

Rwanda through implementation science

Tressa Johnson

The ELMA Philanthropies,
New York, USA

Boston College School of
Social Work, Boston MA,
USA

Emmanuel Habyarimana

François-Xavier Bagnoud
Rwanda, Kigali, Rwanda

Anita Asiiimwe

National Early Childhood
Development Program,
Kigali, Rwanda

Sauna Murray

Research Program on
Children and Adversity
Boston College School of
Social Work, Boston MA,
USA

creators – François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Rwanda, a local non-governmental organisation, and a combined team at the Research Program on Children and Adversity at Boston College School of Social Work and the University of Rwanda – built a high-level management relationship with critical stakeholders across sectors in the government of Rwanda (Ministries of Gender and Local Government), and invited active co-creation from their multilateral (World Bank), bilateral (USAID) and private funders (Network of European Foundations, The ELMA Foundation).

This multi-faceted partnership has been working to design, deliver, iterate, and measure the impact and cost of the Sugira Muryango home visiting programme, a 12-week intervention that works through community-based coaches to

components:

- providing education on children's development, nutrition and health, and hygiene promotion
- coaching male and female caregivers to engage in play and early language learning with young children

emotion-regulation skills

- strengthening problem-solving skills and social support through access to available informal and formal resources
- building skills in positive parenting, alternatives to violence, and coping skills to promote healthy family functioning.



The Sugira Muryango partnership conducted a rigorous analysis to shed light on what it would cost to expand the programme entirely through government structures. Because of this emphasis – and the programme’s continued commitment to measure and monitor results for families – NECDP invited the partners to collaborate in developing national minimum standards and join technical working groups to guide other programmes transitioning to scale. The expansion phase also attracted further support to the Sugira Muryango partnership, from the LEGO Foundation, Echidna Giving, and Oak Foundation.

Adapting to Covid-19

The Sugira Muryango partnership’s focus on learning how to integrate the services into government structures proved to be critical during the Covid-19 disruptions. Project stakeholders immediately pivoted and adapted processes and materials: testing, adjusting, and progressing.

For example, training protocols were immediately adapted to use the WhatsApp platform, while partnership meetings continued with the government and other stakeholders through remote conferencing facilities. Direct home visiting was put on hold until social distancing restrictions could be eased, but the partnership continued a robust training and preparation agenda remotely to adapt programme delivery. Currently, multi-level strategies are being tested in three districts for scaling to all families with children under age 3 who are eligible for social protection programmes due to extreme poverty. Should they prove successful, they will provide a platform for expanding and sustaining high-quality services at greater scale.

➔ Find this article online at earlychildhoodmatters.online/2020-13

REFERENCES
