Challenges in evaluating ECD-focused interventions targeting at risk population groups

(Case study: Un villaggio per crescere)

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The Human Safety Net – For Families

• The Human Safety Net is the new Generali flagship initiative for the community active on three programmes worldwide (For Families, For Refugees start-ups, For New-borns)

• The Programme For Families commits to the call for action of the Nurturing care framework (NCF), and invest to promote early child development (ECD) in vulnerable populations with children aged 0 - 6

• Partnerships are set with small/medium non profit organizations (NGOs) working where Generali operates, currently there are almost 15 countries active, and approx. 20 NGOs partnering
Accountability & learning for the Programme For Families

- Objective: to Prove, Improve and Share, what we do collectively, and as an NGO

- We developed a Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework to standardize the evaluation process

- The MEL framework includes a set of impact dimensions related to changes that can occur to individuals, organizations and the society as a consequence of our programmes

- Comprehensive and flexible enough to balance the tension between standardization and local application.
MEL framework – Impact on individuals

- **Degree of impact**: awareness, knowledge, practice (*from connection, to transformation*)

- **Target**: parents and children

- **Timeframe**: short-term and long-term impacts

- **Impact dimensions**: menu to guide NGOs, streamline language

- **Impact selection**: informed by evidence - top down, and practice - bottom up

**MEL framework**

- **Connect**: Increased awareness of an issue and how to tackle it
  - Parents have better awareness of child’s development needs & the importance of their parental role
  - Parents have increased knowledge, skills and/or ability to provide more nurturing care
  - Parents have a better perception of their role and its value/importance
  - Parents show intention/commitment to make changes
  - Parents know how to access support networks/resources
  - Parents have better awareness of their own parenting ability (self-efficacy)
  - Parents have access to social and economic support network

- **Improve**: Increased capacity of individuals to tackle an issue
  - Parents have improved knowledge of early childhood development and parenting strategies
  - Parents better manage their own emotions
  - Parents have developed specific life skills enabling them to provide household stability for their children
  - Parents have access to social and economic support network
  - Parents are actively demonstrating new parenting behaviours using their learnings from the program

- **Transform**: Sustained change in circumstances of individual
  - Parents and children experience positive changes in family life
  - Children have access to quality pre-primary education
  - Child’s health development and well being evolve appropriately
  - Parent experience wider changes in personal circumstances
Case study: Un Villaggio per Crescere, with Centro per la Salute del Bambino

- **Organizational profile**: small team, strong expertise on ECD, multidisciplinary team (*paediatricians, educators, academics*), familiarity with monitoring & evaluation

- **Model**: open hub in a disadvantaged community, embedded in the system (*location in public primary care facility*), outreach through local network, activities based on demand

**Strengths**

Sustainability, systemic approach, beneficiaries centred, high potential to scale

**Opportunities**

Use The Human Safety Net MEL framework to develop a MEL plan, prove the impact of this model and compare with NGO partners
Case study: MEL plan

- **Degree of impact**: all degrees from connection, to transformation
- **Target**: parents and children
- **Timeframe**: short-term and long-term impacts
- **Tools**:
  - Self perception of parental role questionnaire
  - Family routine questionnaire
  - Perceived self efficacy questionnaire
  - Parental stress questionnaire
  - GMCD
Case study: MEL plan roadmap and challenges

Actions / opportunities

• translation and validation of tools locally
• training of staff and educators
• redistribution of time management between activities and evaluation
• engagement of beneficiaries
• use of validated tools in Italy
• organizational strengthening

Challenges

• limited budget and human resources
• tension of focus (research vs. activities)
• definition of target group (fixed cluster vs. open hub; control group - collect and not act seen as unethical)
• short term engagement (child development vs. development due to the intervention).
Testing innovative interventions to promote nurturing care for early childhood development is a recognized global priority.

Evaluations should be valid, driven and owned by implementers.

Evaluation methods require a shift from traditional experimental designs towards real life, dynamic quasi-experimental, mix methods approaches.

**Design**
- Controlled, blinded and rigid approaches vs. intrinsically open, inclusive nature interventions.

**Target**
- Easy (non skilled professionals), combine developmental assessment with promotion and evaluation (care for attrition and sensitive data);

**Tools**
- Sensitive to transformation in target population independently from the intervention.