Background

Family skills programmes support and strengthen positive age-specific and age-appropriate family functioning. Such evidence-based programmes are effective in preventing substance use, violence and crime and as such, amongst many “Australia Development Goals (ADG), since 2010, the Australian Government has piloted the Positive Parenting Youth Resilience Training (Pycs) has been actively promoting and piloting such evidence-based programmes globally. In over 30 low- and middle-income countries, the UNODC experience is to create a universal family skills programme tailored for low- and middle-income countries. Most available evidence-based programmes are designed in middle-income countries. UNODC initially developed a family skills programme called ‘Strong Families’, which is a “universal” in a “selective” settings. Families living in humanitarian contexts have been actively promoting and piloting such evidence-based programmes globally in low- and middle-income countries.

With a positive developing evidence from Strong Families, UNODC Pycs has developed a new family skills programme: Family United. Family United is a “universal” for wider settings and context in low-middle-income countries. It is easy to adopt, composed of 4 sessions spread over 4 weeks and best suited for families with children between 8 and 15 years. (Figure 2)

Methods

Family United has been initially piloted in Bangladesh and Indonesia. Short-term impact on child mental wellbeing, parenting skills and child resilience was measured using a set of questionnaires, which were filled in by caregivers 1 week before the training (t1), 2 weeks (t2) and 6 weeks post-intervention (t3). Most available evidence-based programmes are designed in middle-income countries. UNODC initially developed a family skills programme called ‘Strong Families’, which is a “universal” in a “selective” settings. Families living in humanitarian contexts have been actively promoting and piloting such evidence-based programmes globally in low- and middle-income countries.

The Family United programme had a significant effect on the parental practices and parent and family adjustment, as assessed through the PAFAS. Significant changes in the parent and family adjustment score, mainly due to improvements in the personal resilience subscore. The Family United programme had a significant effect on the child resilience, as assessed through the CYRM-R. Significant changes in the child resilience subscore, mainly due to improvements in the personal resilience subscore.

First results from Dhaka, Bangladesh (Jan-Mar 2020)

The Family United programme had a significant effect on the child mental health, as assessed through the SDQ. (Figure 4) Significant changes in the ‘problem scale’, ‘emotional problem scale’ and ‘conduct problem scale’. The Family United programme had a significant effect on the child mental health, as assessed through the SDQ. (Figure 4) Significant changes in the ‘problem scale’, ‘emotional problem scale’ and ‘conduct problem scale’.

Conclusions & next steps

The implementation of a brief family skills programme was feasible in resource limited countries and had an impact on parenting practices, family adjustment skills and child resilience.

The Findings indicate potential for application at a larger scale, however long-term effects need to be verified. The Family United programme was additionally piloted in West Java, Indonesia, with 37 families and showed promising results. It is planned to be implemented in additional countries, jointly with UNCSF, Serbia, Iran, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and India as soon as COVID-19 measures ease.

The programme is already available in 3 languages (English, Bangla and Bahasa) and is currently being translated into more.

Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Section United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Vienna, Austria

Email: unodc.pfts@un.org or wadih.maalouf@un.org

Website: www.unodc.org/un drug-prevention-and-treatment/index.html

We thank the support of the Government of Japan to UNODC that made the Family United programme available and piloted in these 2 countries.

From the People of Japan

FAMILY UNITED:

Promising impact in the field from a new universal open-source and free family skills training programme aimed at preventing a broad spectrum of risk behaviours

Karin Haar1, Aala El-Khani2, Celina Herrera3 and Wadih Maalouf4, on behalf of the country implementation teams

UNODC, Austria 1The University of Manchester, United Kingdom  | CONTACT AUTHOR: Wadih Maalouf , email: wadih.maalouf@un.org