

Parenting support and child protection

Maestral's approach and expertise

Maestral.



Parenting programs and child protection

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Maestral sees the importance of parenting support as an integral part of our child protection mandate. **Parenting** (see the definitions box) exerts a tremendous influence on all children's physical, mental, social and emotional development, from infancy and early childhood, through to middle childhood and adolescence. **Positive parenting** (see the definitions box) has a large and growing body of evidence showing that it stimulates and nurtures children's holistic development.

*"Families, parents and caregivers play a central role in child well-being and development. They offer identity, love, care, provision and protection to children and adolescents as well as economic security and stability. Families can be the greatest source of support for children but also – under unfortunate circumstances – the greatest source of harm."*¹

Parents in the context of parenting programs refers to all people who are the primary caregivers of children aged 0-17 years. This includes biological mothers and fathers, and other primary caregivers who may be family members (such as grandparents or uncles and aunts), or other primary caregivers, such as foster parents, for example. Adolescent parents are both parents themselves while still in need of the protection and care to which all children are entitled.

Parenting support programs are "a set of activities or services aimed at improving how parents approach and execute their role as parents, specifically their parenting knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviours, and practices."²

Positive parenting is "Parental behavior based on the best interest of the child that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent and provides recognition and guidance which involves setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child."³

Family support is "A set of (service and other) activities oriented to improving family functioning and grounding child-rearing and other familial activities in a system of supportive relationships and resources (both formal and informal)."⁴ Family support is broader than parenting support as it is not only about the adult-child relationship but also includes broader support to strengthen the economic stability of the family.

Parenting programs form an essential part of Maestral's work by focusing on the individual and family-level resilience and risks faced by children. These in turn form an essential part of the prevention of child protection risks and support to children who have already experienced harm. Although parenting programs primarily focus on households, the core concepts of positive parenting (see the definition in the box above) are equally relevant for work with children outside of family care, whether in alternative care, on the move or outside of a household, or to strengthen education approaches in schools.

¹ Daly, M., R. Bray, Z. Bruckhauf, J. Byrne, A. Margaria, N. Pecnik, and M. Samms-Vaughan (2015). [Family and Parenting Support: Policy and Provision in a Global Context](#), *Innocenti Insight*, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence.

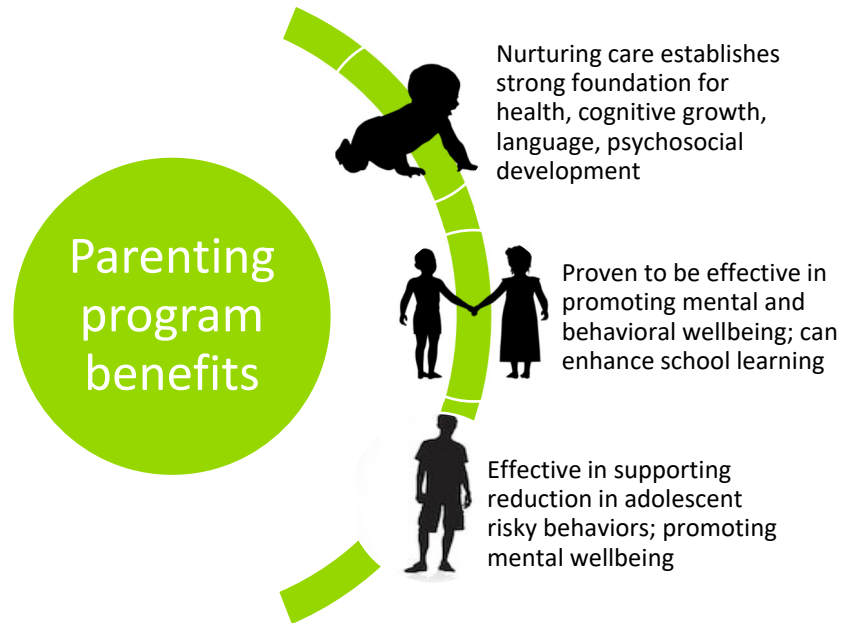
² Daly, M., et. al. (2105). *Op.cit.*

³ Council of Europe, [Committee of Ministers Recommendation \(2006\) 19 on policy to support positive parenting](#).

⁴ Daly, M., et. al. (2105). *Op.cit.*

What do parenting programs do and why are they important?

Parenting programs have been linked to poverty reduction, violence prevention, peacebuilding, and sustainable development.⁵ Parenting programs have a positive benefit for children at every age and stage of a child's life.



Parenting support programs form an essential part of a broader child protection response.

How does Maestral's parenting work fit into and complement other aspects of our work?

Child protection system strengthening

Child protection systems strengthening is about ensuring: laws and policies are in place and enforced that protect children and enable prevention and response actions, a competent workforce provides services to prevent and respond to child protection violations, interventions and services exist to protect children as well as referral mechanisms to enable optimal access to those services, and sufficient sustainable resources through national financing, government leadership and robust monitoring and evaluation. However, the functionality of a child protection system depends in large part on whether basic principles of nurturing care, positive discipline, child

⁵ Engle, P. L., Black, M. M., Behrman, J. R., de Mello, M. C., Gertler, P. J., Kapiriri, L., ... Young, M. E. (2007). Child development in developing countries 3: Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world. *Lancet*, 369(9557), 229–242; Britto, P. R., Lye, S. J., Proulx, K., Yousafzai, A. K., Matthews, S. G., Vaivada, T., ... Fernald, L. C. (2017). Nurturing care: promoting early childhood development. *The Lancet*, 389(10064), 91–102; Mejia, A., Calam, R., & Sanders, M. R. (2012). A Review of Parenting Programs in Developing Countries: Opportunities and Challenges for Preventing Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties in Children. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 15(2), 163–175; Mejia, A., Calam, R., & Sanders, M. R. (2012). A Review of Parenting Programs in Developing Countries: Opportunities and Challenges for Preventing Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties in Children. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 15(2), 163–175; Chu, J. T. W., Farruggia, S. P., Sanders, M. R., & Ralph, A. (2012). Towards a public health approach to parenting programmes for parents of adolescents. *Journal of Public Health*, 34(suppl 1), i41–i47; Marcus, R., Kruja, K. and Rivett, J. (2019) What are the impacts of parenting programmes on adolescents? A review of evidence from low and middle-income countries.

wellbeing and rights are accepted and upheld by society, communities, and the family as the basic unit of society. Policy and lawmakers, law enforcement and implementing actors, including social workers will struggle to implement a child protection system if families and communities do not understand the importance of nurturing care, positive parenting and ensuring child wellbeing and respect of child rights. Parenting programming is about creating that resonance, recognizing the role of parents in ensuring child protection, and engaging them as key actors at the core of the child protection system.

Care reform

Parenting support programs are an essential part of any comprehensive care reform effort. Comprised of three critical components care reform involves prevention of family separation, deinstitutionalization/reintegration, expansion of family based alternative care. All three of these areas have a foundational element of parenting support. To prevent child and family separation, the establishment or expansion of family support initiatives are critical to ensure that families receive the services required to address their vulnerabilities as well as strengthen their ability to protect and nurture children in their care. Alternative caregivers often care for children that have lived through trauma and require a unique type of parenting. Strengthening the capacity of these caregivers by providing them with the skills, knowledge and abilities to parent in a manner that enables a safe and nurturing environment in which children can begin to recover from the experiences they have lived, including separation and violence. Reintegration of children from residential care involves preparing both the child and the family and parenting support in a core part of the reintegration journey and specific topics related to reintegration can best be addressed through group or individually delivered positive parenting modules.

Violence against children

Parenting support is one of the seven strategies set out in the global INSPIRE framework. INSPIRE contains seven complementary strategies that are grounded in a robust evidence base for prevention of violence and are promoted through the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (“End Violence”),⁶ a global partnership forum through which governments commit to and are supported to implement national-level VAC prevention strategies. The INSPIRE framework is important because it is the framework recognized by the majority of governments around the world.

The family home is the place where most violence occurs. It is estimated that nearly three in four children aged 2–4 years globally regularly suffer physical punishment and/or psychological violence at the hands of parents and caregivers.⁷ One in four children under five years lives with a mother who is the victim of intimate partner violence.⁸ Children living outside family care are at even greater risk of violence. But the family can also be the most important sources of protection from violence, and of care and support when violence has occurred. Providing families under stress with support to provide positive parenting is an essential part of enabling children to develop in a protected environment.

Social welfare workforce strengthening

A core element of Maestral’s social welfare workforce strengthening is to strengthen prevention and early intervention actions in the community. Supporting positive parenting is one of the most important interventions that a community-based child protection worker can do. Parenting support is a way for social workers and community-based child protection workers to promote family resilience. The skills to support positive parenting,

⁶ <https://www.end-violence.org/>

⁷ UNICEF. (2017). A familiar face: violence in the lives of children and adolescents.

⁸ UNICEF. (2017). *Op.cit.*

for example techniques for non-violent discipline, strengthening adult-child communication, supporting problem-solving for children, are all foundational skills and knowledge that members of the workforce can impart to the families with whom they work.

Juvenile justice

The UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines,1990) emphasize the necessity of parenting as a necessary part of children avoiding coming into conflict with the law: “the successful prevention of juvenile delinquency requires efforts on the part of the entire society to ensure the harmonious development of adolescents, with respect for and promotion of their personality from early childhood.” Parents and caregivers are central to this policy, and the guidelines call for measures and programs to ‘provide families with the opportunity to learn about parental roles and obligations as regards child development and child care, promoting positive parent-child relationships, sensitizing parents to the problems of children and young persons and encouraging their involvement in family and community-based activities.’ According to findings from the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (2019), the most important reason for the large number of children in detention is the lack of adequate support for families, caregivers and communities to provide appropriate care to children and encourage their development. Such support and effective cooperation between parents, child welfare, social protection, education, health, law enforcement and the justice system would prevent children from being placed in institutions and coming into conflict with the law.

Research shows that it is essential for parents and caregivers to be actively involved with their children who are in the juvenile justice system.⁹ For example, police officers indicate they are more likely to use diversion options when parents are involved in a positive manner.¹⁰ Restorative justice interventions are more likely accepted and successful if parents are involved and supportive of their child, and play an advocacy role with community members who may prefer a more punitive approach.¹¹

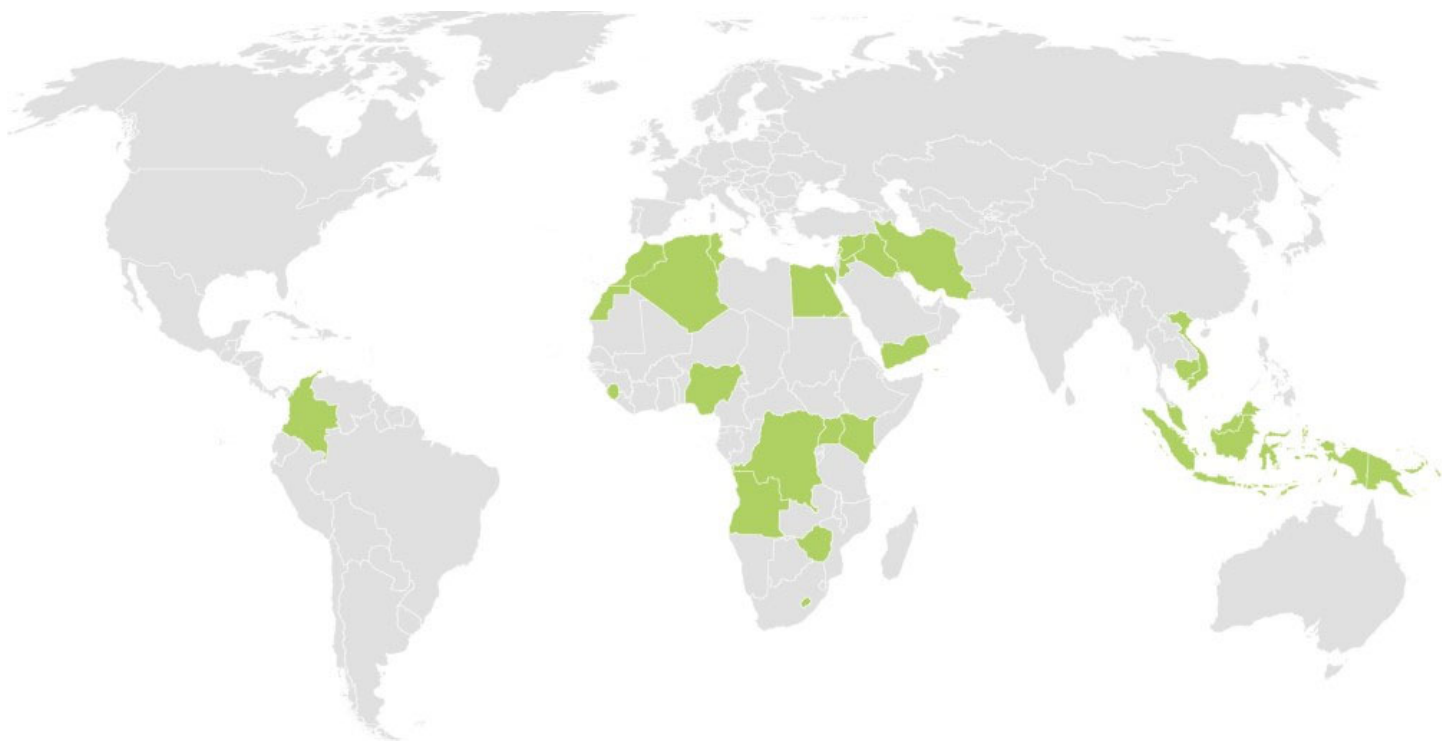
Maestral’s work on child justice, particularly with children in conflict with the law, aims to integrate issues around parenting as one of the strategies to prevent juvenile delinquency as well as a strategy to prevent children from entering the justice system.

⁹ Burke, J.D., Mulvey, E.P., Schubert, C.A., Garbin, S.R. (2105). The Challenge and Opportunity of Parental Involvement in Juvenile Justice Services. *Child Youth Service Review*, 39: doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.01.007

¹⁰ Ibid

What and where has Maestral engaged in parenting support programs?

Maestral has contributed to and worked closely with UNICEF and the Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) WHO-supported program and national governments in the following countries.



Country	Geographic areas	Areas of support	Client and partners
Global	Global	Guidance note on Designing Parenting Programmes for Violence Prevention.	UNICEF HQ
Global	Global	Parenting Program Webinars conducting for Generali employees.	The Human Safety Net
Algeria, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, and Yemen	Regional – Middle East and North Africa	Mapping of parenting programmes across the region and the development of a regional strategic framework for parenting support interventions for UNICEF.	UNICEF MENARO
Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea	Regional – East Asia and the Pacific	Positive Parenting Programme Review in the East Asia and Pacific region.	UNICEF EAPRO
Angola	National	Implementation of an evidence-based methodology to promote responsible, nonviolent fatherhood and gender-equitable childrearing practices.	UNICEF Angola

Country	Geographic areas	Areas of support	Client and partners
Colombia	National	Inform the drafting of home visiting guidelines and the parenting curriculum.	Chemonics with Instituto de Bien Estar de la Familia
Jordan	National	Review of the existing national parenting programme and development of a revised parenting programme for younger years and adolescents.	UNICEF Jordan
Kenya	Kisumu County	Technical assistance to support review and adaptation of the Skilful Parenting curriculum for families at risk of separation and undergoing reintegration into a hybrid group / home visit curriculum. Skilful Parenting is group-based intervention that supports parents and caregivers with children aged 0-18 towards more positive parenting and better family relations.	Changing the Way We Care with ICS Africa
Lesotho	Maseru, Berea	Supported the DREAMS project in improving adolescents' and their parents'/caregivers' relationships, with HIV prevention and care benefits, through Rethabile parenting program.	4Children (CRS)
Malaysia	National	Parenting programme designed to prevent and respond to violence against children in Malaysia.	UNICEF Malaysia
Nigeria	National	Design of a Parenting Assessment Framework and provision of technical support for adaptation of the Better Parenting Programme to the Nigerian context, with a focus on increasing ECD and adolescent technical content as part of the 4Children project.	4Children (CRS)
Sierra Leone	National	Formative research on violence against children in home to inform opportunities for positive parenting in Sierra Leone.	UNICEF Sierra Leone
Sierra Leone	National	Development of a parenting education programme framework, a parenting education programme curriculum, and piloting of the positive parenting education programme.	UNICEF Sierra Leone
Uganda	National	Provided technical insight and review of a PLH training program adapted for families where reunification of a child from residential care has occurred.	4Children (CRS)
Zimbabwe	National	Provided technical assistance in case management, system strengthening, data mapping and use for decision making and positive parenting, including assessing existing parenting curricula and programs used in Zimbabwe to identify strengths and gaps.	Pathways (CRS)