a further 19 million parent / caregivers and children have been reached through the scale-up of PLH programmes in GPI focus countries and beyond.

Although headline reach figures are eye-catching, the scale-up of parenting programmes is not uniform across GPI countries. More work is required to build towards the institutionalisation of sustained parenting programme at scale. That being said, GPI scale-up activities are gaining momentum in several countries. As mentioned in the other sections of this report, over the last year some GPI project teams have made good progress in securing funding to accelerate scale-up activities. Examples are outlined below:

1. In **Tanzania**, the ParentApp for Teens team are working closely with the government to accelerate efforts to scale parenting interventions. The National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) and PLH have received funding from the Wellspring Foundation to establish a multi-sectoral national parenting consortium dedicated to the scale-up of evidence-based parenting support in Tanzania. Phase 1 of the team's policy engagement activities have successfully concluded and funding for Phase 2 of the programme have been approved.

2. In **Uganda**, the PFR programme is being scaled-up in five new provinces, as described in Box 5. In addition, members of the PFR-Digital team, with support from the GPI lead-PI, Dr Jamie Lachman, has been deeply involved in the development of a national parenting consortium. The team is collaborating closely with the Ugandan Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), the team is part of the Uganda Parenting Agenda Initiative. The objective of this initiative is to support the MGLSD and other family strengthening stakeholders in establishing a National Parenting Consortium.

3. In **Thailand**, following the successful training with staff at BNCU, the PLH for Young Children programme is being delivered to 627 parents and primary caregivers across 47 groups in five provinces. Alongside this, PCF is collaborating with the Ministry of Public Health's Bureau of

Mental Health Service Administration and the Rajanagarindra Institute of Child Development in Chiang Mai to set up a positive parenting promotion centre. Additionally, stakeholder workshops held in May, June, and October have been crucial in assessing the opportunities and challenges of scaling up evidence-based parenting in the Thai public health system. These discussions are informing the project's scale-up strategy set to be finalised in the coming year.

Furthermore, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health, the Thai Biomedical Engineering Research Association, UNICEF Thailand, and Mahidol University, the country team has been actively involved in embedding process and impact data collection tools into the government's pilot ChildShield and Primero case management systems in Public Health Administrative Region 8. This initiative allows for real-time monitoring and analysis of parent engagement, program fidelity, family case management, coaching support, and program impact. Crucially, PLH for Young Children process and impact indicators have been integrated into the system, facilitating effective monitoring and evaluation of service delivery during scale-up.

4. In the **Philippines**, after successfully scaling the MaPa content nationwide via a government-led conditional cash-transfer programme, the team is now focusing on integrating PLH modules into the government's new initiative, the Family Development Sessions seven-year Transformative Learning Path (FDS-7YTLP). Collaborating with the Family Development Division of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, they are designing two MaPa modules for this programme. The modules, 'Giving Positive Attention to your Child Through One-on-One Time and Praise' and 'Household Rules and Routines to Support Children's Positive Behaviour', are tailored to reinforce positive parenting practices.

The Philippines country team are also pursuing several other pathways to scale through government institutions:

- Working with the Local Government Units and civil society in Valenzuela City to integrate a MaPa hybrid package into their programming to achieve universal city-wide scale. At present this work is focussed on Valenzuela City with the intention expand to Angeles City and Cagayan de Oro.
- Co-creating and co-designing training curricula for capacity building of social workers and other personnel within the DSWD academy. In particular, the team is speaking to the University of the Philippines Open University, DSWD's partner in the DSWD Academy, to explore the integration of MaPa into the capacity building and development of social workers.
- Exploring the continuation of MaPa programmes through residential care facilities, a project previously supported by UNICEF. Future plans are being discussed with the Director of the Program Management Bureau who is keen to institutionalise MaPa within these facilities in the capital region and beyond.
- Ongoing discussions with the National Authority for Child Care (NACC) about the integration of MaPa into their Foster Care Programme. In 2023, the team met with NACC to discuss the way forward and this now working on a Memorandum of Agreement.
- Engaging with various disaster relief organisations to promote the integration of MaPa into the Philippines' disaster risk and reduction management response mechanisms. The Philippines is at severe risk of earthquakes and typhoons. The team are working to ensure that MaPa content is provided as part to rapid response support to parents and children affected by disasters.

The core Accelerate team is actively facilitating in-country scale-up activities in various ways. For instance, they have developed three detailed 'scaling concept notes' for the GPI teams in Thailand, South Africa, and the Philippines. These notes provide a common reference point of potential scaling pathways, assumptions, and risks in each country. In Malaysia, the core team has helped develop a detailed activity workplan and timeline for country-level scale-up activities. They are now working alongside the local team to deliver this workplan, taking the lead on initiatives such as a digital landscape analysis to assess smartphone accessibility. In 2024, the core team will conduct a national mapping of parenting programmes, a stakeholder analysis, and will facilitate the implementation of a real-time scaling lab with local stakeholders.

Building systems to understand the reach and proliferation of GPI tools is an important long-term strategic goal of the programme. The core Accelerate team has begun data collection for a Global Implementation Review of the scale-up of PLH parenting solutions in the Global South since 2011. This review is collecting data on the reach PLH in-person, remote, digital, and hybrid programmes as well as those who have elements of PLH embedded in their

programme (e.g., PfR in Uganda). The review will also collect data from implementing partners on their capacity in terms of existing facilitators, coaches, and trainers who have been trained and certified. The review is underway and should report in 2024. The team is also working with the Innovate and PLH digital solutions teams to integrate monitoring tools within GPI's suite of hybrid-digital parenting tools to help track current and future scale-up.

As part of the GISP, the GPI team is also collaborating with the WHO on their new LEGO Foundation-funded programme, "Supporting scale up of evidence-based parenting interventions through health and allied sectors", There is substantial alignment between the aims and objectives of this programme and GPI's scale-up efforts in the Philippines, Thailand, and Tanzania. At country and headquarter levels our teams are engaging with WHO staff to explore ways in which the new project can support our ongoing in-country work.



GPI attending the first in-person GISP meeting.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT, OPERATIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Over the last year, the GPI programme management team has instituted several initiatives to strengthen programme oversight, governance, and monitoring. These include:

Adoption of an objectives and key results (OKR) framework: A new objectives and key results framework has been introduced across GPI workstreams to improve alignment and coordination. This framework integrates the objectives and activities from each workstream, aiding in better internal coordination and effective tracking. These OKRs will be reviewed by the GPI Executive Action team on a six-monthly basis.

Strengthening researcher safety and security: In response to the escalating intensity of fieldwork in an expanding range of countries and contexts, as well as previous security incidents, the programme management team of GPI has undertaken a thorough review and enhancement of safety, security, and incident response processes for all GPI projects. A centralised best-practice safety protocol has been established to guide project staff. This protocol details necessary actions and procedures to reduce risk exposure, both before and during fieldwork, and outlines steps for responding to and reporting any incidents that might occur.

A central repository of safety and security guidelines has also been created for project teams. This includes up-to-date information on specific security risks in each country and travel risk reports from the University of Oxford's security partner, Crisis24. In 2024, the team will convene a dedicated session for all GPI researchers where study PIs and in-country researchers will discuss and share experiences and strategies for identifying and managing risks within the various countries and contexts where GPI works.

Regular review of GPI Programme risk register: An updated risk register and risk log has been created and is reviewed monthly, a process led by the Head of Programmes and involving the heads of research, operations, and advocacy. During this meeting the team ensure identified risks and associated mitigation strategies are up to date, evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented responses, and to discuss appropriate responses to avoid these risks elsewhere. Risks are categorised into six categories: *management and resourcing, partner engagement, governance, research implementation, advocacy and uptake, and finance and administration.*

Improving systems of internal knowledge management: At any one time, there is an array of activities being undertaken across the GPI's diverse network of projects, workstreams, researchers and Future Leaders. As such, the success of our programme relies on our ability to track progress, knowledge creation, and learning in an efficient and effective manner. We also need to surface issues and challenges, share learning between studies, and provide management and operational support where appropriate.

Over the past year, we have evolved our approach to project oversight and support to improve coordination and to reduce the meeting load. Instead of separate workstream-level meetings with project teams we have moved to a model of a single anchor meeting with all workstream leaders either every month or every two months.

During these meetings, project progress, outputs, and actions are documented in real-time using a live GPI project document, which helps all team members monitor progress, challenges, and lessons over time. Any insights gained and implementation or management risks identified are shared and discussed at the monthly Executive Action team meeting.

OPERATIONS

In the past year, the GPI has taken great strides in improving administrative and operational functionality across our global teams. As well as standardising our finance, onboarding, and reporting processes, we have strengthened our grants management capacity building programme through the establishment of the Admin and Ops Forum and commenced a schedule of tailored institutional support visits to partners.

Admin and Ops Forum

The Admin and Ops Forum brings together administrative and finance personnel working within our international study teams on a quarterly basis. The forum aims to support the smooth and efficient operation of the GPI, through providing a space for administrative and operations updates and facilitating the flow of information to appropriate team members. The forum also acts as a knowledge exchange hub and offers an opportunity for members to share best practice as well as keep connected with their admin colleagues.

Kicking off in March 2023, the Admin and Ops Forum met four times in Year 2, with agenda points including a participatory session on continuous improvement, an assessment of finance training needs, a social media masterclass delivered by our Comms team, and a presentation from the Makerere team on the PfR study – achievements and challenges through an operational lens.

Finance Training Sessions

Following input from members of the Admin and Ops Forum, a series of finance trainings were developed to address the needs of finance and admin staff at partner institutions. In 2023, open sessions on invoicing and reporting were held, with further trainings on Excel for finance and budgeting for reforecasting scheduled in early 2024.

Institutional Support Trips

November 2023 saw the first of our institutional support visits to GPI partners, with the Heads of programmes and operations visiting the PfR team at Makerere University, Uganda. The trip provided an opportunity for in-person meetings and a deep dive into the programmatic and

operational aspects of the study. During the week, bespoke work sessions on work planning, budgeting, reporting and project management tools were held to further support the GPI's commitment to capacity building across the initiative.

Further in-country support visits to Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines, and Universiti Putra Malaysia are scheduled for April 2024.

Successful Recruitments

We are pleased to report that the University of Cape Town has successfully appointed the following core management and operational roles:

- Full-time Communications Director, Maggie Marx, taking over from Annie Oppler
- Full-time Communications Assistant, Phatiswa Somdaka
- Full-time Community of Practice Lead, Genevieve Haupt Ronnie
- Full-time Capacity Sharing Lead, Nondumiso Mginywa
- Full-time Operations Manager, Likhona Mdluli

COMMUNICATIONS

2023 witnessed a concerted effort to enhance the communication activities of the GPI and expand its impact. This included refining internal communication efforts as well as supporting and driving external communication activities.

GPI's first communications strategy: A Communications Director and a Communications Assistant were appointed in September and October 2023, respectively. While they continued with the formative work done by the interim communications team, they also developed a communications strategy and a strategy implementation plan.

The communications strategy is a comprehensive plan to promote the GPI's goals of providing free, evidence-based parenting support to parents worldwide. The strategy focuses on increasing visibility and awareness of GPI evidence and resources, supporting research uptake and stakeholder engagement, and building internal communications and knowledge management systems. It outlines specific short-term key focus areas, such as website enhancement, audience expansion in the Asian region, social media and online presence, internal communications, media relations, and enhanced collaboration. The strategy underscores the importance of collaboration with specific workstream teams, including Evaluate, Advocate, Accelerate, and Facilitate, as well as the various study countries. Additionally, it highlights the significance of research uptake activities in driving the scale-up and sustainability of playful parenting programs in the Global South. The strategy is informed by stakeholder analysis and aims to engage implementing organisations, governments, UN agencies, and other external stakeholders.

The communications team refined internal GPI communication: Internal communication activities involved the establishment of a member database, reporting processes, and routine internal newsletters to foster a sense of community and keep the GPI network well-informed regarding GPI news, processes, and opportunities. The internal communication portfolio included the GPI Internal Digest, Weekly RoundUp, and maintaining a master list of GPI colleagues. The team experienced challenges such as the content-heavy nature of the Digest and had to rethink its format, as well as the lack of content sharing from colleagues. In response, we implemented fortnightly internal communiques alternating between comprehensive RoundUps and Internal Digests to cater to diverse information consumption preferences. Additionally, the team aimed to standardise reporting for better understanding of GPI's impact.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Introducing GPI's Exclusive Bookings Page for Statistician Consultations



We're thrilled to announce the launch of our new initiative exclusively for GPI members seeking statistical insights and guidance. Starting 31 January 2024, scheduled every alternate Wednesday from 9-10 am GMT, members can book personalised one-on-one sessions with our experienced statisticians.

Each 20-minute slot is designed to address specific queries and elevate research endeavors, replacing previous drop-in sessions. Our streamlined booking system allows for easy reservation or cancellation, ensuring smooth coordination and optimal scheduling. Click below to access the bookings page and enhance your research experience with us!

[Book here](#)

An excerpt from an Internal Digest email to GPI colleagues.

GPI connected with various audiences: GPI experienced promising growth in audience engagement on its website and social media platforms. The website attracted 11,938 unique users with consistent monthly visitor traffic and substantial page views, indicating a strong online presence.

Additionally, GPI's social media presence, particularly on LinkedIn and YouTube, exhibited consistent follower growth and high engagement rates, with a successful Parenting Month social media campaign contributing to increased audience reach and engagement. We also hosted a substantial number of registrants from over 100 countries for its events, indicating a broad international audience.

Looking toward 2024: Planned activities for 2024 include increasing and sustaining the visibility of GPI activities and resources through various dissemination channels and engagement strategies. This involves increasing social media engagement, website traffic, and hosting webinars and in-person events to share evidence and resources with key stakeholders. The implementation plan also includes increasing media coverage, sharing news and updates via newsletters, collaborating with external partners, and supporting research teams to develop and utilise dissemination products. Additionally, we plan to identify under-engaged stakeholder groups, support official GPI partners in digital audience growth, and maintain a positive public perception.

The communications team also aims to build the capacity of the GPI community to identify and generate content, ensuring consistent communication, and investigating alternative social media platforms. Other activities include migrating the existing website to WordPress, hosting webinars, publishing newsletters, developing an intranet solution, and collaborating with GISP and other related organisations in external communication.

GPI PUBLICATIONS/PR MATERIALS IN 2023

Academic publications from GPI core and satellite studies

Over the past year, six papers from GPI core and satellite studies have been published or accepted for publication. Four of these have been led by our Future Leaders. In addition to these papers, several papers have been submitted for publication, including the protocols for the factorial trials of ParentText in South Africa and Malaysia.

2024

Baerecke, L., ... Lachman, J. M., Cluver, L. D. (2024). A hybrid digital parenting programme to prevent abuse of adolescents in Tanzania: Study protocol for a pragmatic cluster randomised controlled trial. *Trials*. (Accepted for publication)

2023

Embleton, L., Murphy, K., ... Kirwa, S., Okal, E. O., Makori, D., Logie, C. H., Di Ruggiero, E., Lachman, J. M., Ayuku, D., Braitstein, P. (2023). Factors influencing the implementation of evidence-based interventions with street-connected children and youth: Two case studies from Eldoret, Kenya. *Global Implementation Research and Applications*. 3, 195-211. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43477-023-00083-6>

Janowski, R., Green, O., Shenderovich, Y., Stern, D., Clements, L., Wamoyi, J., ... & Cluver, L. D. (2023). Optimising engagement in a digital parenting intervention to prevent violence against adolescents in Tanzania: protocol for a cluster randomised factorial trial. *BMC Public Health*, 23(1), 1-19.

<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-15989-x>

Schafer, M., Lachman, J. M., Gardner, F., Zinser, P., Calderon, F., Han, Q., ... & Clements, L. (2023). Integrating intimate partner violence prevention content into a digital parenting chatbot intervention during COVID-19: Intervention development and remote data collection. *BMC Public Health*, 23(1), 1708.

<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-16649-w>

Sim, A., Jirapramukpitak, T., Eagling-Peche, S., Lwin, K. Z., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Gonzalez, A., ... & Puffer, E. (2023). A film-based intervention to reduce child maltreatment among migrant and displaced families from Myanmar: Protocol of a pragmatic cluster randomized controlled trial. *PLoS one*, 18(10), e0293623. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37903143/>

Stamate, D., Haran, R., Rutkowska, K., Davuloori, P., Mercure, E., Addyman, C., & Tomlinson, M. (2023, September). Predicting High vs Low Mother-Baby Synchrony with GRU-Based Ensemble Models. In *International Conference on Artificial Neural Networks* (pp. 191-199). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-44201-8_16

Other academic publications from GPI investigators on parenting

Over the past year, 23 papers from GPI researchers have been published. These papers span a wide range of projects, focusing on parenting interventions across childhood and adolescence. This work represents a massive contribution to the literature on parenting programmes in the Global South and beyond.

2024

Tomlinson, M., Marlow, M., Stewart, J., Makhetha, M., Sekotlo, T., Mohale, S., ... & Skeen, S. (2024). A community-based child health and parenting intervention to improve child HIV testing, health, and development in rural Lesotho (Early Morning Star): a cluster-randomised, controlled trial. *The Lancet HIV*, 11(1), e42-e51. [https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1016/S2352-3018\(23\)00265-5](https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1016/S2352-3018(23)00265-5)

2023

Backhaus, S,* Gardner, F,* Melendez-Torres, G. J., Schafer, M., Knerr, W., Lachman, J. M. (2023). WHO Guidelines on parenting interventions to prevent maltreatment and enhance parent–child relationships with children aged 0–17 years: Report of the Systematic Reviews of Evidence. Geneva, WHO * joint first authors. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240065505>

Brühl, A., Ward, C. L., Lachman, J. M., Foran, H. M., Raleva, M., Baban, A., & Heinrichs, N. (2023). Co-occurrence of intimate partner violence against mothers and maltreatment of their children with behavioral problems in eastern Europe. *Violence Against Women*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012231188090>

Cuartas, J., Bhatia, A., Carter, D., Cluver, L., Coll, C., Donger, E., ... & Seidel, F. (2023). Climate change is a threat multiplier for violence against children. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 106430. <https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106430>

Cluver, L., Imai-Eaton, J. W., Sherr, L., Mahy, M., & Flaxman, S. (2023). Reauthorise PEPFAR to prevent death, orphanhood, and suffering for millions of children. *The Lancet*, 402(10404), 769-770. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)01723-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01723-3)

El-Khani, A., Calam, R., Cluver, L., Rakotomalala, S., & Maalouf, W. (2023). Urgent help needed for children affected by the earthquake in Syria and Türkiye. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 10(4), 246-247. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(23\)00059-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(23)00059-7)

El-Khani, A., Calam, R., Cluver, L., Rakotomalala, S., & Maalouf, W. (2023). How to help caregivers help children in emerging humanitarian emergencies. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 147, 106561. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106561>

Fang, Z., Liu, X., Zhang, C., Lachman, J. M., & Qiao, D. (2023). Parenting interventions promoting child protection and development for preschool-age children with developmental disabilities: A global systematic review and meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231207965>

Fang, Z., Lachman, J. M., Qiao, D., & Barlow, J. (2023). How are parental mental health and parenting practices associated with externalizing behaviors among young children with autism in China? A cross-sectional study and indirect effect analysis. *Family Process*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12940>

Fang, Z., Lachman, J. M., Qiao, D., & Barlow, J. (2023). How are parental mental health and parenting practices associated with externalizing behaviors among young children with autism in China? A cross-sectional study and indirect effect analysis. *Family Process*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12940>

Holly, L., Wong, B. L. H., van Kessel, R., Awah, I., Agrawal, A., & Ndili, N. (2023). Optimising adolescent wellbeing in a digital age. *BMJ*, 380, e068279. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2021-068279>

Jocson, R., Alampay, L. P., Lachman, J. M., Gardner, F., Maramba, D., Melgar, M., Ward, C., Madrid, B. (2023). Pre-post mixed-methods study of a parent and teen support intervention to prevent violence against adolescents in the Philippines. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 73(1), 102-109. <https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.02.027>

Lachman, J. M., Juhari, R., Stuer, F., ...Landers, C. (2023). “Before I was like a Tarzan. But now, I take a pause”: Mixed methods feasibility study of the Naungan Kasih parenting program to prevent violence against children in Malaysia. *BMC Public Health* 23 (241). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15065-4>

- Massarwi, A. A., Cluver, L., Meinck, F., Doubt, J., & Green, O. (2023). Pathways to parenting stress reduction among parents in South Africa. *Child & Family Social Work*, 28(1), 184-193. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12952>
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- Rudgard E. W., Obiesie, S., Desmond, C., Casale, M., Cluver, L. (2023). Assessing the cost-effectiveness of economic strengthening and parenting support for preventing violence against adolescents in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa: An economic modelling study using non-randomised data. *Plos Global Public Health* <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0001666>
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- Zhang, H., Wang, W., & Lachman, J. M. (2023) The efficacy of an evidence-based parenting program in preventing child maltreatment in mainland China. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106544>

Policy briefs

To ensure research from the GPI is disseminated to policymakers and other key stakeholders in an accessible format, the core GPI team leads or supports teams in developing eye-catching, plain language policy briefs that summarise studies and their key messages. In 2023, the GPI team produced the following four briefs:

- [*Ugandan Parenting for Respectability Implementation Science Evaluation: Cluster randomised controlled trial of a parenting programme to reduce violence against children and gender-based violence in Uganda*](#)
- [*Feasibility and acceptability of Parenting for Lifelong Health program in Mainland China*](#)
- [*Mixed methods feasibility study: Naunqan Kasih parenting program to prevent violence against children in Malaysia*](#)
- [*Integrating intimate partner violence prevention into a digital parenting chatbot intervention during COVID-19*](#)



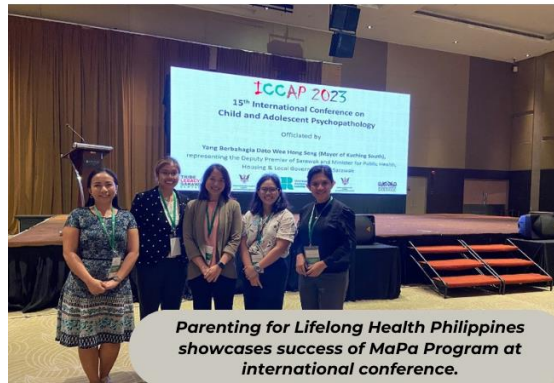
Prof Lachman and Dr Saara Thakur visiting GPI colleagues in Philippines.



Parenting for Respectability launch event in Uganda.



Dr Amalee McCoy meeting with the regional Public Health Administration in Thailand.



Parenting for Lifelong Health Philippines showcases success of MaPa Program at international conference.



Some of the GPI team members that attended ISPCAN 2023.



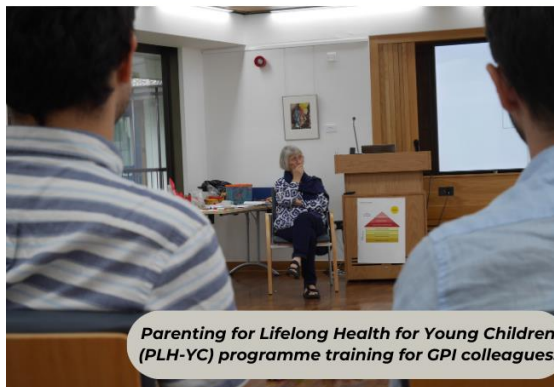
First in-person Future Leaders gathering.



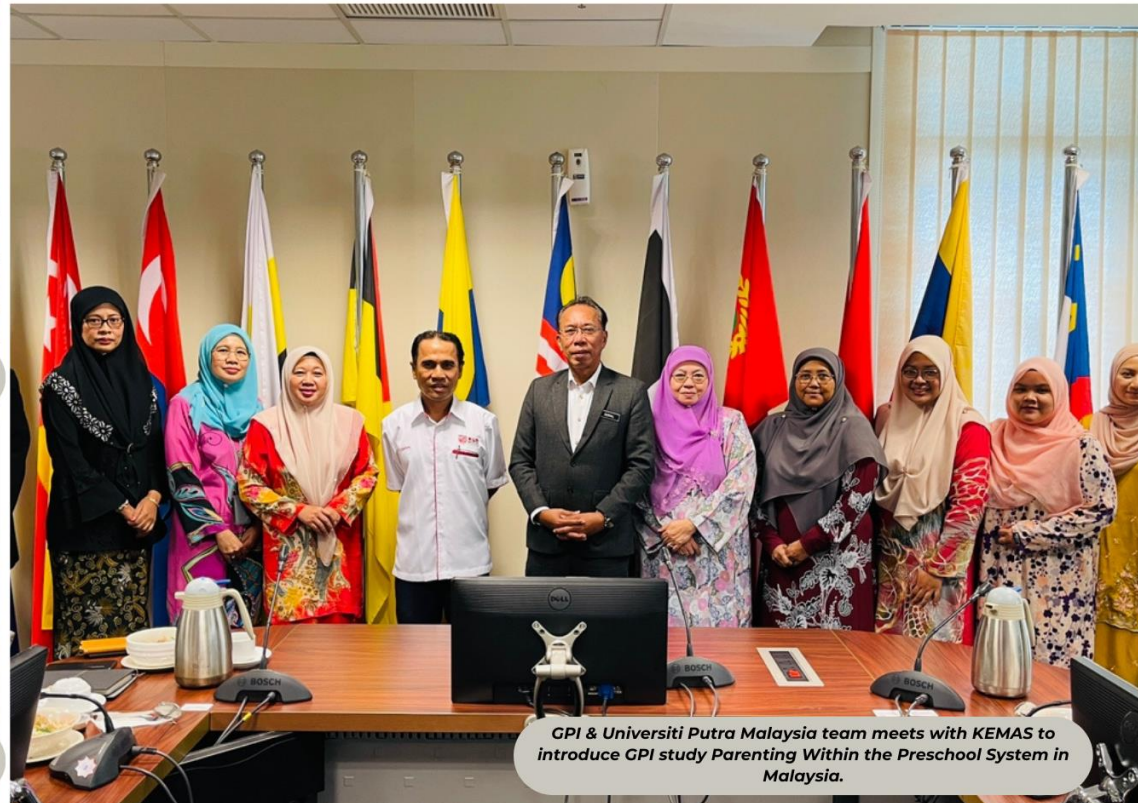
Oxford seminar on "Collaborating for Children in Crisis: Unlocking Opportunities for Greater Impact".



Prof Lachman presenting at the Gulf Countries' Policy Dialogues on Child Wellbeing.



Parenting for Lifelong Health for Young Children (PLH-YC) programme training for GPI colleagues.



GPI & Universiti Putra Malaysia team meets with KEMAS to introduce GPI study Parenting Within the Preschool System in Malaysia.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS: REACH AND SPECIFIC RESULTS

REACH

At the outset of the GPI, our targeted reach figures consisted of the three categories. The number of parents/caregivers and children directly reached by parenting programmes through the implementation of GPI projects and the number reached through the scale-up of parenting interventions both in core GPI countries, and in an additional 20 countries.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Target reach (Years 1-5)</i>
1. Direct reach from GPI projects	# parents/caregivers and children reached through the implementation of GPI projects	Children: 1 610 473 Parent / Caregivers: 1 470 900
2. Projected scale up of programmes in core GPI countries	# parents/caregivers and children reach through the scale-up of PLH interventions in focus countries.	Children: 5 750 000 Parent / Caregiver: N/A
3. Accelerated scale-up of programmes in additional 20 countries led by GISP and PLH with support from GPI	# parents/caregivers and children reached through scale-up of PLH interventions in non-GPI countries	Children: 18 338 950 Parent / Caregiver: N/A

Since the award of the Playful Parenting for All Grant to the newly established PLH Charity, from July 2023 responsibility for progress towards the scale-up of parenting programmes has transferred to the PLH Charity. The table overleaf shows the reach of combined reach of GPI and PLH to date. All reach figures in Year 1 were monitored and recorded by the GPI. In Year 2, PLH Charity has captured and reported the reach against indicator 2 and 3.

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Target groups	# Year 1	# Year 2	Total (Years 1-2)	Target	% of target	Put reported reach in context ¹
Direct reach of GPI studies (indicator 1): ALL YEARS FROM GPI REPORTING						
Children	10 251 325	8 228	10 259 554	1 610 374	637%	Reach has been calculated using reported data from each GPI partner and are based on their monitoring of GPI research implementation. In most cases information of those reached is drawn directly from monitoring data from research implementation. In year one, over 4 million parents and an estimated 10 million children were reached through the scale-up of PLH content and modules through the Government's Conditional Cash Transfer Programme.
Parents	4 120 224	6 487	4 126 711	1 470 900	281%	
Facilitators / Stakeholders trained	53	374	427	N/A	N/A	Reach has been calculated using reported data from GPI partner
Total	14 371 602	15 089	14 386,692	3 081 274	467%	
Reach through scale-up of programmes in core GPI countries (Indicator 2) and additional countries (Indicator 3): Yr 1 GPI REPORTING, Yr 2 PLH REPORTING						
Children	8 813 075	1 067 993	9 881 068	24 088 950	41%	In Year one, reach figures are drawn from GPI partner reporting. Significant reach was achieved through our Parenting in Crisis response in both Ukraine and Pakistan, this included the dissemination of PLH messages via videos resources, printed resources, social media, and through direct partner dissemination.
Parents	8 813 075	897 361	9 710 436	N/A	N/A	
Facilitators / stakeholder trained	513	266	779	N/A	N/A	In Year Two, reach figures have been drawn from aggregated data from PLH and Centres of Excellence projects and reflects the scale-up of in-person, remote, digital, population-level delivery, and PCC response delivery.
Total	17 626 663	1 965 620	19 592 283	N/A		

¹ How reported number was estimated and how does it relate to other factors, e.g., children reach estimates can be based on the number of individuals reached in key target groups, e.g., teachers, parents, etc., who interact regularly with children. If the project reaches 10,000 teachers through training, the assumption could be that 50% (5,000) of teachers trained will undergo behaviour change. If each of those teachers has on average 35 learners, the project could reach 17,500 children (i.e., number of teachers who implement Learning through Play practices X average number of children in classroom = children reached).

OUTCOMES

The GPI is a five-year research programme running from April 2021 to March 2026. This is the second annual report for the LEGO Foundation at 21 months into programme implementation. In line with the underlying GPI Theory of Change ([Box 6](#)), our primary pathway to policy and societal impact is through the generation of robust evidence of the cost-effectiveness of innovative playful parenting interventions, and working creatively and collaboratively at global, regional and country level to ensure this evidence is used: whether in the form of uptake within government systems; implementers scaling-up parenting programmes using GPI tools and resources, or the wider community of parenting researchers using GPI insights for future research initiatives. At this stage of the programme, most of our programme time and resources are dedicated to developing innovative digital and hybrid parenting tools (Innovate) and assessing their effectiveness (Evaluate). As results emerge from this research, there will be an increased emphasis on Advocate and Accelerate activities during Years 3-5 of the GPI.

Box 6: Summary of GPI Theory of Change

The GPI’s goal is to provide access to **free, evidence-based playful parenting support to every parent, everywhere**, so that they are empowered with the knowledge and tools to help children realise their potential while also preventing child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence.

Our path to impact relies heavily on the dynamic interplay across the GPI workstreams: **Evaluate, Innovate, and Facilitate**. The GPI focuses on developing innovative digital and hybrid parenting tools (Innovate) and approaches, increasing the evidence of their effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and scalability (Evaluate), and strengthening capacity through shared learning exchanges and individual and institutional empowerment in the Global South (Facilitate).

The dynamic interaction between Evaluate, Innovate, and Facilitate work streams boosts our capacity to **Advocate** for policy impact on country, regional, and global levels. Increased advocacy and close partnerships with the Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP), including UNICEF and WHO, will **Generate** further demand for technical assistance and **Accelerate** the scale-up and institutionalisation of playful parenting support within existing systems.



Overall progress towards our programme’s outcomes has been outlined in the workstream updates section of this report, with the detailed reporting of progress at project and country levels given in the [Annex](#)

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<i>Workstream</i>	<i>Outcome(s)</i>	<i>Progress summary</i>
Evaluate	Increased evidence on effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and transferability of PLH human-digital playful parenting programmes	All studies are progressing according to plan, and we are pleased to report no major concerns regarding the overall implementation of the research. The preliminary results emerging from the first tranche of research studies are not only promising but also garnering attention within the broader parenting community. Moreover, thanks to the support from the Emerging Trends Fund and other funding sources, the scope of our research portfolio is expanding. Over the next 12 months, we anticipate that many GPI studies will start producing and sharing their findings, contributing valuable insights at country, regional, and global levels.
Innovate	Cohesive ecosystem of agile, adaptable, and scalable evidence-based human-digital parenting interventions.	Great strides have been made to build out front-end and back-end features and infrastructure of both the App (underpinning ParentApp for Teens, ParentApp for Kids, and the FacilitatorApp) and ParentText. The processes and tools for adapting and updating these tools have been greatly simplified, lowering the technical barriers for our partners and reducing development times. The acceleration of the adaptation and deployment process – most clearly evidenced by the deployment of the FacilitatorApp in Malaysia – is testament to the progress being made. Nevertheless, as we enter the last year of Innovate funding, substantial time investment is required to resolve priority areas of “technical debt” to ensure tools are sustainable. Other priorities in the final year include updates to the App and ParentText infrastructure and improving data monitoring and visualisations for implementers.

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<p>Facilitate</p>	<p>Shared learning environment amongst the wider field of implementers, researchers, and policymakers engaged in parenting and violence prevention</p>	<p>The GPI has firmly established itself as an important thought leader within Playful Parenting research and implementation. In the past year, we launched the GPI Open Webinar Series (6 events, 716 attendees), hosted 12 Research-in-Progress events, and convened a Global Community of Practice event on the Scale-up of Playful Parenting Interventions. Following the success of the workshop, we have invited to lead a Global Community of Practice on Scale-up, supported by GISP and ISPCAN. At the national level, our teams have successfully engaged government partners in the co-design and delivery of playful parenting programmes, building knowledge and understanding and buy-in to PLH programmes. In Thailand, the Parenting within the Public Health System team launched a new Thai community of practice, to bring together policymakers and implementers.</p> <p>In terms of capacity sharing, we are excited to be supporting 94 GPI Future Leaders (70 of which are from the Global South). This year, we launched the Future Leaders Training programme, with an exciting curriculum designed to provide unique and exciting learning opportunities, particularly to researchers in the Global South. In 2024, we will fully roll-out GPI’s mentoring programme – providing each GPI Future leaders with the opportunity to professional mentorship with senior professional within and external to the GPI network. Through our project work, we are training government service providers and implementers to support the delivery of playful parenting programmes.</p>
<p>Advocate</p>	<p>Policy environment at country-level supporting the sustained institutionalisation of parenting programmes.</p>	<p>GPI advocacy activities continue to shape the global parenting agenda at global and local levels. At the global level, the GPI continues its core advocacy role in the Inter-Agency Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP). This year, the team has also been working closely with Global Leaders from USAID and the World Bank to shape the global agenda on parenting support. Notable advocacy activities here include leading the campaign to secure the re-authorisation of PEPFAR; using evidence-based advocacy to influence the creation World Bank fund supporting family-based care for children in crises; and informing the development WHO’s Parenting Intervention Guidelines.</p> <p>At the regional and national level, our project teams have done great work engaging government stakeholders in the early phases of our research. In the coming year, as studies start to produce results, we expect the advocacy activities around GPI research to increase substantially at both global and national levels. This will we require close coordination of the advocacy, accelerate and communication teams’ efforts, particularly at the country level. These three teams are currently co-developing a strategy for sharing resources and coordinating activities.</p>

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Generate	Successfully crowd-in additional resources to support the scale-up and sustainability of GPI activities	In the last year, GPI teams have secured funding to support the scale up of playful parenting research. This year's funding has primarily been directed towards supporting the institutionalisation and/or scale-up of PLH programmes in various countries, including Uganda, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In addition to funds awarded this year, the Oxford team is awaiting the outcome of two grant proposals with the Economic and Social Research Council and the National Institute for Health and Care Research, as well as grant proposals to the Innovations for Poverty Action Intimate Partner Violence Initiative and the Sexual Violence Research Initiative.
Accelerate	Evidence-based human-digital playful parenting programmes embedded into national governments and NGOs.	Since the start of the programme in 2021, the GPI has reached over 14 million parents / caregivers and children with playful parenting programmes. In addition, with the support of the PLH charity and their partners, a further 19 million parent / caregivers and children have been reached through the scale-up of PLH programmes in GPI focus countries and beyond. Moreover, our efforts to institutionalise playful parenting programmes across GPI countries is progressing well. In Tanzania, collaboration with the government and funding from the WellSpring Foundation has led to the establishment of a national parenting consortium. In Uganda, the expansion of the Pfr programme is underway across five new provinces. Thailand's PLH for Young Children programme is reaching an extensive network of parents and caregivers, and in the Philippines, the successful nationwide scaling of MaPa content through government systems is continuing. The core Accelerate team continues to provide technical assistance to countries teams: taking the lead on scaling assessments, supporting the development of scale-up strategies, and convening in-country scale-up workshops.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

There are no learning questions included in the GPI proposal or MEL plan.

Annex

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ParentApp for Teens (Tanzania)

Project overview

ParentApp for Teens is a digital app-based parenting programme for caregivers and their 10- to 17-year-olds. The project seeks to establish nurturing caregiver-teen relationships and reduce the risk of violence against adolescents in and outside the home. The project goal is to strengthen the ability of caregivers to provide a protective environment and ensure the health and wellbeing of their children through positive parenting techniques. Parents are taught alternative parenting strategies to reduce adolescent problem behaviours and avoid harsh disciplining techniques at home.

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

The ParentApp for Teens team are pleased to report considerable progress in their fieldwork and research activities. Following a feasibility pilot in 2022, the optimisation study has concluded, informing the design and implementation of a randomised controlled trial (RCT). The RCT began in March in the Nyamagana and Ilemela districts of Mwanza City, Tanzania. Despite a brief pause due to the Marburg virus outbreak, baseline data collection and onboarding sessions resumed in mid-April.

The RCT baseline survey phase assessing caregivers and adolescents has been successfully completed with a total of 80 clusters. 2,396 (99.8%) caregiver-adolescent dyads were interviewed out of a recruitment sample of 2,400 dyads. As of December, 2,386 (99.4%) mobile phones have been distributed to participants, with 1,194 installed with ParentApp and 1,192 with WASHApp for the control intervention (focused on water, sanitation and hygiene practices). 68/80 clusters have also completed a 12-week intervention (34 groups each for control and intervention clusters). The team's progress, along with excellent recruitment and eligibility rates, reflects strong engagement from communities and successful implementation across diverse cluster settings, enhancing the robustness of the trial outcomes. Ongoing fieldwork includes a one-month follow-up completed in 48 clusters to date, with six clusters in progress. A total of 1,434/2,396 (60%) caregivers and 1,367/2,396 (57%) adolescents have been interviewed so far.

Several fieldwork and research activities are planned for 2024. In January, a 12-month follow-up for the feasibility pilot study and qualitative interviews for the RCT are due to begin. Ethical amendments have been approved by the University of Oxford for sibling exploratory surveys due to be distributed in February and March. Between February and August, the team will interview additional siblings/adolescents living with RCT caregivers using the same survey to ascertain wider intervention impact in approximately 50% of sample households. Additionally, a ParentApp partner workshop is planned for mid-2024 to reflect on progress

made in the RCT, early pre/post-test findings, a strategy for 2024/25 outputs and dissemination. Finally, a 12-month follow-up survey for the RCT is due to begin in September 2024.

Published or in press journal articles

Title	Status
<u>Optimising engagement in a digital parenting intervention to prevent violence against adolescents in Tanzania: protocol for a cluster randomised factorial trial</u>	Published
ParentApp for Teens RCT Protocol Paper	Accepted for publication in Trials

Innovate

Under the leadership of implementing partner Community Interest Company (IDEMS), ParentApp for Teens has been continually refined based on user feedback. Changes have responded to specific needs, such as adaptation to low-data use settings, and are based on rigorous testing during the feasibility pilot and optimisation phases of the project. One of the project's critical innovations has been the development and application of the Modular Skin, granting users the freedom to choose their learning path. Based on feedback from the optimisation study, this skin includes contextualised human illustrations to increase engagement. It has also allowed users to access all the App content anytime, rather than releasing one module per week. Additional updates aim to enhance content interactivity and include more male images, as the optimisation study demonstrated comparable module usage by male caregivers.

Box 7: ParentApp Optimisation Study

The optimisation study was conducted in Mwanza city and sought to identify the most optimal combination of techniques designed to increase user retention and engagement in the delivery of ParentApp and to determine whether the effectiveness of components vary by population characteristics. The study tested three intervention components: a) Support (self-guided/moderated WhatsApp groups), b) App design (sequential workshops/non-sequential modules), and c) Digital literacy training (on/off).

The two key findings of the study were: 1. **Hybrid-delivery with WhatsApp support groups led to much greater user engagement compared to digital only delivery.** With support significantly increased: the times users opened the app, number of workshops/modules started by participants, number of workshop/modules completed, and the likelihood that use would start a home practice activity. 2. **Participants engaged better when they had a choice of which modules they used and in which order.** These findings are informing the design of the App in additional contexts.



As one of the forerunner studies of the GPI, the development work on ParentApp for Teens has led to advancements in back-end solutions, strengthened the PLH digital ecosystem, and opened up opportunities for local capacity building. ParentApp has importantly worked on a back-end solution for storing data dynamically. This is a big step towards having a more customised user experience (contributing to the development of adaptive digital architecture), where the App behaves differently depending on a user's needs and interactions. Developing such back-end structures has also contributed to the overall App ecosystem. In terms of transferability, existing ParentApp data lists and templates have been capitalised to help streamline the creation of digital tools for ParentApp for Kids and Parenting for Respectability's digital offerings.

The team are continuing to innovate and expand the parent tools and resources available through the ParentApp infrastructure:

- The last version of ParentApp released in September includes three newly developed modules focused on critical issues covering *Sexual Reproductive Health, Sexual Violence Prevention, and Bereavement*.
- A 'Learning through Play' module has been developed for adolescents and their caregivers, including an array of fun activities to improve parent-child relationships. The activities were designed following focus group workshops with caregivers and adolescents from multiple African countries currently resident in Gauteng, South Africa.

Strengthening monitoring data for implementers and researchers. In collaboration with IDEMS, an online dashboard to visualise and monitor engagement with ParentApp during the RCT has been developed. Data from the app is monitored in real-time and feedback loops between all partners ensure that data is used to inform implementation of the intervention. For instance, to follow up with and support participants who are inactive.

Facilitate

Collaboration and capacity-strengthening continue to underpin ParentApp for Teens research and innovation work. Supported by IDEMS, Kenyan based implementation partner INNODEMS led on the technical development of the WASHApp, used for the control arm of the ParentApp RCT. This role provided the INNODEMS team with invaluable learning opportunities and hands-on experience, which will support replication elsewhere. The WASHApp development also enabled the team to recycle the app structures developed for ParentApp for Teens, which meant that the WASHApp could be deployed in an impressive three-month period, including several cycles of iteration.

The ParentApp for Teens team is opening up avenues for knowledge sharing and learning across research projects and between stakeholders. Findings from the feasibility pilot have been presented to the World Bank, USAID, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Swedish International Development Agency and the UK Academy of Science. In September, preliminary findings from the feasibility pilot and optimisation phases and early stages of the RCT were presented at the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) conference in Edinburgh. Furthermore, the team invited a local parent representative, a participant from the optimisation study, to join the Trial Steering Committee. This committee includes representatives from WHO, UNICEF, local parenting research experts, and government representatives. The first meeting was held on 4 April, where the parent representative shared caregiver perspectives and recommendations for the RCT.

During the March 2023 pause in fieldwork the team took the opportunity to strengthen internal processes and procedures. There were additional training sessions with facilitators and Research Assistants and research tools were refined before going into the field. Training and implementation partner, Clowns Without Borders South Africa also visited Tanzania to conduct in-person training and provide on-the-ground support to facilitators.

The ParentApp for Teens team has diligently produced a diverse array of resources, which have been subsequently disseminated amongst several initiatives within the GPI. These resources encompass a comprehensive range, including an RCT protocol submitted to *Trials*, detailed Standard Operating Procedures, workplans, Gantt charts, and a WhatsApp user support guide. The documents have considerably streamlined the capacity of other GPI projects to leverage and build upon the work of ParentApp for Teens.

Box 8: Future Leader activities

On 19 July, team members **Roselinde Janowski** (Doctoral Student, University of Oxford) and **Kija Nyalali** (Doctoral Student, National Institute for Medical Research) delivered a presentation entitled 'Optimising Engagement in ParentApp: Findings from a Factorial Trial' at a GPI Research in Progress session and also presented preliminary trial findings at the ISPCAN conference in Edinburgh (September 2023).

On 27 July, Roselinde presented in a GPI Open Webinar: 'Optimising Engagement for a Digital Parenting Intervention in Tanzania'. To watch the recording, [see here](#).

Advocate

ParentApp for Teens have deepened their engagement with civil society and international networks. Alongside the WHO and the INSPIRE Working Group, the team have contributed to the refinement of the INSPIRE framework, identifying scalable and cost-effective interventions to end violence against children (ongoing throughout 2023 - 2024). In Lesotho, the team have been working with civil society to inform PEPFAR's Country Operating Plans to support effective HIV prevention activities for adolescent girls and young women. PEPFAR/USAID has been engaged on how ParentApp for Teens evidence and novel cost-effectiveness analysis can promote future sustainability of interventions for adolescent girls and young women, including the delivery of parenting initiatives. Additionally, evidence on interventions to protect vulnerable children with *'Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage and Joining Forces for Africa'* was shared with a consortium of international NGOs collaborating to advance child protection.

The team are beginning to develop policy-focused projects from national stakeholders. A policy brief entitled *'Parenting Interventions for Prevention of Violence Against Children in Tanzania'* which contains the teams' analysis of COVID orphan hood contributed to policy briefs and high-level advocacy in Zambia, Eswatini, South Africa, and Malawi, highlighting the importance of economic and parenting support within national, social and child protection systems. As results from the feasibility pilot and optimisation studies are published, the team look forward to developing further outputs that can be used to advocate at the national and regional level. With support from Dr Lina Digolo, the team also finalised a research uptake plan during the reporting period.

ParentApp for Teens have also increased its online profile over the reporting period. Research is disseminated through online blogs, including in *The Conversation Africa*, and through AUDA-NEPAD advocacy briefs focused on the role of digital technologies in improving the health and wellbeing of adolescents.

Accelerate

Results from our formative work points to ParentApp's potential for scale-up likely lies in a hybrid-digital form. The Optimisation study showed that there was significantly more engagement with the App when users are supported by remote person-to-person WhatsApp groups. Engagement was similarly facilitated by inputs of in-person technical support. In-person technical support sessions were offered at intervals to participants, with background processes for remotely supporting the technical team delivering frontline support.

In Tanzania, members of the ParentApp for Teens team are working closely with the Tanzanian government to accelerate efforts to scale parenting interventions. The National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) and PLH have received funding from the WellSpring Foundation to establish a multi-sectoral national parenting consortium dedicated to the scale-up of evidence-based parenting support in Tanzania. The NIMR policy engagement team is leading this work, working alongside collaborators UNICEF, WHO, the Ministry of Community Development and the Ministry of Health, to begin developing a scaling plan for Tanzania.

Phase 1 of the team's policy engagement activities have successfully concluded. These include stakeholder mapping and 16 key informant interviews. A technical stakeholders meeting was conducted in October to support the formation of the national parenting consortium and to finalise a policy brief developed from the key informant interviews.

In consultation with UNICEF Country Office and the Government of Tanzania, a proposal for phase 2 of a roadmap to scale up parenting in Tanzania has been approved. As part of NIMR's policy engagement on parenting interventions in Tanzania, the team also met with stakeholders working on parenting and prevention of Violence Against Children at the 7th annual learning convention on prevention of Violence Against Children in Kampala, East Africa on 13 July.

Achievements from phase 1 of NIMR's policy engagement work

1. Stakeholder mapping and engagement
 2. Policy Review
 3. Policy Environment Analysis
 4. Systematic Review of Parenting Interventions
 5. Key Informant Interviews
 6. National Stakeholders Meeting in Dodoma
 7. Scaling labs with Government, NGOs, INGOs and CSOs
 8. Continued engagement with policymakers - e.g., regional level meetings in Mwanza and Shinyanga
- Tanzania Parenting consortium formed. Terms of Reference drafted and awaiting approval

Parenting within the Public Health System (Thailand)

Project overview

The **Parenting within the Public Health System** project aims to examine and support the scale-up of Parenting for Lifelong Health within the public health system in Thailand. The project is led by the Thai-based Peace Culture Foundation (PCF) working in close collaboration with local academic and government partners. Project activities are organised around two objectives. Objective 1 is to support the scale-up and evaluation of PLH delivery within the Thai public health system, with a particular focus on North-eastern Thailand. Under this activity, the team is undertaking a combination of research, digital development, and capacity strengthening activities to develop a regional hub for scaling up PLH programmes, as well as to co-design, implement and evaluate a hybrid-digital parenting intervention delivered by government health workers in the public health system. Objective 2 seeks to strengthen the shared learning environment at national and regional levels on evidence-based positive parenting and violence prevention.

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

The research and evaluation work in this project consists of various studies which span the entire policy cycle. This includes formative research on the acceptability of PLH digital interventions, the evaluation of intervention effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, and studies exploring the prospects for the integration of digital or hybrid-digital into Thai policy and service delivery system.

There has been generally good progress on these research studies in the last year:

- **Evaluation of an adapted PLH hybrid-digital intervention:** Preparations for an RCT of an adapted ParentChat programme in Udon Thani are advancing well. This study design has been developed by the PCF team working alongside Dr Piya Hanvoravongchai and Wilaiwan Pongpaew (PhD candidate and Playful Parenting Scholar at Chulalongkorn University). The phase two RCT will evaluate the preliminary effectiveness of ParentChat as an intervention to reduce child maltreatment (physical abuse and emotional abuse) and improve positive parenting and will also explore issues of implementation fidelity, programme adherence, participant satisfaction, acceptability, and feasibility. The study protocol is undergoing finalisation, and an application has been submitted to the GPI Emerging Trends Fund and is awaiting approval. Plans are also underway for Dr Bernice Mamauag and Jennel Reyes

(Parenting within the Social Welfare System team, Philippines) to conduct training in Udon Thani in early March 2024.

- **Cost-benefit analysis and social return on investment of PLH-YC in Thailand:** Following several preparatory meetings with project partners, the Departments of Medicine and Economics, Chula Unisearch (the research arm of Chulalongkorn University), and Sal Forest consultancy firm, data collection was completed in Udon Thani and meetings with public health officials were conducted virtually. Data for both studies have been analysed and reports are expected to be finalised in the first quarter of 2024. Emerging findings of this study are promising and suggest that for every Thai Baht invested in the PLH-YC Thailand programme, a total of THB 4.76 in social value is generated.
- **Investigating strategies to improve the engagement of fathers, grandfathers, and other male caregivers:** The study aims to identify barriers and enabling factors for recruiting, retaining, and engaging male caregivers in parenting programmes, with findings relevant to PLH-YC in Thailand and to other GPI programmes. Qualitative data collection has been completed and the analysis and coding of this data is ongoing.
- **Formative study on the relevance and acceptability of PLH digital strategies:** This study is planned for 2024 and will include user testing of the ParentChat chatbot in Northern and Northeast Thailand, as well as a qualitative study of the relevance and acceptability of the ParentChat programme by parents and facilitators in Udon Thani.

Innovate

Using co-creation and partner consultation to help inform the design of effective PLH digital solutions in Thailand. As part of the formative work of the planned ParentText and ParentChat trials, PCF and IDEMS hosted a consultation to identify the needs of facilitators, coaches, assessors, and parents in delivering and participating in the PLH-YC programme. Opportunities for the collaborative design of digital strategies to meet identified needs were also discussed. A total of 13 stakeholders participated, including Dr Chanvit Tharathep (former Inspector General for Region 8), three health officials, eight health practitioners, and one academic from Mahidol University. This consultation has been essential for the adaptation of ParentChat for the upcoming trial and will also feed into the adaptation of ParentText planned for 2024. Dr McCoy has been working with Dr Jenny Doubt and Deepali Barapatre at PLH to adapt the ParentChat programme for the Thai context. In addition, PCF has also contracted the president of the Thai Young Filmmakers Association, through his production company 'Fong Mek,' to develop a series of video vignettes with Thai actors to replace the illustrated stories.

Facilitate

Capacity strengthening of Ministry of Public Health stakeholders and other government officials is an important pillar of this project and central to long-term scale-up plans. These

activities are covered in more detail further below in the Accelerate section of this project report.

In addition to government-focused capacity strengthening activities, the PCF team also regularly contributes to the GPI shared learning community. In July, Dr McCoy delivered an in-depth presentation on the team's experiences in capacity building for PLH-YC facilitators, coaches, and trainers at the GPI Trainers and Coaches network meeting. In October, Dr McCoy delivered an online lecture to undergraduate-level students studying violence at the University of Amsterdam, focusing on violence against children in Thailand, the PLH YC programme, research findings, and current efforts to scale up.

Advocate

In the last 12 months, the team has made great strides in building momentum of the Thai Positive Parenting Community of Practice. In December 2023, PCF and the National Institute for Child and Family Development at Mahidol University signed a Memorandum of Understanding to formally co-Chair the Thai Positive Parenting Community of Practice (CoP), which was launched the previous year in September. The CoP operates as a peer network for sharing experiences, lessons learned, research findings, programme materials, and strategies, as well as for identifying opportunities for joint advocacy on positive parenting. During 2023, five COP webinars were organised by the co-Chairs and three COP newsletters were released. To date, 65 individuals have registered to formally join the COP through its website. The team will continue to reach out and encourage membership registration as well as webinar participation. A total of 123 resources (including research studies and programme materials) have been made available in Thai (and in English where possible) on the website. On 19 December, the first in-person CoP network meeting took place on the theme: *Building strong partnerships for positive parenting: From community-based programmes to national policies*. A total of 133 participants (24 government officials, 27 health professionals, 25 teachers, 34 NGO staff, two UN officials, and 21 private sector and other) attended, with a plenary session panel comprising five senior government officials from the ministries of public health, social development and human security, and education. Through interactive parallel working groups, participants articulated that they wanted a clear and concerted government policy on positive parenting, the provision of incentives by government for parents to participate in evidence-based parenting programmes, and greater use of collaborative methods in parenting programmes.

The PCF team participated in meetings with Thai senior policymakers, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and global health agencies over the reporting period. In June, Chalermkwan Chutima and PCF partner Dr Ora-orn Poocharoen met with Mr Pita Limjaroenrat, then the Prime Ministerial candidate and leader of the Move Forward Party, who visited the School of Public Policy at Chiang Mai University. They discussed PCF's work on the PLH YC programme and emphasised the importance of positive parenting programmes for violence prevention in Thailand. In addition, Dr McCoy, Dr Poocharoen and Ms Chutima

had an in-depth meeting with five Move Forward Party parliamentary candidates from Chiang Mai earlier in January on positive parenting and the RCT findings on PLH-YC in Thailand (all candidates won their seats, with one, Ms Puthitha Chaenan, making a speech in Parliament in August on the importance of non-violent parenting). In addition, Dr McCoy met with Professor Ann Skelton, Chairperson for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in November at the UNICEF Thailand Office. They discussed PCF's work to scale up PLH programmes in Thailand, as well as opportunities for the UNCRC to include formal recommendations to the Thai Government on evidence-based positive parenting programmes as part of the next round of country reporting and issuance of Concluding Observations. Finally, Dr McCoy delivered a presentation on PCF's work in this area to an online, introductory stakeholder meeting organised by WHO Thailand on 10 October. PCF has been actively supporting the consultant contracted by WHO Thailand, Dr Daranee Junla, in conducting a landscape analysis of parenting programmes in Thailand.

The PCF team has also delivered several presentations at government and academic conferences. In July, Dr McCoy and Dr Tapanya were invited by the government to participate in a parallel session on '*Violence against Children: From global to Thai context*' at the Ministry of Public Health International Conference on Mental Health in Bangkok. Dr McCoy presented on PLH YC and efforts to scale the intervention, alongside panellists from the UNICEF Regional Office and Mahidol University, while Dr Sombat acted as moderator. Dr McCoy also gave a short talk on PLH YC for the Department of Mental Health YouTube Channel. In October, Dr McCoy and Dr Tapanya delivered an in-depth presentation in Chiang Mai on PCF's work on PLH programmes to the Department of Mental Health workshop on developing a Positive Parenting Promotion Centre.

Between November 2022 and April 2023, PCF team members attended a series of six virtual GPI Research Uptake Workshops facilitated by Dr Lina Digolo. As part of these workshops, the team developed various outputs and planning tools to inform the development of future advocacy and scale-up activities, these include research uptake objectives, a stakeholder analysis, key messages, and a research workplan with detailed activities.

Accelerate

PCF continues to work closely with the Boromarajonani Nursing College Udon Thani (BCNU) to create a regional PLH training, supervision, and monitoring hub. Strengthening the capacity of BCNU, an institution overseen by Ministry of Public Health, is essential to both build Government ownership and leadership in the scaling-up process, and to facilitate the testing and evaluation of ParentChat and ParentText. In the last year, PCF has worked with BCNU to deliver five additional rounds of pre-service and in-service facilitator trainings, with one led by Master Trainer Prof. Judy Hutchings (University of Bangor) in the form of an assisted 'training of trainers.' This training was the first time that nursing students were trained as facilitators as part of an independent learning course. In addition, the first in-person coach training was conducted with lecturers from BCNU as participants. All cohorts have been

supported in delivering the programme to parents in areas served by their respective district and sub-district level hospitals. Further, PCF and government public health partners organised online trainings and meetings on PLH YC content and RCT study findings, questionnaire administration for pre-post-tests, and monitoring and evaluation through ChildShield with directors, health professionals, and Village Health Volunteers. Finally, PCF collaborated with Dr Mackenzie Martin from the University of Alberta to organise a PLH-YC Facilitator Assessor Training in November and December, which allowed for BCNU lecturers to review and test the application of rubrics from the draft PLH-Facilitator Assessor Training (PLH-FAT) Manual for Thailand.

#	Training Focus	Contact Time	Participants
1	PLH Facilitator Training for Group 1 in Public Health Administrative Region 8	4-day facilitator training with seven weeks of coaching	12 BCNU lecturers and 12 government health workers
2	PLH Facilitator Training for Group 2 in Public Health Administrative Region 8	4-day facilitator training with seven weeks of coaching	12 government health workers
3	PLH Facilitator Training for Group 3 in Public Health Administrative Region 8	4-day facilitator training with seven weeks of coaching	16 government health workers
4	PLH Facilitator Training for Group 4 in Public Health Administrative Region 8	4-day facilitator training with seven weeks of coaching	18 government health workers
5	PLH Facilitator Training for BCNU nursing students in Public Health Administrative Region 8	4-day facilitator training & assisted trainer training, with seven weeks of coaching	24 nursing students and four BCNU lecturers
6	PLH Coach Training	1-day coach training	12 BCNU lecturers
7	Training of PLH-YC Parent Assessors on Interview Skills & Questionnaire Administration	2 hours	37 government health workers (across 6 trainings)
8	ChildShield Database Training	3 hours	~90 health workers across 6 trainings
9	PLH-Facilitator Assessor Training	12 hours over 3 sessions	6 BCNU lecturers and 2 PCF staff

Implementation of PLH-YC is underway in six provinces. PCF and BCNU delivered the first round of the PLH-YC programme since 2021 to 628 enrolled parents and primary caregivers in 47 parent groups in Udon Thani, Loei, Nakhorn Phanom, Sakorn Nakhorn, Nong Khai, and Bueng Kan. Delivery was provided by 12 newly trained BCNU staff and 24 nursing students as well as 54 in-service health workers.

Strengthening of the pilot ChildShield public health database system. During 2023, PCF continued to collaborate with the Parenting Education Working Group, led by Dr Chanvit Tharathep (formerly the Inspector General for Region 8 at the Ministry of Public Health), in utilising funds provided by the Thailand National Research Institute to develop the ChildShield pilot database system and to support PLH-YC service delivery. The system is linked to the government’s health information database and is being piloted in Region 8. The PCF team provided guidance to partners on process and impact indicators to be included in the

database, as well as worked with partners to identify families at high and medium risk of child maltreatment to be included in PLH-YC recruitment by Village Health Volunteers. PCF regularly participated in bi-weekly working group meetings as well as co-facilitated online trainings for PLH-YC facilitators, coaches, and parent assessors on how to utilise and enter data into ChildShield.

In addition to the work with BCNU, PCF are collaborating with the Ministry of Public Health's Department of Mental Health and the Rajanagarindra Institute of Child Development (RICD) in Chiang Mai to develop a Positive Parenting Support Centre. The center at RICD, established on 1 July, will allow for the capacity building of health and education workers to deliver PLH-YC, the Preschool Parenting Programme (Thai Triple P), and NetPama. In addition, establishment of the center will foster research initiatives as well as coordinate delivery efforts to improve population coverage and allow for PLH-YC to be delivered in the Northern region of Thailand for the first time. Dr McCoy and Dr Tapanya have also been invited to join a Strategy and Technical Advisory Team, which would allow for programme developers/adaptors to dialogue and plan with government actors across several ministries.

During the reporting period, PCF collaborated with Chiang Mai University to initiate two projects and conduct a workshop related to the development of a national strategic plan for PLH scale-up. In March, Dr Ora-orn Poocharoen facilitated a half-day workshop with the Project Steering Committee. There were 11 committee members in attendance from the Ministry of Public Health, the National Institute for Child Health Development, Rajanagarindra Child and Adolescent Mental Health Institute, Chiang Mai University, Chulalongkorn University, the National Child Protection Committee, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Life Skills Development Foundation, and UNICEF Thailand.

Outcomes achieved at the workshop were:

1. A better understanding of the project on scaling up PLH in Thailand;
2. The sharing of PSC member ideas on the vision for scale up;
3. The sharing of PSC member views on drivers and barriers to scaling;
4. The initial proposal of channels for intervention that will facilitate scale up; and
5. The identification of other key stakeholders and how different agencies can collaborate on scaling.

The PCF team also worked with Dr Ora-orn and her team to advance a series of studies that would inform a national strategy for the scale-up of PLH programmes. The studies include 1) review of international literature on frameworks and tools for scaling up social interventions; 2) review of good practices from both high-income and low- and middle-income countries in scaling up social learning theory-based interventions, and 3) an assessment of opportunities and challenges to scaling up PLH Young Children in the public health system. **Rowland Edet**, the first Playful Parenting Future Leaders Scholar at Chiang Mai University, worked with Dr Ora-orn Poocharoen, to finalise the first two studies in June 2023.

It provided valuable strategic insights on the scale-up process and provided recommendations to inform the overarching scaling strategy in Thailand. The second GPI Future Leader at Chiang Mai University, **Nan Mwe Nohn**, recently began her Master’s degree and will be working with PCF on the third study, the development of the National Scaling Strategy for PLH, as well as analysing some of the qualitative data on parent experiences of the film from the Parenting on the Border (Thailand/Myanmar) project. Tim Reilly from MSI International and GPI core staff on the Accelerate team provided inputs to the opportunities and challenges study, which is expected to be completed by early 2024.

Finalised research reports

<i>Title</i>	<i>Status</i>
Policy brief: A review of frameworks and tools for scaling up social interventions	Finalised
Study on strategic planning and scalable integration of Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) in policy and service delivery in Thailand	Finalised

Supporting Wellness through Integrated Family Training (South Africa)

Project overview

The Supporting Wellness through Integrated Family Training (SWIFT) project (formerly the 'Systems' study) aims to establish the optimal delivery system for the combined human-digital PLH parenting package. This goal will be accomplished by progressively increasing programme intensity, starting with digital interventions (ParentText/ParentApp) before moving to human-delivered variants (ParentChat/PLH in-person). The project involves testing this method with families recruited from health clinics in the Western Cape, South Africa. This project necessarily depends on evidence from the other trials, and as such, it will be the final to be delivered.

The project is planned across three phases across three years. Year 1 - research design and planning; Year 2 – research implementation; and Year 3 – analysis, reporting and dissemination. As the project is coming towards the end of its first year, reported progress predominately concerns research planning and capacity building activities.

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

Engaging with diverse stakeholders from government departments and NGOs has proven instrumental for the SWIFT team this year. Insights gained from these interactions have not only shaped the design of the intervention but built awareness and support for Phase 1 of study implementation. The SWIFT team met with multiple stakeholders across government departments and NGOs to inform the design of an intervention and subsequent evaluation. Stakeholder interviews have allowed the team to gather invaluable information about the systems, programmes and role-players working within the Western Cape. This will enable the team to design their study in a sustainable way to avoid overburdening service providers while providing comprehensive support to parents.

To date, engagement and interviews have taken place with stakeholders in the following departments and organisations:

- Provincial Department of Social Development, Western Cape
- Provincial Department of Health and Wellness, Western Cape
- The Mikhulu Trust
- The Parents Centre
- Clowns Without Borders South Africa
- City of Cape Town Health

- The National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers
- The Western Cape, Provincial Mental Health Steering Committee
- Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, University of Cape Town
- Parent-infant program, Delft
- The District Mental Health Steering Committee, Witzenberg
- Centre for Public Mental Health
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Western Cape

Stakeholder interviews highlighted the exciting potential of a partnership with The Provincial Mental Health Steering Committee. The committee operates a mental health initiative, which has an existing parenting component that includes training for nursing staff closely aligned with objectives for the pilot study due to be conducted within community clinics in the Western Cape (Phase 2 of implementation). In early November, the research team met with the committee to discuss integration of PLH tools as a parenting support element to the programme’s delivery and review requirements for collaboration. The partnership is still in its infancy, but should it proceed, it will be a great opportunity to allow the team to design a parenting programme which is scalable and sustainable in both the urban district of Mitchell’s Plain and the more rural Municipality of Witzenberg, specifically within the town of Ceres and also addresses many of the referral pathways the team have considered, such as for domestic violence. The team is excited to see how this partnership develops.

Facilitate

Future Leader activities

GPI Playful Parenting Fellow, **Cindee Bruyns** (University of Cape Town) participated in several development opportunities within the reporting period. These include regularly attending quarterly GPI Leadership Forum meetings as a Future Leader representative and acting as a member of the early researcher’s programme within the University of Cape Town. In addition, Cindee has been mentored by Principal Investigator Prof Cathy Ward and has developed several new skills including an expansive ethics process.

Research Assistants, **Carly Katzeff** and **Juliet Stromin** (University of Cape Town) have joined the team part-time to provide fixed term support to research activities. Their work to date has included development of a matrix to synthesise research literature. In addition, scoping of a preliminary study plan is in progress, which will inform a randomised controlled trial protocol outlining uptake, costing, monitoring, staffing, and referral pathways for the pilot study.

Members of the team were also part of a two-day SAPPIN (South African Parenting Programmes Implementers’ Network) Families Indaba, which provided an opportunity for knowledge sharing and networking.

Parenting within the Social Welfare System (The Philippines)

Project overview

The Parenting within the Social Welfare System project aims to examine and support the scale-up of PLH within the government conditional cash transfer (CCT) system. Since 2016, PLH programmes have been making a significant impact in the Philippines with support from Ateneo De Manila University, Child Protection Network, Inc, and from stakeholders such as Department of Social Welfare and Development and UNICEF Philippines. This project seeks to monitor and evaluate the feasibility, accessibility, relevance, and impact of the digital-hybrid Masayang Pamilya (MaPa) programme, when implemented at large-scale through a government-run CCT system. The project team will work closely with counterparts from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and UNICEF to support the implementation and monitoring of MaPa and to feedback study findings into future scale plans.

In addition to the CCT programme, the project team will explore other pathways to test and scale-up evidence-based parenting programmes in the Philippines. This includes collaboration with UNICEF to scale its interventions through residential care facilities; new research to evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of a revised version of MaPaChat Programme in Valenzuela City; and the implementation of a planned RCT of the in-person MaPa Teens 2.0 programme in Santa Maria, Bulacan in collaboration with a non-government organisation, the Joy Nostalg Foundation (JNF).

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

Beyond supporting the evaluation of the CCT programme, the project research team have made substantial progress on other research activities:

- **RCT of MaPa Teens 2.0 in-person programme:** The protocol has been submitted to Ateneo de Manila Universities Research Ethics Office for review. Once approved, the trial will be registered on Open Science Framework and the RCT will be implemented in partnership with JNF in the new year.
- **Evaluation of the adapted MaPaChat programme:** A research proposal, led-by Dr Bernice Mamaug, received funding from the GPI's Emerging Trends Fund for the evaluation of a new version of MaPaChat in Valenzuela city. This is an adapted version of MaPa chat revised following feedback from an earlier feasibility study. All intervention activities and pre and post data collection have been implemented as planned. Emerging findings from pre and post intervention scores suggest significant

reduction in pre- and post-intervention scores on overall child maltreatment, emotional abuse, and child behaviour problems. However, qualitative interviews highlighted the need for additional support for programme facilitators and supervisors. These findings are currently being written up.

- **Scaling in residential care facilities:** For the residential care facilities programme, focus groups were conducted with social workers (programme facilitators) and house parents from April to June. The initial analysis of programme implementation was also presented to the DWSD Programme Management Bureau (PMB) in July. Following the presentation, a consultation dialogue was jointly conducted by the PLH Philippines and DSWD PMB Centre Development Division in August to provide feedback and validate the results with the MaPa facilitators-social workers and house parents from the three facilities in the National Capital Region.

National and Global recognition of GPI researchers

In September, **Professor Liane Alampay**, Co-PI of this project - received the Outstanding Psychologist Award for 2023 from the Psychological Association of the Philippines for her work on Filipino families.

In addition, Professor Alampay was awarded the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children Article of the Year for *“Change in Caregivers' Attitudes and Use of Corporal Punishment Following a Legal Ban: A Multi-Country Longitudinal Comparison”*.



Journal articles under review

<i>Title</i>	<i>Status</i>
Evaluation of a brief online training for community service providers in the Philippines. Children and Youth Services Review.	Under review
Mediators of the Effects of a Parenting programme on Overreactive Parenting and Child Maltreatment	Under review

Innovate

The team has invested a significant amount of time in adapting existing material into a hybrid-ready MaPa Teens Manual. The manual incorporates content and insights from research and implementation experience in Philippines (MaPa Teens 2019, and Map in Residential Care Facilities) and elsewhere (ParentChat Hybrid in South Africa). The outcome of the MaPa Teens adaptation would be a hybrid-ready MaPa Teens Manual, which will be used for the MaPa facilitator training for MaPa Teens in-person with JNF in 2023 and subsequent programme implementation by the JNF in 2024. As part of this work, the team have also produced a Handbook for facilitators and trainers, Family Guidebook for participants, and tailored audio-visual materials for all modules. The IDEMS team supported MaPa Teens research partners with a data codebook to assist the analysis of data from ParentText 1.0 deployment which was launched in June 2022.

During the reporting period, PLH Philippines have actively explored ways to increase youth participation in the MaPa Teens programme:

- The programme development team reviewed global and local youth-led parenting programmes with sexual health modules to inform the design of the planned hybrid MaPa Teens Programmes.
- Following discussions with UNICEF Philippines, the team are exploring new content to address key issues and risky behaviours such as teenage pregnancy and online sexual abuse and exploitation.
- The team have Ateneo de Manila University's Institute of Philippine Culture to initiate discussions on including child participation in MaPa programmes.
- The team met with UNICEF Philippines Child Protection, Health, and Education sections to discuss the components of the UNICEF C-Surge programme which focuses on prevention of teenage pregnancies and youth participation.

Facilitate

PLH Philippines are facilitating research engagement and knowledge sharing through community of practice networks and stakeholder meetings. Co-Principal Investigators Dr. Alampay and Jennel Reyes contributed to the “*From evidence to action: towards scaling up parenting interventions to prevent maltreatment and enhance parent-child relationships*” webinar conducted by the World Health Organisation on 14 April. The webinar acted as a platform for sharing national and local initiatives in scaling evidence-based parenting interventions in addition to insights on advancing uptake. Jennel Reyes supported the “*Fathers and Children’s Online Safety*” Training of Trainers conducted by the Philippine Women’s University (PWU) in April. This training focused on fathers’ involvement in the protection of children from technology-mediated violence and was attended by the PWU community and stakeholders. In addition, the team shared their experience of integrating and scaling up the MaPa modules within the electronic Family Development Sessions of the Pantawid Programme, Philippine’s conditional cash transfer system.

In November, the team presented at the annual **Ako Para sa Bata Conference for 2023**, for a session entitled, “**Strengthening Systems Care Enhancing Wellness for Youth and Caregivers**”. A presentation delivered by PLH Philippines Research Director, Dr Bernice Mamaug highlighted the need to focus on caregiver mental health to support children’s mental health. This strategy is important especially in the Philippines where government expenditure on mental health within the healthcare system is very low. The presentation also underscored UNICEF Philippines’ recommendation of scaling MaPa to address children’s mental health issues. Dr Alampay served as the session moderator.

Future Leader activities

In September, Future Leader team members participated in several events aiding capacity building. These include a presentation on MaPa cultural adaptation work, which was delivered by PLH Philippines Research Director, **Dr Bernice Mamaug**, during Prof Cathy Ward’s Prevention Science MSc course at the University of Cape Town. In addition, **Jennel Reyes** attended the Global Implementation Society Presentation webinar as a panellist on 21 September and delivered a pre-recorded presentation during a workshop at the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) conference on 24 September. Jennel and Bernice also attend quarterly meetings of the GPI Leadership Forum.

Advocate

In April, PLH Philippines participated in the public consultation for the **Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Parenting Effectiveness Service (PES) Programme**. Lead by the DSWD, PLH Philippines commented on parenting-related clauses of the IRR which was drafted by the law’s implementing agencies from across government. Coordination for the involvement of PLH Philippines in the development of modules for the PES programme is ongoing.

In September, an Advocacy and Communications proposal was submitted for GPI funding. The proposal covers the establishment of a PLH Philippines website, video orientation, podcast, human interest stories, and social media content. GPI Head of Advocacy, Dr Isang Awah provided feedback and the proposal is being revised by the team accordingly.

Dissemination events

Date	Activity	Description
7-9 August	15 th International Conference for Child and Adolescent Psychopathology in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia	Supported by the GPI's Capacity Sharing Fund, the team presented the following five papers: Paper 1 presented by Dr Rosanne M. Jocson: Feasibility and Acceptability of a Parent Support Intervention via Viber Group Chat: Results from a Pilot Study (Covering MaPaChat run in 2021) Paper 2 presented by Dominiq Reyes (Research Coordinator): Evaluation of eFDS-MaPa: A parenting programme implemented through the national conditional cash transfer programme in the Philippines (Covering the nationwide scaling up of MaPa within the social welfare system in 2021-2022) Paper 3 presented by Dr Samantha Mendez (Research Manager): The user experience of participants of a self-guided chatbot intervention for parents (Covering MaPaText run in 2021) Paper 4 presented by Jennel Reyes (Co-Principal Investigator): Masayang Pamilya Programme in select residential care facilities for children in Metro Manila (Covering MaPa implemented within residential care facilities in 2023) Paper 5 presented by Dr Bernice Mamaug (Research Director): Masayang Pamilya Chat (MaPaChat) Revised Program: Preliminary results from a small-scale feasibility trial (Covering the MaPaChat run in 2023)
21-23 September	Annual Convention of the Psychological Association of the Philippines (Theme: PAP@60: Moving Forward Towards a Global, Scientific, Ethical, and Socially Relevant Philippine Psychology) in Legazpi City, Albay, Philippines.	Chaired by Prof Alampay, three papers were presented by members of PLH Philippines: Paper 1 presented by Alexandra Torres (Content Developer and Research Coordinator): Adaptation of the Masayang Pamilya Programme in DSWD's Residential Care Facilities for Children Paper 2 presented by Andrea Regina Casas (GPI Scholar): Feasibility of a Caregiver Support Intervention in Residential Care Facilities for Children: Findings from a Mixed Methods Pilot Study Paper 3 presented by Dominiq Reyes (Research Coordinator): Masayang Pamilya Chat (MaPaChat) Revised Program: Preliminary Results from a Mixed Methods Feasibility Trial)

Accelerate

Following the nationwide scaling of MaPa content through a government CCT programme, the team has been working on integrating PLH modules into enhanced Family Development Sessions (FDS) as part of the government's successor programme: FDS 7-Year Transformative Learning Path (FDS-7YTLP). Across 2021 and 2022, PLH-PH worked with Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (4Ps) of DSWD to integrate six MaPa modules into their existing electronic FDS. These modules were delivered through the existing social welfare system, not as part of a trial, and were reportedly well received by Government

partners, services providers and beneficiaries alike (see Dominiq Reyes' paper, 15th International Conference for Child and Adolescent Psychopathology). This year, the team has been working with counterparts at the Family Development Division of the DSWD on the design of two MaPa modules for integration in year one. These modules are: Giving Positive Attention to your Child Through One-on-One Time and Praise and Household Rules and Routines to Support Children's Positive Behaviour.

To sustain strong ties with government, the team are having to adapt to changes to the administrative structure and responsibilities of the DWSD. In this period, the DWSD has restructured the management and administration of the CCT programme, which has led to high staff turnover. In addition, the FDD developed a new system called FDS Score Card to monitor the implementation and behaviour change among beneficiaries. In response to this, the PLH-PH team closely coordinates with the FDD team to receive updates regarding the pilot testing of the mentioned monitoring tool.

In addition to scaling through the CCT programme, the team are also actively setting up new partnerships to increase the reach of the MaPa Teens Programme, these include:

- **Possible implementation with LGUs in Miagao:** The team presented MaPa Teens to the Mayor of Miagao, which will support the implementation and eventual development of a resolution to adapt the Programme for the local government unit of Miagao.
- **Integrating MaPa Teens into family focussed programmes run by the Consuelo Foundation and JNF:** Ateneo University have signed a MoA with the JNF to support the training and roll-out of MaPaTeens in communities in Sta. Maria, Bulacan (Luzon), a housing beneficiary community of JNF. In addition, this wider project team are also engaged in a review of the Consuelo Foundation's Family Strengthening Programme, which is implemented with partner communities countrywide. The team has conducted a series of meetings, collected data through focus group discussions and KIIs, and conducted desk reviews and workshops with those involved in the programme. These engagements are a start to sharing the team's expertise and supporting other partner organisations in enhancing their family programmes.

ParentApp for Kids (Tanzania)

Project overview

ParentApp for Kids is a project to assess the feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary effectiveness of a digital application on responsive caregiving and child development. Supporting caregivers to foster nurturing, playful relationships with their children is an important strategy to mitigate developmental risks and promote positive outcomes for children. By targeting a broad age range from pregnancy to nine years old, the project team aim to create a tool that can sustain support for caregivers beyond the first 1000 days, and into middle and late childhood.

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

The development of the ParentApp for Kids intervention design has progressed well over the reporting period. Ethical approval for the project has been obtained from Stellenbosch University and an in-country ethics application has also been submitted. In preparation for a pilot (2024) and RCT (2025), the team created a programme theory of change and a measures inventory to facilitate measures selection for the trial. The inventory focuses on caregiver wellbeing, caregiving, and child outcomes, consolidating information on measure characteristics and use/validation in low- and middle-income countries and sub-Saharan Africa. Following this, a hierarchy of outcomes were developed to identify primary and secondary outcomes for the trial, based on the project theory of change. In September, the team met with the GPI senior statistician to discuss the outcomes, sample size and assessment time-points for the ParentApp for Kids trial. Following this discussion, a study design with two arms (200 participants per arm), with three assessment time-points: a baseline, immediate post and a six-month follow-up, was finalised. The team has subsequently been working from the GPI measures inventory to select appropriate measures for the study's outcomes of interest.

The team published a peer-reviewed paper, relevant to the ParentApp for Kids project activities: A paper was published in the journal Digital Health on the results of the team's previous WhatsApp-based Sharing Stories intervention implemented and evaluated in Tanzania and Zambia (which informs much of the ParentApp for Kids work).

Journal articles in draft or published

Title	Status
Using WhatsApp support groups to promote responsive caregiving, caregiver mental health and child development in the COVID-19 era: A randomised controlled trial of a fully digital parenting intervention. Digital Health	Published
A community-based child health and parenting intervention to improve child HIV testing, health, and development in rural Lesotho (Early Morning Star): a cluster-randomised, controlled trial The Lancet HIV	Published

Innovate

ParentApp for Kids’ work represents an evolution of the digital development process post ParentApp for Teens. Supported by implementation partner IDEMS and PLH, the team have reviewed and designed the session structure, shared reading/book features and the use of Facilitator App. The team are also utilising an adaptive google docs content authoring system facilitated by IDEMS. In addition, the team have built a repository of open-source books to be used in the App, linked to specific skills/learning areas. Ideas for the development of new open-source books that link in with ParentApp modules/themes have also been drafted (for example playful parenting, talking about emotions, positive parenting and fostering independence).



ParentApp for Kids

A digital parenting programme to promote **caregiver wellbeing** and **positive parent-child relationships** to improve child development and wellbeing.

Delivered weekly over **8** sessions / modules:

JOIN	CONNECT	PLAY	EXPLORE
TALK	CREATE	BUILD	and BUILD



As part of every session, ParentApp for Kids provides **digital picture books** and **support for shared reading activities** for caregivers and their children.

Facilitate

ParentApp for Kids have strengthened connections with stakeholders during the reporting period. In April, Dr Joyce Wamoyi (National Institute for Medical Research) conducted meetings with government stakeholders in Dodoma, Tanzania and provided a presentation on the ParentApp for Kids project. In October, Marguerite Marlow and Mark Tomlinson (Stellenbosch University) attended the WHO, UNICEF, and World Bank's Regional Meeting on Measurement of ECD in Eastern and Southern Africa in Kigali, Rwanda, with participating governments from 23 countries in the region. Marguerite and Mark facilitated a workshop session on monitoring programme implementation and conducting implementation research to promote nurturing care and early childhood development outcomes.

Future Leader activities

Marguerite Marlow (Stellenbosch University) delivered presentations at the Hilton Foundation Partners Convening in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and the World Bank Education Global's Read@Home and Accelerator Programmes webinar.

The first event (17-18 April) included a discussion on the importance of responsive caregiving and parental mental health, and the benefits of digital and hybrid approaches to supporting parents. In addition, it provided a useful platform to discuss the GPI, and the forthcoming ParentApp for Kids project activities and for making key links with stakeholders to build from. The convening was attended by various representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community Development, Ministry of Education Science and Technology, as well as representatives from WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank country offices, the Tanzania ECD Network (TECDEN) and other organisations working in the parenting/child development space.

At the second event (17 October), Marguerite presented on parent and caregiver engagement in shared reading activities (including how to support parents through digital platforms).

Parenting on the Border (Thailand/Myanmar)

Project overview

The Parenting on the Border project will test a wraparound approach to improving systems, population, and individual caregiver and child level outcomes among migrant and displaced families on the Thai-Myanmar border. The project will be the first rigorous evaluation of a population-level media campaign to increase positive and playful parenting, reduce violence against children, and promote caregiver and child mental wellbeing in a displacement setting. In addition, the project will also enable developing and testing of a trauma-informed adaptation of PLH for higher-need families, thereby informing strategies to effectively target and allocate resources for maximum impact.

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

The research team has successfully completed data collection for the cluster RCT of the film intervention. The parenting film, called *Being Family*, was finalised in May 2023 and screened to 44 communities on the Thai/Myanmar border. The film portrays positive parenting skills, family relationships, and mental health coping strategies drawn from the PLH programme and additional strategies developed based on qualitative research conducted with children and families. *Being Families* presents these skills through the stories of two fictional families living in this context, with actors recruited from the local refugee communities. After the screening, trained community facilitators led a structured discussion with audience members to reinforce the key messages and skills depicted in the film.

Both baseline and endline survey data collection has been completed with 2,246 caregivers. In addition, the team has collected implementation-level monitoring data such as film screening attendance and conducted qualitative focus group discussions focused primarily on implementation outcomes. A four-month follow-up is due to be completed in January 2024 and a detailed statistical analysis plan is also in place to measure the film intervention’s impact.



The next phase of the project - to co-design, implement and evaluate a parenting and mental health intervention - is well underway. In November, the team held co-design workshops with key community-based service providers from the local parenting and mental health sectors. The workshops will shape both the intervention's framework and content, drawing inspiration from the insights emerging from the film RCT. These design activities, which will also include parents and caregivers, will extend into early 2024 with the intervention rollout and evaluation planned for later that year.

The team is exploring options to increase the size and power of the evaluation of the parenting and mental health intervention. There is substantial local stakeholder interest in the co-designed intervention. The team has worked hard to identify interested and value-aligned partners in Thailand, and these partners are now actively engaged in the co-design process. The team would like to increase the size and scope of the planned evaluation for two reasons: firstly, to be able to engage a greater number of implementing partners in the delivery of the project, helping build engagement and prospects for sustainability, and secondly, to increase the sample size and power of the evaluation.

Published journal articles

<i>Title</i>	<i>Status</i>
A film-based intervention to reduce child maltreatment among migrant and displaced families from Myanmar: Protocol of a pragmatic cluster randomized controlled trial (PONE-D-23-16654R1)	Published

Facilitate

Future Leader activities

The Parenting on the Border team has pursued several activities to foster the development and capacity of GPI Future Leaders, including those from the Global South:

Stephanie Eagling-Peche, Project Co-Investigator and DPhil student at University of Oxford, delivered a presentation focusing on qualitative formative results and the intervention development process at the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Conference (ISPCAN) and the European Society for Prevention Research Conference. During the reporting period, Stephanie also completed her thesis proposal including three papers related to multiple phases of the project.

Khaing Zar Lwin, Co-Investigator and Research Manager on the project, is from Myanmar and working towards her doctorate at Mahidol University in Thailand. She has planned her thesis study using baseline data from the project, successfully defending her thesis proposal in November 2023. During the reporting period, Khaing also presented to the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand.

Hayman Linn Lae Zaw, Fulbright Scholar Burma (2022), MSW Candidate (Community, Management and Policy Practice) at University of North Carolina School of Social Work and Jeslyn Brouwer, an undergraduate student from Thailand studying at Duke University joined the team as a Research Assistants, supporting data analysis and study implementation.

Stephanie, Khaing, and Pattaporn (Gib) Chuenglertsiri (Project Co-Investigator) began collaborative qualitative data analysis of the formative data for the project.

In November, **Dr Amanda Sim**, Stephanie and Khaing presented baseline findings to partners and the advisory committee and also presented at a research seminar in Mahidol.

Dr Sim gave a talk titled 'Going to the movies to reduce violence against children? Development and evaluation of a film-based intervention to prevent child maltreatment on the Thailand-Myanmar border' at the Global Health Seminar Series at McMaster University in October.

Advocate

The Parenting on the Border team are engaging in advocacy activities with internal and external networks:

- Dr Amanda Sim and Tawanchai Jirapramukpitak from Mahidol University, and Frances Gardner (University of Oxford) met with Napat Phisanbut from UNICEF Thailand in March to provide an update on the project and discuss potential opportunities for UNICEF to support with dissemination, implementation or scale up.
- The team is coordinating with the GPI Advocacy team (University of Oxford) to organise a film screening in Oxford for spring 2024. They are also exploring options for a screening at the LEGO Foundation.
- The team has also convened film screenings for local stakeholders in Mae Sot, Thailand, to gather input from partners and advisory group members on priority questions for baseline data analysis.

Using baseline findings to raise the profile of violence against children on Thai/ Myanmar border. In coordination with the GPI Communications team, the Parenting on the Border team is planning to use the baseline findings from the study to create communication products (e.g., policy briefs, videos, or similar) for the team in Thailand to use in discussions with government stakeholders and funders.

Accelerate

Multi-lateral partners are interested in disseminating the film beyond the intervention areas in Tak province. The project film partner, Sermpanya Foundation, has been asked by UNHCR and UNICEF to submit funding proposals to disseminate the film intervention in more migrant communities as well as the refugee camps.

Parenting for Respectability (Uganda)

Project overview

The Parenting for Respectability project is a bold initiative designed to explore the potential of digital platforms for scaling up the Parenting for Respectability (PfR) programme. This programme has previously shown significant efficacy in reducing violence in domestic environments through an in-person delivery format. The proposed digitally based PfR Implementation Science Study aims to utilise the PLH Digital Architecture to extend PfR's reach to reduce violence against children and intimate partner violence (IPV) in Uganda. The study will test the feasibility of the PfRApp, evaluate its initial effectiveness, optimise engagement and retention to support an RCT and eventual scale-up of the programme.

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

The PfR-Digital project was launched in early 2023 and has made good progress in assembling its research team. Dr Godfrey Siu and Carolyn Namutebi, based at the Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC) at Makerere University College of Health Science, lead the core team. The research team has been expanded through the addition of Dr Betty Okot, GPI Playful Parenting Fellow, who will focus on facilitator readiness for digital scaling. In addition, Onesmus Kamacooko and Martin Joy Omello, both appointed as GPI Playful Parenting Scholars funded by the GPI, will delve into the various dimensions of PfR-Digital's scalability and accessibility.

Formative planning for the RCT to deliver the PfRApp has progressed, resulting in the finalisation of a PfR Digital study protocol. Completed in October 2023, the protocol is under review by Principal Investigator Dr Siu and the central GPI research team in readiness for submission for ethical approval. Drawing on existing knowledge and findings from the ParentApp for Teens optimisation study conducted in Tanzania, the protocol outlines three delivery options, which will be adopted to evaluate the initial effectiveness of the PfRApp: 1. Individualised self-paced sessions with no facilitator involvement; 2. Hybrid individualised self-paced sessions (participants receive weekly phone-in support from a facilitator); 3. Hybrid WhatsApp group-based facilitator assisted delivery.

Innovate

To accelerate the digital design process, the PfR project team convened a five-day digital study orientation and app design and development workshop in Kampala. The extremely productive workshop brought together 16 participants, including 10 members from CHDC and five tech developers from GPI implementing partners INNODEMS (Kenya) and IDEMS (UK). This workshop served as an orientation for the team to establish a common understanding of

the project's goal and its link to the broader GPI. It also helped the CHDC team begin to conceptualise the PLH digital architecture and to explore the design and functionalities of suitable digital tools for the PFR-Digital project.

Building on the success of the May workshop, the project team has worked closely with IDEMS and INNODEMS to co-develop the PFRApp for parents in the Ugandan context.

Focusing on an adapted version of ParentApp for Teens, the PFRApp will include content from the PFR programme adapted to be inter-operable with the PLH digital architecture. Consultation with IDEMS and INNODEMS is ongoing to ensure a digital PFR programme that retains its unique features - including male engagement, single-sex and mixed-sex groups, spousal interaction, group-based and facilitation delivery, and local community engagement - whilst being user-centred and building upon lessons learnt from the ParentApp for Teens optimisation study. To date, a test version of the PFRApp has been released following a management review of content, features and usability. The current PFRApp version covers simple and effective strategies to build habits, reduce conflict, and support positive parenting. Content shall be delivered through text, audio and images in 12 interactive weekly sessions covering the core programmatic content of the original evidence-based programme in a condensed format. In addition, the team has laid out the timeline of the programme, including the targeted alpha and beta releases of the PFR-Digital app and further onto full trial implementation in 2024. If all proceeds as planned, 2025 will see the optimisation and scaling studies, which aim to scrutinise PFR's scaling processes, including digital adaptation.

Innovate outputs

Title	Description	Status
Test version of content only PfRApp	The PfRApp is a digital version of the PfR human-based programme mobile application designed for parents/caregivers of adolescents aged 0-17 years. The application is open source and has offline and online functionality, to benefit rural locations with limited internet access.	Web preview launched August and again in December with an updated style theme.

Facilitate

The PfR-Digital team is actively fostering shared learning across the GPI, through the findings of a recently completed cluster RCT. Findings from the research, funded by Oak Foundation and led by Makerere University in collaboration with SOS Children’s Villages Uganda, the University of Glasgow MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Science Unit, and the University of Oxford were presented at the first GPI Open Webinar Series event, ‘[Parenting for Respectability Uganda: Lessons in Violence Prevention from a Home-grown Parenting Programme](#)’ in March. This webinar attracted 99 attendees drawn from a wide range of researchers, implementers and local stakeholders and was accompanied by the production of a [policy brief](#). It was a collaborative presentation by Dr Siu (CHDC), Dr Okot (CHDC) and Dr Jamie Lachman (University of Oxford), which contributed to the research uptake and advocacy activities by the team.

Through the GPI, the team benefited from an institutional research capacity building programme, which enabled mentorship of [four disability inclusive youth \(DIY\) interns](#). A collaboration between CHDC and the Medical Research Council (MRC), engagement of the interns in research and mentorship activities, between June - September, provided valuable insights into researchable topics to incorporate disability inclusive parenting within PfR Digital. To expand the research capacity at CHDC by participating in knowledge, skills, and experience development, the PfR programme is continuing to mentor and support the DIY interns with a grant from the GPI Emerging Trends Fund. The new project (scheduled to run from November 2023 - April 2024) strengthens the disability dimension of PfR and ensures that PfR-Digital is disability-inclusive, both in the subject matter of its content and in the digital accessibility of the tools provided.

The LEGO Foundation

Aiming to address the unique challenges faced by parents with disabilities and those parenting children with disabilities, it is also an opportunity for PfR to engage with disability networks and exchange supportive parenting knowledge and information.



PfR's disability interns.

The PfR-Digital team has increased its capacity to

develop and refine the PfRApp as an open-access technological resource to support digital delivery of PfR in Ugandan communities.

The team engaged with a wide community of stakeholders including parenting programme implementers, faith-based communities, parents, and persons living with disabilities and parenting children with disabilities through in-person and remote events over the reporting period. In August, the CHDC and PLH teams organised a stakeholder learning convening in Entebbe, Uganda, bringing together participants from the consortium, development partners, district officials and government departments to discuss among other topics, how best research can be transferred into policies and practice to facilitate local learning regarding the value of play in parenting and early years learning. In September, a cross-country workshop was organised by CHDC and PLH in Namanve to promote knowledge exchange and sharing at country level between Kenya and Uganda. The learning component engagement enabled the parenting agenda to feature in country level learning exchanges, and community stakeholders to share learning from research initiatives.

Future Leader activities

CHDC team members Onesmus Kamacooko, Martin Joy Omello and Dr Betty Okot have made progress in several areas:

Onesmus presented his research topic to the Makerere University Doctoral committee at CHDC on 19 September and is due to submit Higher Degrees Committee for provisional admission.

Martin successfully completed his internship at CHDC and contributed to the Elma digital Data-hub concept for the co-development of a centralised data management system for tracking violence prevention interventions and hosted by the MGLSD. He is also actively involved in the management review of PfRApp development.

Betty acts as the focal person for the DIY Interns. She is mentoring the interns and leading disability inclusion into PfR Digital through the Disability Inclusive Parenting research funded by the ETF award. With support from the GPI Capacity Sharing Fund, Dr Okot presented a poster at the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) conference (24-27 September)

Onesmus, Martin and Betty also participated in an MSc Prevention Science Course convened by Prof Cathy Ward (University of Cape Town).

Advocate

The PfR-Digital team seeks to deliver PfR as an inclusive human-digital parenting intervention to engage different sub-groups of parents. These include those that are living with disabilities and parenting differently abled children as well as families in crisis contexts. As part of International Deaf Awareness Week (18-22 September) CHDC's DIY interns presented a sign language-based skit on parenting children with disabilities and gave a paper presentation at a memorial lecture (Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda) to a local, national, and international audience. These contributions were very well received, increasing awareness of the need for a disability inclusive PfR. In addition, Dr Betty Okot, was invited by the Equality Diversity and Inclusion lead at University College London to give a guest lecture (4 October). Following the lecture, she was invited to another meeting with the contact from the Institute of Education to explore possible areas of future collaborations with the broader GPI, CHDC and PLH. CHDC also continues to collaborate with UNICEF, MRC, Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, PLH, INNODEMS and IDEMS among others to widen the scope of their work. During the PfR project digital study app design workshop in Kampala, the team conducted interviews with workshop participants. The findings resulted in an abstract that was presented at the Joint Annual Scientific Conference of Makerere College of Health Sciences and Ministry of Health Uganda in August 2023. Digital delivery of parenting training was highly welcomed and the Ugandan Minister for Technology and Communication who was the Chief Guest took particular interest in the presentation.

Accelerate

The PfR-Digital team has invested in a sustainable digital infrastructure to assist scale-up of the PfR human-digital parenting intervention. The PfRApp is an example of how the team are seeking to address the limitations of an in-person delivery of PfR, which resulted in sub-optimal reach. The feasibility and initial effectiveness study adapted manualised PfR content and adopted suitable digital delivery options for digitally scaling-up PfR to maximise and sustain the achievements in violence against children and IPV prevention. The innovation will utilise digital platforms to facilitate larger-scale delivery by addressing the following three main barriers to scale: 1. Limited resources to facilitate in-person delivery at scale; 2. Standard pandemic restrictions, which could affect in-person group-based delivery; 3. Limited access and participation in in-person sessions by parents with busy work schedules.

Supported by the Children’s Rights and Violence Prevention Fund and the Centre for Transformative Parenting, the team are continuing to scale up PfR in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. In April, CHDC in collaboration with the Centre for Transformative Parenting convened a three-day regional learning and sharing workshop. The workshop enabled partners to explore and consider the opportunities for scaling PfR gains across the three countries. This work is contributing to local adaptation and dissemination of PfR content on a wider scale in the region. In addition, it strengthens the economic and male engagement aspects of PfR as the Children’s Rights and Violence Prevention Fund partners are deliberately targeting fathers and supporting Village Saving and Loan Associations initiated by parenting groups.

The scale-up intervention is also evolving into a campaign to strengthen families through common messages on positive parenting among the East African countries. In June, the Children’s Rights and Violence Prevention Fund and the Centre for Transformative Parenting held a regional meeting in Entebbe bringing together partners from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania to share learning, experience and good practices drawing from their engagement in PfR. This is an example of how PfR is contributing and building a strong community of practice among a wider field of implementers, including non-governmental organisations, researchers, donors, and policymakers to appreciate the value of playful parenting, child learning, child rights and violence prevention in the proper upbringing of children and the well-being of families. In August, CHDC was invited by the Children’s Rights and Violence Prevention Fund to submit a proposal to evaluate scale-up of PfR in Kenya and Tanzania and to share evidence on the effectiveness, reach and relevance of the programme, among other objectives. If successful, the research component will be supported by Dr Siu and Dr Okot.

ParentText Optimisation and Evaluation (South Africa)

Project overview

ParentText is a chatbot-led parenting intervention that aims to increase positive parenting and reduce child maltreatment. Building on a pilot study of ParentText in South Africa funded by the LEGO Foundation, this study is the first to rigorously optimise and evaluate the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and scalability of a parenting programme delivered via a chatbot in a low- and middle-income country. Findings from an optimisation trial will be used to assess the feasibility of a chatbot-led intervention and inform an RCT in 2024. In addition, findings will support the wider dissemination and scale-up of PLH human-digital programmes, and more specifically the ongoing and forthcoming delivery of ParentText in multiple countries, including Malaysia, Mexico, China, South Africa, Thailand, Sri Lanka.

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

Through the optimisation trial, the ParentText team seek to determine the most effective and cost-effective means of service delivery by examining a combination of external implementation factors. For user engagement enhancement, two delivery streams have been explored: 1) remotely facilitated WhatsApp support groups for participating parents; 2) in-person sessions for parents. The team also want to understand how these delivery approaches (or a combination of such), along with baseline characteristics, maximise intervention effects, including positive parenting and reduced violence against children.

Data collection for the optimisation trial is ongoing in Mpumalanga. Approximately 85% and 92% of caregivers in the programme have completed baseline and post-test surveys, respectively. Further, the team have conducted focus group discussions in three districts with recruited caregivers and facilitators who delivered the intervention. At the same time, the data management team is actively cleaning and preparing quantitative and qualitative data for cost-effectiveness and effectiveness evaluation. Researchers from the Universities of Cape Town and Oxford have worked closely with implementing partner mothers2mothers (m2m) to collate and clean the data collected and to troubleshoot issues as they arise. Data cleaning is expected to be completed early next year with preliminary findings expected by May 2024.

Several different options are being explored to test ParentText in an RCT in South Africa. One promising proposal is for a large-scale three-arm RCT evaluating the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and scalability of a shortened five-day user experience of ParentText, focused on positive parent-child interaction through one-on-one time. The trial would be large-scale - approximately 20,000 participants recruited via social media - and would test the

effectiveness of different modalities of digital-only parenting interventions. This research concept will be written-up for an upcoming Emerging Trends proposal to be submitted to the LEGO Foundation in early 2024.

Published and submitted journal articles

Title	Status
<p>Integrating intimate partner violence prevention content into a digital parenting chatbot intervention during COVID-19: Intervention development and remote data collection. BMC Public Health 23, 1708 (2023).</p> <p>Policy brief is available HERE.</p>	<p>Published</p>
<p>ParentText South Africa Optimisation Trial Research Protocol</p>	<p>Submitted to JMIR – under review</p>

Innovate

ParentText was developed in collaboration with implementation partner IDEMS to create a culturally suitable and adaptive intervention. ParentText has been adapted for the study’s population through translated chatbot material and content. All materials have been translated into the two most regionally spoken languages, siSwati and isiZulu. This aims to enhance ParentText’s acceptability among local stakeholders and participants. Benefiting from WhatsApp’s widespread use and low data usage in South Africa, the team anticipate ParentText’s scalability and sustainability for parenting interventions. Its low-cost, resource-efficient nature makes it optimal for seamless integration into existing infrastructure and service delivery, utilising current staff. A dashboard for monitoring and evaluation of ParentText 2.0 is now also available.

Facilitate

The ParentText team are working closely with local implementation partner m2m to support and engage communities in Mpumalanga in positive parenting knowledge and empowerment. m2m is an NGO that focus on preventing HIV transmission and ending the AIDS epidemic in South Africa. By engaging with parents and adolescents through playful parenting, the team hope to foster collaboration with m2m to empower people living with HIV. After the intervention, the team plan to create brief reports containing relevant information and recommendations for stakeholders within NGOs, public health, and social care services in South Africa. In addition, they will provide verbal reports to local participants through community meetings to help disseminate findings and share knowledge.

In collaboration with m2m, the ParentText team have trained and supported local facilitators to implement a new digital parenting intervention. Training sessions were conducted in August in Mpumalanga and included team building, chatbot training, condition assignment, and role-playing. The team have also recruited and trained data collectors from the local area to support the input of paper-based data into the Open Data Kit system. This has enabled the team to provide skill-sharing opportunities to further enhance the facilitator experience and knowledge.

Future Leader activities

The ParentText team is providing opportunities for young researchers to gain fieldwork experience in a low-income setting. Co-Principal Investigator **Dr Hlengiwe Gwebu** (University of Fort Hare) and recently appointed Research Officer, **Zamakhanya Makhanya** (University of Cape Town) will be heading to the field in November and December to facilitate qualitative data collection.

Following meetings with implementation partners, m2m and CWBSA, the team finalised a trial research protocol. Protocol development was led by **Dr Maria Ambrosio** (University of Oxford) whose DPhil research will be centred around the study.

Accelerate

Through the ParentText team's partnership with m2m, positive working relationships have been established to incorporate a parenting intervention into their existing infrastructure. This integration has allowed the team to leverage m2m's service delivery capabilities, and it is hoped that ParentText and the insights gained from it will inform the development, implementation, and scaling of parenting programmes at a regional and potentially global level.

As an open-source digital intervention hosted on the WhatsApp platform, the chatbot intervention has potential for mass scalability and sustainability. Given its low data usage, integration with existing community-level infrastructure/service delivery, and easy user-experience, the team hope it can be adapted to fit future parenting interventions taken up by the community and will be able to comment more on its acceptability following data analysis. By optimising the adaptability and acceptability of the chatbot, the team also hope to attract future partners who are interested in PLH human-digital parenting programmes and working with the GPI in other research capacities.

Parenting within the Preschool System (Malaysia)

Project overview

The Parenting within the Preschool System project seeks to optimise the effectiveness and scalability of ParentChat and ParentText within a national government education system for low-income families in Malaysia. Aimed at parents and caregivers of children between ages four and five, two remotely delivered Parenting for Lifelong Health programmes (locally known in Malaysia as Naungan Kasih Positive Parenting Programme): ParentChat and ParentText will be tested, in addition to a PLH in-person programme. The findings of this research will make an important contribution to an understanding of how playful parenting interventions can have a meaningful impact on parenting, learning through play, and early educational outcomes.

Progress across GPI workstreams

Evaluate

The Parenting within the Preschool System team advanced preparations for delivery of the Naungan Kasih (NK) pilot cluster randomised factorial trial. Following a review of the project workplan and NK-Hybrid programme design and meetings with stakeholders (i.e., UNICEF, the National Population and Family Development Department (LPPKN), and the Community Development Department (KEMAS), a decision was made to conduct a pilot study before a full programme intervention. The pilot study aims to investigate the differential feasibility, acceptability, and engagement for NK when ParentText is delivered with a) one or two in-person sessions, and b) with remote online WhatsApp support groups. In addition, it aims to provide preliminary exploratory data regarding the relative effectiveness of the different versions of the programme.

Collaboration with government stakeholders has been at the heart of the project design. In July, an intensive four-day in-person co-design workshop was held with government representatives from LPPKN, KEMAS, civil society representatives from the Malaysian Association of Social Workers (MASW) and other NGOs. The workshop enabled stakeholders to provide their input during the formative stage of content development. Insights from the workshop have also informed a study protocol, which was submitted for publication to the Journal of Medical Internet Research in mid-December.

Since the co-design workshop, the team has continued to engage with government stakeholders as they finalise the research design and are preparing to commence implementation. Ethical approval from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and University of Oxford have been received and child direct assessments have been finalised. Planning for data

collection has included recruitment of enumerators, and creation of flyers for parents. In addition, a data collection manual has been completed and translated and the team has developed a comprehensive diagram which outlines the stages of participant recruitment and data collection procedures. In collaboration with KEMAS, UPM have made good progress with baseline data collection assessments of primary and secondary caregivers and child direct assessments. An implementation plan has been drafted, with onboarding sessions for pre-school teachers due to take place in early January 2024 and post-testing in late February 2024.

Published and submitted journal articles

Title	Status
<p>“Before I was like a Tarzan. But now, I take a pause”: mixed methods feasibility study of the Naungan Kasih parenting program to prevent violence against children in Malaysia. BMC Public Health 23, 241 (2023).</p> <p>Accompanying policy brief can be found HERE.</p>	<p>Published</p>
<p>A pilot cluster randomised factorial trial of a hybrid human-digital playful parenting programme to improve positive parenting, learning through play, and child educational outcomes among preschool children in Malaysia: Study protocol</p> <p>Preprint can be found HERE.</p>	<p>Submitted to JMIR - under review</p>

Innovate

The July co-design workshop with partners and stakeholders led to several proposed adaptations of ParentText 2.0 for the Malaysian context. Adaptations include emojis and changes to the tone and readability of content to increase accessibility for users. In addition, recordings of familiar Malaysian male and female personalities have been used to create locally recognisable AI avatars for the ParentText chatbot. In collaboration with PLH, development work on ParentText 2.0 has also progressed. By November, the first iteration of ParentText 2.0 was produced.

In collaboration with PLH, an app (FaciNK) has been developed for NK programme facilitators to engage with parents using pre-drafted content. Recent content adaptations include modification of the structure of WhatsApp Group Weekly Chat sessions to move from topic-specific to general check-ins. This change is designed to facilitate open discussions among parents, regardless of the ParentText goals they are completing. Common challenges parents face during home activities are now included in addition to pre-scripted messages which enable facilitators to share solutions during check-ins with parents. By November the first web preview of FaciNK App was produced.

Innovate outputs

<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
FaciNK App	FaciNK is an App for programme facilitators to deploy pre-drafted weekly messages to parents via WhatsApp. The app also provides access to a Facilitator Guide, content around common challenges, FAQs, and safeguarding.	Web preview launched November 2023

Facilitate***Future Leader activities***

Dr Muslihah Hasbullah, Farah Zeehan Mohd Nadzri, Nurhilmayani Ismail and Nor Syazani Syahmi Mohd Zaki (Universiti Putra Malaysia) attended Prof Cathy Ward's MSc Prevention Science course (University of Cape Town). Hal Cooper began studying for a DPhil in October (University of Oxford) and Vanisa Senesathith, an MSc student in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation, has joined the team as a Research Support Assistant, also based at Oxford.

Advocate

Over the reporting period, the UPM team have enhanced the visibility of their work in the Malaysian context. Professor Rumaya Juhari (Universiti Putra Malaysia) gave the keynote speech at NetWorks 2023, the global summit of The Human Safety Net Summit (Venice, 22 - 24 November). In her speech, she shared insights into the successful adaptation of the PLH programme to the Malaysian context. The presentation showcased the adaptability of initiatives and served as a source of inspiration for the entire community. The team have also created a Facebook account to update about in-person co-design activities in Malaysia.

Accelerate

The Parenting within the Preschool system team participated in several discussions with stakeholders focused on NK programme scale-up. Recent activities have included virtual co-design workshops and meetings with KEMAS and LPPKN to discuss hybrid delivery and content for NK@Scale modules and options to increase the scalability of parenting interventions in Malaysian government, private and community sectors. An exploratory meeting with the Ministry of Health also took place on 17 July to discuss collaboration opportunities for the benefit of families through the government healthcare system. Learning goals and modules for NK were also shared for feedback.

Identifying and Measuring Playful Parenting Using Machine Learning

Project overview

Identifying and Measuring Playful Parenting Using Machine Learning is an innovative project with the aim to create a new objective measure of playful parenting. Led by Prof Mark Tomlinson (Stellenbosch University) in collaboration with Dr Caspar Addyman and Dr Daniel Statmate (Goldsmiths, University of London) the project will apply existing machine learning techniques to videos of caregiver-infant interactions.

Overall progress

Peer-reviewed research was published in the [Proceedings of International Conference on Artificial Neural Networks \(ICANN\) 2023](#), a leading European neural networks conference.

The study proposes the first machine learning prediction modelling approach, based on Gated Recurrent Unit - GRU ensemble models, to automatically differentiate high from low dyadic synchrony between mother and baby, using a dataset of videos capturing this interaction. In the study, a computer model was trained to predict high and low synchrony in a dataset of expert coded parent-child interaction videos. The model has a mean accuracy of 72% and a mean specificity of 83%, which represents an 83% detection rate for dyads with low synchrony. This is a very encouraging first step towards the team's goal of automating assessments of parent child interactions. A model such as this could help identify priority cases for parenting interventions, improving their effectiveness.

Two PhD students, **Irene Uwerikowe and Jeremiah Ayock**, joined the Machine Learning team in July as part of the Quantum Leap Africa programme from the African Institute of Mathematics (AIMS). Irene and Jeremiah will be registered in the Applied Maths department at Stellenbosch University and supervised by Dr Caspar Addyman, Dr Ulrich Paquet, Dr Daniel Statmate and Prof Mark Tomlinson. Ulrich is director of AIMS South Africa and research scientist at Google DeepMind. The team were able to make the recruitments due to funding received from the GPI Emerging Trends Fund.

In September, the team worked alongside IDEMS to run a Sustainability and Society hackathon at accountancy software company Sage. The hackathon was organised in collaboration with Sage Foundation, which supports volunteering by Sage employees in support of charities and social enterprises. The hackathon featured seven teams of Sage AI engineers and business analysts from across four continents. Dr Caspar Addyman and PhD students Irene Uwerikowe and Jeremiah Ayock supported two teams (based in London and the US) to complete a challenge in response to [parent child interactions videos](#). The London team demoed combining speech recognition and laughter detection algorithms, whilst the US team demonstrated an approach where multiple individual models fed rich data into GPT-4 to interpret what was happening in the videos, recorded in the [Sage-AI blog](#). The event was a

great success for the team, enabling professional AI developers to contribute some of their expertise towards the project. A follow up event is planned for February 2024.

Building on work to enable the hackathon the team created a new open-source project called 'BabyJokes'. A [GitHub repository](#) represents a data and modelling testbed for the team's work and for future collaborations. The dataset contains 1,440 short videos of 90 parents demonstrating simple jokes to babies under two years old, all with metadata and consent for data-sharing. The project demonstrates how machine learning tools can extract data from the videos (movement, speech, facial expressions) for classification purposes. In addition, it addresses the challenge of sharing technical results with the research community that would be impossible if working directly with sensitive Parent Child Interaction data.

GPI satellite projects

Completed satellite studies

Booksharing for Fathers in South Africa:

Context: Violent behaviour in adolescence and adulthood has been shown to develop when children’s normal expression of aggression, which generally peaks at two-three years, fails to follow the normal trajectory of emotion regulation, as children learn adaptive ways of managing their aggressive impulses. Instead, if child aggression becomes persistent and pervasive by age three-to-four, it is a strong risk factor for later aggressive behaviour, accounting for more than half of all adolescent and adult violent crimes, including gender-based violence. This negative developmental pathway to violence is predicted by three early parenting difficulties: unresponsive/insensitive parenting, leading to children’s insecure attachment; harsh/inconsistent parenting, leading to child behaviour problems; and poor cognitive stimulation and support, leading to child cognitive problems and educational failure.

“Dialogic book-sharing” is an early positive parenting intervention that stands to make a major contribution to violence prevention. It significantly improves the three problematic aspects of parenting with corresponding reductions in early child risk for later violent behaviour. However, Dialogic book-sharing programmes have almost exclusively been directed at mothers. As such, this study adapted the programme for delivery to fathers with the aim of reducing parenting risk factors for the development of violence and increasing child secure attachment, prosocial behaviour, and cognitive skills.

Methods: The study used an RCT design to evaluate the effectiveness of an adapted DBS intervention for fathers in reducing harsh parenting and early child risk factors for aggressive behaviour in children and violence against women. The Mikhulu Trust partnered with Sonke Gender Justice and the University of Cape Town for this 2-phase project. In Phase 1, 3-4 men from Sonke Gender Justice participated in the original book-sharing programme and provided feedback on how it could be revised to appeal to fathers. Additionally, 25 fathers participated in focus group discussions to further refine the programme based on their input and needs. In Phase 2, a pilot RCT was conducted with 70 fathers of 12- to 24-month-old children from Gugulethu in the Western Cape. After a baseline assessment, fathers were randomly assigned to either the intervention or waitlist control groups. All participants were reassessed after completing the 6-week intervention for the intervention group. The waitlist control group then received the intervention.

The study used multiple implementation measures to evaluate fathering outcomes and child outcomes. For fathering outcomes, we assessed sensitivity and reciprocity. To do this, fathers were filmed interacting with their child in two contexts – book-sharing and free-play. We assessed how often fathers share books with their children each week (assessed using a Father Involvement Scale developed by one of the investigators and based on two prominent theories, the Belsky Process Model (1984) and The Theoretical Model of Father Involvement by Lamb et al. (1987); the use of positive parenting (praise) and harsh parenting (hitting and yelling) in the past month was assessed using the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (Essau et al., 2006); as well as gender equitable attitudes using the Gender Equitable Men Scale (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008). For child outcomes, we indirectly assessed

Language by father and mother reports using a local adaptation of the MacArthur Child Development Inventory, or CDI); as well as Attention with the Early Childhood Vigilance Task (Goldman, Shapiro, & Nelson, 2004).

Findings and discussion: This study is the first RCT of book-sharing conducted with fathers in a low- or middle-income country. Despite high hopes for the intervention to yield significant gains for fathers and children, the study did not find any significant differences between the intervention and control groups on any variable. The lack of significant findings can be attributed to the large amount of missing data, which was largely a result of challenges experienced throughout the research process, including low participation and high attrition rates during the intervention delivery. Engaging fathers in parenting programmes is known to be challenging globally, particularly in South Africa, and this study underscores the difficulty of engaging fathers in a meaningful way in the book-sharing intervention. Further research is needed to understand the complexities of father engagement in parenting programmes. To successfully deliver future father-targeted interventions, a comprehensive understanding of the social contexts of dominant masculinities, tailored recruitment processes, clear expectations for participation, flexible scheduling, timing aligned with societal contexts, and thoughtful incentivization strategies are critical. These lessons learned should be carefully considered, researched, and implemented in future research and programming. While previous RCTs with mothers in LMICs have demonstrated the transformative potential of the book-sharing intervention, meaningful engagement of South African fathers in parenting programmes is a prerequisite for achieving similar outcomes. Thus, this study's most significant contribution lies in highlighting the challenges encountered, identifying their causes, and outlining the implications for future research.

Satellite studies in progress

1. **Parenting at Scale in Mexico: Adapting ParentText to Promote Caregiver and Adolescent Mental Health:** This project includes a pre-post study and scaling up an adapted version of the ParentText chatbot intervention with the government system. The team has been through an intensive formative evaluation phase with practitioners, experts, and government officials to determine the content adaptation needed to improve adolescent and caregiver mental health outcomes and align ParentText with the Mexican cultural context. They will now test the adapted version of ParentText in intensive user-testing focus group workshops with parents and facilitators. Following any further adaptations, the intervention will go through a pilot outcome and process evaluation in early 2024. Funding for this project is from UNICEF to PLH and the National Institute for Psychiatry.
2. **Piloting of Early Family Maths App:** In Kenya, this 6-month pilot project explores the Early Family Maths app's potential to enhance interactions between children aged 2-4 years and parents. Ethical approval secured, comprehensive training conducted, and 81 parents enlisted. The next steps involve introducing participants to the app, observing usage, and collecting data.
3. **Adapting Malezi Bora to Include Street-Connected Fathers:** In Eldoret, Kenya, participatory action research with street-connected parents involved 40 in-depth interviews, 9 focus group discussions, and workshops. Analysis, guided by a Parent Advisory Group and Steering Committee, is ongoing. In May 2023, the team hosted a knowledge-sharing event in Eldoret

and presented at the Consortium for Street Children Network Forum. The team, including street-connected team members, aims to stimulate a global community of practice. A formal partnership with Kenya's National Government has been established for grant submission, marking a significant step towards project sustainability.

4. **Adaptation of PLH Teens with Intimate Partner Violence Prevention:** Piloted in Zimbabwe, this study evaluated the adapted PLH Teen Programme. Positive outcomes included reductions in violence, parenting stress, and child behaviour problems, with increased equitable gender attitudes. Findings were presented at conferences, and dissemination workshops in Mutare and Harare involved participants and stakeholders from various sectors.
5. **Scale-Up of Parenting Evaluation Research (SUPER):** The SUPER study explored parenting programme scale-up across contexts. Qualitative data collection and analysis were completed in case study countries (Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, and Zimbabwe). Preliminary findings were shared with implementing partners, and a symposium at the ISPCAN Congress highlighted study methods and results.
6. **Strengthening the Protection and Reintegration of Children (SPARC) Implementation Study:** Assessing Growing Strong Together's impact in conflict zones, the study analysed data from Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, and Nigeria. Preliminary results were presented at conferences. Stakeholder engagement throughout the research and development process facilitated the intervention's uptake in diverse conflict settings.
7. **Evidence Synthesis for Policymakers and Adaptation of PLH-Young Children in Latin America:** This past year has seen ongoing engagement with stakeholders in the region in collaboration with the PLH charity, most notably the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). Together with PAHO, this satellite team developed a guide that focuses on key considerations for delivering and implementing parenting interventions based on the evidence and experiences in the Latin American and the Caribbean region. The content of the guide can be used by policymakers and decision-makers to inform different processes suitable across contexts and institutional organizations. The guide is currently under review by PAHO and will then be made publicly available.
8. **Gender-Responsive Parenting within ParentText:** User-testing of ParentText with integrated IPV prevention content was conducted in South Africa and Jamaica. Fieldwork and primary data collection are completed, and preliminary findings were presented at the ISPCAN Congress in Edinburgh.
9. **Evaluation of Parenting in Crisis (EPIC):** The EPIC study examines evidence-based parenting resource dissemination in Pakistan and Ukraine. Quantitative analysis revealed significant improvements across measures. Preliminary findings were presented at the EUSPR23 conference, and results were shared with key stakeholders, including the WHO and UNODC.
10. **Adaptation of PLH-Young Children for Delivery within Schools:** The study focuses on adapting PLH Kids for delivery in schools. Stakeholder engagement revealed high prevalence of violence against children. Adaptation involves a one-session version for children starting primary school.

11. **Ukraine Hope Groups RCT:** Pre-launch activities are almost complete for the RCT, launching in early November. Pre/post analysis from the initial pilot study was shared broadly, and partnerships to adapt Hope Groups to a Colombian context are underway.
12. **PLH for Toddlers for Community Health Workers in South Africa:** This study seeks to evaluate the impact of the training of Community Health Workers in the PLH Toddlers programme in the Western Cape, South Africa. This work is currently on hold as the lead, Kaathima Ebrahim, is currently on maternity leave.