



# FAMILIES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

## HOW SUPPORTING PARENTS HELPS PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Children need a safe and loving home to grow up happy and healthy. However, home is exactly where children worldwide are most at risk of violence, and it comes from those closest to them. For boys and girls growing up

amid poverty and crisis, the protective role of a parent is especially critical—and especially difficult. Supporting caregivers with alternatives to violent discipline helps keep children safe and lets them develop to their full potential.

### VIOLENCE IN CHILDREN'S LIVES<sup>1</sup>

Violence against children in the home causes harm in all areas of children's development: including how they grow physically, how they learn at school, and how they relate to people around them. It has tragic consequences for children now, but also has well-known, long-term consequences – it can lead to cycles of violence and threaten the health, educational and economic wellbeing of countries and communities. Growing up in a crisis zone worsens the risks of violence and these negative effects.

**59 million** children are growing up in the midst of humanitarian crises



**4 in 5** children aged 2 to 14 face violent discipline in the home

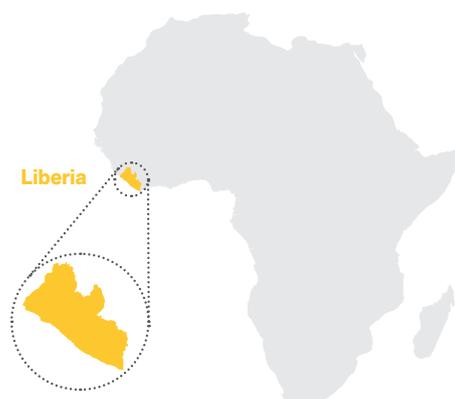


**7 in 10** children are victims of emotional violence - often from parents



### THE POWER OF POSITIVE PARENTING

Since 2010, the International Rescue Committee has been working to reduce violence in the lives of children in crisis zones and support their healthy development by focusing on parenting. The IRC worked with displaced Burmese families on the Thai-Myanmar border and with rural communities in Liberia recovering from civil war to introduce parents to techniques they can use to communicate and problem-solve effectively with their children and discipline them without the use of violence.



After each 10- to 12-week program, we evaluated the results. What we found:

▲ **4-18%** positive interactions between parents and children<sup>2, 3</sup>

▼ **15-64%** use of beatings and threats<sup>2, 3</sup>

**87-98% attendance** proved that positive parenting programs are feasible even in post-crisis situations<sup>2, 3</sup>

**Qualitative interviews suggested that the programs in some cases may have:**

**Decreased children's behavioral problems** and improved their resilience to the stress of the family's living situation<sup>3</sup>

**Improved relationships** with fewer arguments and more joint decision making<sup>3</sup>

**Increased motivation** for children to attend and achieve at school<sup>2</sup> and to be better behaved<sup>3</sup>

These IRC studies, carried out between 2010 and 2013 with research partners from the Harvard School of Public Health and Duke University, were the first randomized impact evaluations of parenting skills-building programs in crisis areas.

### WHAT NEXT?

The IRC is calling on governments and policymakers to invest in positive parenting programs and research like these to keep children safe around the world.

Read our full recommendations and research studies at

[rescue.org/families](http://rescue.org/families)

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF: Hidden in Plain Sight: September 2014.

<sup>2</sup> International Rescue Committee: Do Parents Make the Difference? Findings from a randomized impact evaluation of a parenting program in rural Liberia: 2014.

<sup>3</sup> International Rescue Committee: Building Happy Families: Impact evaluation of a parenting and family skills intervention for migrant and displaced Burmese families in Thailand: 2014.