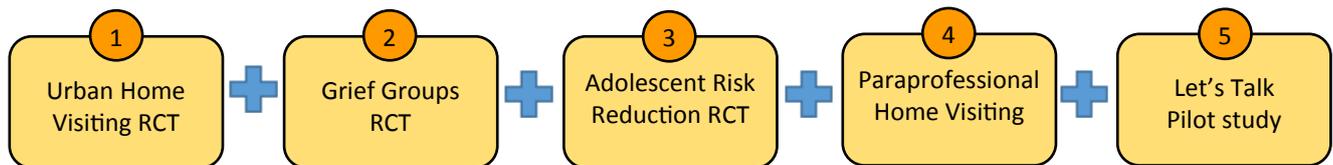


Lessons learned from evaluating care and support programmes for HIV-affected children and families in South Africa

Community-based care and support programmes for orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) and their families are a critical component of HIV prevention, care and treatment efforts worldwide. Addressing the challenges that confront programme evaluators in these contexts can help promote robust evidence for effective programming.

Structured Review

- ◆ A structured review was conducted of five evaluations conducted by Tulane University in South Africa between 2010 and 2016.
- ◆ The interventions under study included home visiting, HIV prevention and psychological support programmes for HIV-affected children and families.
- ◆ Three of the evaluations were randomized controlled trials (RCTs), one adopted a longitudinal quasi-experimental design, and one was a pilot study with a pretest/posttest among participants.



LESSON 1: Keep ethical considerations at the forefront

- ◆ Provisions to guarantee some level of service delivery to all participants can help to balance methodological rigour with ethical concerns.
- ◆ Direct participation of vulnerable children in research is crucial but requires special attention to participants' developmental capacity and the imbalance of power between children and adults.
- ◆ Referral procedures should be established specific to the research context, and interviewers must be trained to anticipate and respond appropriately to participants' responses to questions about sensitive topics.

LESSON 2: Collaborate strategically with programme partners

- ◆ Programme evaluators can and should promote best practices for local partners implementing interventions (e.g. through workshops and programme material upgrades).
- ◆ Supporting the development of registry systems for use by programme implementers is often crucial in tracking intervention enrolment and participation.
- ◆ Regular communication with local stakeholders about the evaluation process and results is essential.

LESSON 3: Adapt evaluation designs to local conditions

- ◆ Pre-assessment work such as preliminary qualitative and pilot studies can greatly enhance the quality and utility of programme evaluations.
- ◆ Ensure the design and available sample size lends sufficient statistical power to detect programme effects.
- ◆ Information technologies can be used to minimize bias and promote efficient implementation of surveys.

Policy and programme recommendations

- ◆ These lessons highlight the central roles of research ethics, rigour-enhancing strategies, and institutional collaboration in OVC programme evaluations. They may be applied across disciplines and internationally to strengthen the quality of evaluation research designed to guide social work and public health practices.

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