

# Unders

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**Understanding ‘Celebrating Families’  
contribution to family well-being**

KEY FINDINGS FROM TANZANIA

SEPTEMBER 2019



**Parents, caregivers, religious and community leaders and World Vision Tanzania staff identified a number of positive changes for families resulting from implementation of Celebrating Families. Highlights include:**

- ▶ There was evidence that following Celebrating Families training that all parents were beginning to develop loving and caring relationships with their children. They recognised the importance of children attending school and of giving children the time and opportunity to play. It was reported that there had been significant decreases in FGM, child and forced marriage and children running away.
- ▶ Parents had become aware of the physical harm they had done to their children in the past and said they had learned about good parenting. All parents said that they no longer used corporal punishment, but instead disciplined their children in a 'loving way'.
- ▶ There was a big improvement in spousal relationships and a decrease in domestic violence and abuse. This was mainly as a result of husbands and fathers changing their behaviour. One Faith Leader stated 'Families have come together. There is now unity in families.'

- ▶ Husbands were allowing their wives to join Savings and Credit Groups and set up small businesses in their own name. Such micro-enterprises were helping reduce the income gap between men and women and were contributing to improved livelihoods and costs of children's education as well as 'increased love, peace and joy in the family.'
- ▶ Parents acknowledged that the spiritual nurture of children is part of good parenting. Many parents and children reported that they now pray together as a family, attend church and sit together, as well as discuss the scriptures at home.

There is strong evidence that Celebrating Families in Tanzania is having a positive effect at the family level, and is challenging cultural, sexual and social norms that are harmful to family relationships, particularly parenting. However, a number of participants requested that Celebrating Families incorporate a module targeted at youth, to enable parents to start the healing process with their older children. As a World Vision Tanzania staff member stated: 'They [the youth] need inner healing, as they are angry about what their parents did to them.'



In 2018, the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University was contracted by World Vision to conduct three in-depth, qualitative analyses of Celebrating Families, focusing on implementation in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Tanzania. These were commissioned to build the evidence base for understanding how Celebrating Families is effective in supporting parents and caregivers to develop nurturing environments for children. Data collection for the Tanzanian case study took place in May 2019, led by Professor Hazel Barrett with Dr Pascal Niyonkuru. It was qualitative, including individual interviews and focus groups with a total of 152 children, parents, faith and community leaders and World Vision Tanzania staff participating.

## About Celebrating Families

Celebrating Families seeks to ensure that all families enjoy positive and loving relationships and have hope for the future. It supports families as places that allow children to experience the 'love of God' by addressing the beliefs, convictions and cultural norms that contribute to harmful practices in child rearing. Through Celebrating Families, participants are equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to create safe and nurturing environments within the family home and community, enabling children to experience positive and peaceful relationships.

Delivery is through a three-day reflective workshop, which encourages parents and caregivers to reflect on their childhood experiences and understand how these influence their approach to parenting. It invites participants to envision a different future, breaking with practices and forms of communication that caused them pain. The workshops support parents and caregivers to make changes in how they behave towards and communicate with children, inviting

them to make commitments through a religious or spiritual commitment. This is supported by extra-curricular activities to support families' holistic development, such as themed sessions at parents' meetings and women's and men's groups.

Target participants include parents and caregivers, religious leaders, community leaders, schoolteachers, social service personnel, local family focused organizations and local government units. Following the Celebrating Families training, participants undertook activities with children that supported their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development, and increased bonding and understanding with parents.

Celebrating Families is implemented alongside other programming and is often integrated within activities on child protection, education and livelihoods. The curriculum can be contextualized for use in multi-faith and non-Christian contexts and additional guidance supports implementation in fragile and conflict-affected places.



## Tanzania's journey with Celebrating Families

Family life in Northern Tanzania is characterised by social norms that support an extreme form of patriarchy that is compounded by deprivation and poverty. This is manifested through: widespread domestic violence and abuse by husbands and fathers against both children and wives; decisions made by male head of households without consultation with other family members; priority given to domestic and agricultural labour by children rather than education; neglect of children; men deciding on if and when their families can attend religious meetings. Patriarchy results in severe discrimination against girls and women which is manifested predominantly through domestic abuse, polygamy and the harmful use of corporal punishment to discipline children, female genital mutilation (FGM) and child and forced marriage. Poverty reinforces the negative effects of patriarchy. This includes the abandonment of wives as husbands move away to find employment and the perpetuation of the dowry system, which is linked, to child and forced marriage.

World Vision Tanzania has long understood the importance of family as a catalyst for improving children's lives. They stress that child protection starts within the family, as children are closer to their parents than they are to others. World Vision Tanzania staff and community influencers also understand the centrality of faith and spirituality, which underpin the social norms that dictate family and community structures, gender norms as well as attitudes and behaviour towards children and parenting. Whatever their faith, be it Christian, Muslim or Traditional, spirituality is central to Tanzanian communities and therefore working with Faith Leaders to bring about behaviour change, particularly on

sensitive issues related to the family, gender and parenting is essential. Celebrating Families, which is deeply rooted in faith and designed to engage participants on a deeply spiritual level, is thus well positioned to engage families and communities in Tanzania. As a Local Facilitator states: 'Celebrating Families' training is inclusive of all faiths – the use of the Bible is not a challenge.' Another explains: 'World Vision is known, trusted and respected in the community, even among different faith groups.'

Celebrating Families began in Tanzania in 2013. In that year, 20 National Facilitators were trained. In total over 100 workshops were run between 2013-2017. These workshops included participants from 61 APs, and in 2019 Celebrating Families was active in 48 APs.

In 2019, Celebrating Families operated in 14 regions out of 33 in Tanzania, covering 41 districts. It is included in World Vision Tanzania's National Strategy, AP Plans and budgets. In terms of World Vision Tanzania's National Strategy, Celebrating Families falls under Strategic Objective Number 4: 'Spiritual Development and Protection of Children'. Celebrating Families is one of the main core approaches contributing to this objective. However, in Tanzania Celebrating Families is not a stand-alone programme, but at national level is included in Integrated Food and Nutrition Security (IFANS). However, at AP level it can also be combined with the Community Engagement Sponsorship Plan (CESP), depending on the mission and programming focus of the AP. As a member of World Vision Tanzania staff stated: 'It [Celebrating Families] is cross-cutting, wherever you put it, it covers everyone.'

## Celebrating Families helps deepen family relationships and increase spiritual nurture

Following attending Celebrating Families training and workshops, parents and caregivers reported that they learned about good parenting and the harm they had done their children and this had motivated them to change their behaviour towards their children. In the focus group discussions parents and caregivers testified to: a reduction in corporal punishment of children; improvements in the relationship with their children; allowing their children to go to church and Sunday School; permitting children to attend school and the clinic; reducing family tasks so children have time to play. Both parents and children confirmed that family meetings occurred to listen to the views of children, particularly with respect to family finances and livelihoods. As children in Kisongo confirmed: 'We participate in family meetings' these family meetings 'allow us to express our views' and they [parents] 'involve us in family decisions' the examples given were when to sell a cow or buy a plot of land to 'build a stand-alone house'. Participants stated in the focus group discussions that the outcome appears to be fewer children running away from abusive family life. As a female Sunday School teacher in Endabash sums it up: 'Children now run to parents rather than away from them!'

In the communities sampled, it was evident that the spiritual nurture of children was not a priority for most parents and caregivers, with parents often being conflicted between traditional practices and Christian teachings. Patriarchal practices and coping with poverty in most families appeared to be prioritised over spiritual nurture, with fathers determining if children could attend church or Sunday School, often dictating that their children should undertake domestic and agricultural work in preference to attending faith based meetings. However following taking part in Celebrating Families many parents recognised their responsibility to their children's spiritual up bringing as a participant explains: 'Because of the transformation of parents, they have become role models and their children now go to Church with them.' As a female Faith Leader states, families now 'build the body of Christianity together.' She particularly used the Wise Builders Module in her work with families and children's spiritual development. Most confirmed that Celebrating Families had strengthened their faith and the spirituality of themselves and their children. A number of parents commented that they now pray together with their children and memorise Biblical verses. Many quoted the saying 'The family that prays together, stays together.'

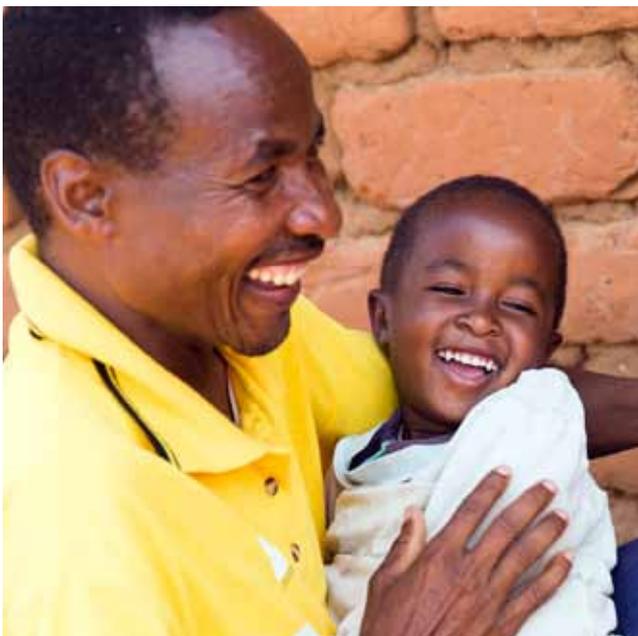
## Local stakeholders support empowering environments for children

The main partners in Celebrating Families in Northern Tanzania are churches and Faith Leaders. There are many denominations of Christians living in the sampled area, including Roman Catholics, Pentecostal and Evangelical congregations. Thus, World Vision Tanzania has made an excellent effort to incorporate into Celebrating Families as many different Christian Faith groups as possible, with a focus on training Faith Leaders as Community Facilitators. These include both male and female pastors as well as Sunday School teachers.

Many Faith Leaders were able to integrate Celebrating Families within their existing work, having a natural platform from which to leverage scripture in support of social change. They tended to focus on two aspects of Celebrating Families, first, improving the relationship between spouses and secondly, advancing the parenting of children. All stated that they used Celebrating Families and the scripture as tools to tackle traditional harmful practices and violence at family level. They testified that they focussed on their own families before disseminating to others. Sunday School teachers requested that child-friendly material be made available to them to use in their ministry.

World Vision Tanzania have also succeeded in incorporating a number of Community and Clan Leaders into Celebrating Families and some have become Community Facilitators. A number of Celebrating Families trained Village Councillors stated that they try to ensure Celebrating Families is on the Village Council meeting agenda, but often the meetings run out of time before coming to this agenda item. They stated that as a Village Council they are able to fine fathers if their children do not go to school. They also become involved in family conflicts, especially those that relate to domestic violence and alcohol. However, they were adamant that they are 'not responsible for faith issues' such as the spiritual nurturing of children.

Faith leaders did not offer examples of ways in which they had used Celebrating Families to influence policy. They felt it was important to increase the reach and impact of Celebrating Families, but this was framed in terms of educating families rather than influencing policymakers.



## Congregations and communities promote strong families

This is the most difficult form of impact to evidence, as it requires behavioural change at the social and cultural levels. Such change generally takes place over a long period of time, often up to a generation, and is very diffuse. However, participants clearly understood that sharing knowledge, in particular acting as role models, was crucial to social change and had enabled them to instigate changes in other families.

World Vision Tanzania has a strong focus on local ownership of Celebrating Families, not only as a moral principle but also as a means to ensuring its sustainability. The strategy of embedding ownership of Celebrating Families within the community has been effective, as many workshop participants have made significant independent efforts to roll out the approach often because they felt the workshop and related activities had been transformational for their families and they wanted to see others benefit too.



The participants who made the clearest attempts to educate others about scriptural teachings concerning family life were Faith Leaders. They were also more likely to share Celebrating Families outside of family networks, for instance with their congregations. Only after Faith Leaders had gained confidence with their congregations did some of them reach out to other organisations and groups within their community, including Village Councils and Savings and Credit Groups.

Celebrating Families messages and teachings on family change are also being disseminated through unexpected informal means, such as child-to-child means and at family and community events. These informal mechanisms are valuable and trusted channels of dissemination. They also mean that people who do not attend church are exposed to Celebrating Families messages.



# Emerging themes and implications for Celebrating Families as a project model

## Change within the family is both personal and interpersonal in nature

In Tanzania, the changes following implementation of Celebrating Families have predominantly affected relationships between parents/spouses, followed by relationships between parents/caregivers and children. In measuring behaviour change at family level, it is useful to distinguish between the physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of spousal relationships and parental care, as this reflects the unique contribution of Celebrating Families as an instigator of holistic family wellbeing.

## Spiritual nurture for children

Children get the knowledge and skills to develop their own spirituality from both parents and church. It is not clear if one is more influential than the other. It is also not possible to be conclusive as to whether congregations and communities have the knowledge and skills to nurture children spiritually. However, what is clear is that some congregations are creating a more enabling environment for children to flourish, and thus have paved the way for children to develop spirituality. There appears to be a need for child friendly materials and training in appropriate pedagogy for those, such as Sunday School teachers, who regularly teach the scriptures to children.

## Local stakeholders engaged and empowered

The willingness of Faith Leaders and churches to engage with rolling out Celebrating Families is commendable, but in a poor

rural region there are staffing and other costs that churches are struggling with, this is proving to be very challenging. As a result, churches function more as disseminators of Celebrating Families, rather than co-owners. In other words they deliver the Celebrating Families curriculum but feel they do not have the capacity or capabilities to suggest any changes to the curriculum or pedagogy to the National or Local World Vision Celebrating Families teams, and thus feel they are not empowered to influence the Celebrating Families curriculum. If Celebrating Families is to be sustainable, this issue must be addressed. World Vision Tanzania need to think strategically about how churches can be empowered, capacity developed and funding to be provided to continue the work of Celebrating Families.

## Communities and congregations engaged and empowered

In Tanzania, most participants spoke of lessons from Celebrating Families being disseminated first by role models influencing family members and then neighbours. Secondly by Faith Leaders engaging with their congregations. Only after Faith Leaders had grown in confidence did they feel able to address the broader community, usually through Savings and Credit Groups. These are an example of a community organisation which could be used to effectively transmit other World Vision messages to remote rural communities. However, informal dissemination mechanisms were also found to be effective, such as Celebrating Families being raised at family and community events and celebrations, and importantly the messages being shared by child-to-child contact whilst playing and in school.



# Recommendations

## Adapt Celebrating Families to local context and culture

There are many different types of family structure in Tanzania and these families face complex interrelated challenges, including patriarchy, polygamy, harmful practices and poverty, as well as traditional beliefs and robust ethnic identities. All are enforced by formidable cultural, sexual and social norms.

Wherever Celebrating Families operates, it is important that family challenges and social norms are analysed in detail at a local level. This should be a qualitative data gathering exercise that complements the existing key performance indicators. Qualitative data at a granular level will elicit detail that illuminates family cultures and relationships, allowing changes in these to be measured alongside more obvious changes in family practices. It will also allow the project model and its Theory of Change to be adapted to local context. It is also important to recognise that the challenges families face generally stem from a range of interrelated root causes that are dynamic and constantly evolving, such as the effects of climate change, health shocks and the introduction of varied political policies.

Participants requested advice, training and refresher courses on how to contextualise Celebrating Families, to ensure they are not alienating local people and communities as well as confirming they are doing 'no harm'. They also asked for training on giving psychosocial advice to family and community members, as well as access to such support for themselves. Such support could be offered jointly across a number of World Vision projects such as Channels of Hope.

## Provide parents with tools for positive discipline

One important aspect of Celebrating Families is that it seeks to eliminate violence in the home, particularly as a form of discipline against children. However, it is clear that domestic violence and abuse between parents must be addressed at the same time as tackling severe forms of punishment of children. A caring, loving family life is the foundation of good parenting and spiritual nurture. It was suggested that the Celebrating Families curriculum be extended to incorporate

the youth, who are the next parents, who without the support of Celebrating Families may well perpetuate the violence common in family life for another generation.

## Invest in lasting social and cultural change

Creating impact in the wider community and society requires change at the social and cultural levels. This takes place over a longer period of time and is very diffuse. The Theory of Change hypothesises that local stakeholders such as Faith Leaders, faith-based organisations and local agencies will be instrumental in instigating wider social and cultural change, working with and through congregations and communities. There is early evidence that some social and cultural change is occurring in Tanzania, but additional progress can be made through empowering local stakeholders, contextualisation and planning for follow-up discussions and activities as well as expanding the range of partners involved in Celebrating Families, such as relevant government departments and private employers.

## Integration

Family life in Tanzania is impacted by a whole array of challenges and harmful social norms, which affect all aspects of family and community relations. These challenges are highly complex, interrelated and dynamic and thus affect all aspects of family and community interactions, livelihoods and well-being. Thus, when Celebrating Families is integrated within other World Vision technical areas or programmes it stands the best chance of addressing root causes of dysfunctional family life, in tandem with other issues such as increasing livelihoods, addressing gender equality issues and improving health and education levels. A caring, supporting family life underpins all aspects of human development, and therefore Celebrating Families should be included in all World Vision programmes. This integration with other programmes will also ensure the rollout and sustainability of the messages of Celebrating Families so that social norms can be transformed to give the next generation a better start in life than their parents had and to break the intergenerational cycle of family violence.



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