

TOOLKIT

Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years

A Contribution to the Protection
of Children from Violence and the
Promotion of Their Holistic Well-Being

BOOKLET VI

Guide for Facilitators

CONSORTIUM

on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood
for the Prevention of Violence

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Booklet VI

Guide for Facilitators

Booklet VI aims to provide a roadmap to follow for the facilitators who will conduct sessions to equip parents, caregivers or educators to nurture the spiritual development of children in the early years, as a contribution to the protection of children from violence and the promotion of their holistic well-being. The guide is designed to give facilitators the technical knowledge and skills they need to effectively design, deliver, monitor and evaluate programs with parents, caregivers or educators.

This guide has four sections.

- 1. Before the Sessions Start** (guidance on elements that facilitators can take into consideration when planning and designing their sessions for parents, caregivers or educators)
- 2. During the Sessions** (information on how to create a safe space for learning, as well as guidance on the learning approach and methodologies that will help parents, caregivers, or educators to internalize the topics and develop practical skills)
- 3. Learning Approach** (information on how adults learn, the learning process, methodologies and ways to create spaces for dialogue and sharing of experiences among parents, caregivers and educators, and how to encourage them to practice self-care)
- 4. Monitoring and Evaluation** (general considerations for assessing effectiveness)

This booklet is part of a series of 7 Booklets that together form the Toolkit “Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years – A Contribution to the Protection of Children from Violence and the Promotion of Their Holistic Well-Being.”

Make sure to refer to the Conceptual Framework in Booklet I, as it contains important information that will strengthen your understanding of the topics.

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How to Conduct Sessions for Parents, Caregivers and Educators

Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide a roadmap to follow for the facilitators who will conduct sessions to equip parents, caregivers or educators to nurture the spiritual development of children in the early years as a contribution to the protection of children from violence and the promotion of their holistic well-being.

The guide has four sections.

1. **Before the sessions start** (guidance on elements that facilitators can take into consideration when planning and designing their sessions for parents, caregivers or educators)
2. **During the sessions** (information on how to create a safe space for learning, as well as guidance on the learning approach and methodologies that will help parents, caregivers, or educators to internalize the topics and develop practical skills)
3. **Learning approach** (information on how adults learn, the learning process, methodologies and ways to create spaces for dialogue and sharing of experiences among parents, caregivers and educators, and how to encourage them to practice self-care)
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation** (general considerations for assessing effectiveness)

Booklet II of the Toolkit provides several activities for facilitators to use in their program with parents, caregivers and educators. Booklet III has activities exclusively for parents, caregivers and educators to use with children up to 8 years old.

Before the Sessions Start

Learning objectives for sessions with parents, caregivers, and educators

At the end of the program, parents, caregivers and educators will be equipped with tools to ensure their own self-care and to help young children to develop spiritual capacities by:

1. Developing positive relations with children, modeling practices that are respectful and empowering and that foster the agency of the child;
2. Fostering nurturing environments, free of violence, where children feel safe, respected, and valued, and are supported to develop their sense of belonging to the community and their holistic well-being; and

3. Creating experiences and opportunities for children to develop pro-social behaviors and ethical values and reflections that allow them to connect with themselves and others in empathic and respectful ways and develop their sense of community and interconnectedness with others.

Understanding the role of facilitators

Nurturing the spiritual development of young children requires a participatory, inclusive and respectful approach to children; for parents, caregivers and educators to internalize this approach, the facilitator must model it at all times. The facilitator is not instructing, but rather guiding and structuring the learning process by organizing learning processes that help parents, caregivers and educators to internalize the concepts, connect with their own religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, share their experiences with each other, and develop more skills to support the spiritual development of children.

The preparation and readiness of the facilitator makes all the difference in the learning experience. Participants depend on you as a facilitator to engage them in this journey. They want to be able to trust you not to judge them but to acknowledge their experiences, needs and challenges.

Your role as facilitator is to:

- Design, coordinate, plan and deliver the sessions and activities for parents, caregivers and educators based on the Learning Program for Adults (Booklet II), using the approach and methodologies suggested;
- Identify possible resistances, conflicts, dynamics, tensions, or cliques among participants, and addressing them in ways that are assertive and respectful; and
- Design and propose follow-up actions and encourage parents, caregivers and educators to share what they have learned and experienced on their journey through the sessions and learning circles.

Facilitators who show the availability and responsiveness to listen empathically, create dialogue and connect experiences and participants will be able to build trust and help ensure that participants will happily be part of the journey they have embarked upon.

It is recommended that facilitators work in pairs, or that there is at least one facilitator per every 10 participants, in addition to a support facilitator who can work with the children of the parents/caregivers, if they are present, by carrying out sessions/activities with them. When working with several facilitators, ensure that your group of facilitators is diverse, representing the different religious, spiritual or ethnic communities present, as well as the ages, languages and gender makeup of the group.

Some programs have found greater success in attracting participation when all participants and the facilitator are the same gender. Each local community can decide whether to take this approach, or whether it is not relevant in the local context. For mixed groups of men and women community members, one recommendation is to have both men and women facilitators working as a team to show that it is possible to work together, and to model equality and respect.

Needs assessment

A needs assessment enables you as a facilitator to collect and analyze participants' needs, expectations, experiences, and motivations, and to understand the context in which they live, as well as obtain information about their parenting practices.

You can conduct a simple needs assessment by creating a form that participants can fill in prior to the program. In the case of participants with low literacy levels, you can either contact them via phone, ask them to send in audio clips, or collect information during home visits. This can help you gather information about age, gender, education and occupation, as well as religious, spiritual and cultural background, and family context (number of children, ages, composition of the family, educational levels of the children), as well as information about participants' expectations, and the needs and challenges they face. An example Pre-Participation Survey is provided in Annex I of this Booklet.

All of this information is essential to help you better define the objectives of your program, and it will influence the choice of activities and methodologies you will use.

Identification of the parents, caregivers and educators who will participate

The interventions in this Toolkit are primarily designed for those who interact daily with children. First and foremost, this includes parents, caregivers and educators, but it can also include other family members, babysitters, day care center providers, early learning educators, religious and spiritual educators, and others.

Tips for inviting people to participate

- When you invite people to participate, you will want to let them know the objectives of the sessions, how important they are for children's well-being, but also for theirs as caregivers, what the activities will entail, the duration, and how participants will benefit. Whenever you can make advance arrangements for childcare, let them know that it will be available.
- You may invite participants during religious or spiritual community gatherings. This allows you to have broader reach across many types of community members.

- One effective strategy is to invite participants through home visits with each family. While effective, this is time consuming. However, it may serve the benefit of helping you to familiarize yourself with the actual conditions in the home environment.
- When you invite a person to participate, you may want to consider also inviting all the caregivers in the space. If you visited a day care provider, you could invite all the caregivers. Your sessions will have more impact when you engage all caregivers because they will all internalize the content, strengthen their knowledge and skills simultaneously, and support one another. One benefit is that you will also see more change in the children because they will experience consistent changes across all the caregivers in the environment.
- Around the world, children with disabilities are at higher risk of violence at home. You may wish to particularly focus on homes with children who have disabilities. You may also want to try to reach caregivers with disabilities who may not have access to the same venues or communication mediums where you may find other caregivers.

Here are some questions you may want to consider when identifying target participants.

- Do you wish to focus primarily on parents, caregivers and educators?
- Is religious or spiritual education for children happening in your community? Would it be appropriate to engage your religious or spiritual educators to implement programs and activities specifically designed to nurture children's spiritual development?
- Are there childcare providers at institutions or foster care centers, home-based day care, or other people engaged in caregiving that you would like to engage in your sessions?
- Are there preschool or early grade educators that you would like to engage in your sessions?

It might help to identify a space where potential participants already gather and organize an "introduction" session for them. This will help to give them an idea of what the session objectives might be, decide on a possible time for the sessions, and identify suitable locations to conduct the sessions.



When preparing and delivering the program, if there are participants from a variety of the above listed groups, they can be grouped together (as educators, religious and spiritual leaders, grandparents, parents, etc.) for discussions and group activities to help explore ideas in their own context and from their own perspectives. Make sure to organize mixed activities as well to benefit from the diversity and interaction.

Encouraging attendance

Once you have participants registered or committed to participate, encouraging regular attendance will be very important for the success of the program. You can emphasize this during the first meeting but also during any home visits or interactions with the participants in other settings. Home visits, when appropriate, can be used as a strategy for helping participants who have missed sessions. Missing sessions might flag a need for greater support. You may

also try providing transportation assistance or other incentives to encourage people to attend consistently.

Selecting a location for the sessions

Below are some criteria for selecting the location to hold your sessions.

- A pleasant environment, free from distractions. Make sure that there is privacy, that other community members cannot overhear the discussions, and that there is not a lot of passing foot traffic.
- A location where participants would incur minimal cost in traveling to and from the site, and that is as close as possible to their place of residence.
- You may also want to assess whether your religious facility is an appropriate venue and would attract more participants, or whether there is another venue that would be more appropriate.
- Ensure that the site is accessible to persons with disabilities.
- You may also want to organize your sessions as part of an existing retreat, or hold a special retreat to offer them, if appropriate and feasible, and take participants to a place with green areas, or close to nature.
- Select a space with natural light and ample enough room to organize the diverse sessions.



Once the site is selected, ensure that the seating is comfortable, acceptable and allows for participants to move, look at each other, and move when needed. Make sure the space is hazard-free and safe, and accessible to people with disabilities.

Nearby to the space where adults will meet, you will want to identify a child-friendly space in a safe and clean area. In this area, co-facilitator(s) with experience working with children should be assigned to meet with the children who accompany adult participants and implement some Activities for Children (see Booklet III) with them. Depending on the number of children and their ages, you might need to have two or more co-facilitators to work with them. Make sure all co-facilitators comply with the organization's Child Safeguarding/Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and that caregivers are aware of these.

Budgeting for program activities

Before you begin to implement sessions, you, or the organization supporting the sessions, will need to determine what, if any, costs may be incurred.

Costs for delivering sessions may include the following kinds of items.

- **Refreshments:** What type of refreshments will you provide? Note that in some contexts parents, caregivers and educators, as well as children, might come hungry, which might affect their ability and willingness to participate and fully engage.
- **Rental space:** Will you need to rent or pay for a space to meet?
- **Materials:** White and colored papers, pens, flipcharts, printed materials, etc.
- **Communications:** WhatsApp messages, phone calls, emails or other media.
- **Travel:** Will you as a facilitator or your participants incur any travel costs?

Creating buy-in in the community

The interventions of this Toolkit are designed primarily for those who spend the most time with children, especially parents, caregivers, and educators. However, in many cases, your efforts may not gain maximum traction unless key stakeholders in the community understand and approve of your approach. It may be particularly important to ask key thought leaders in the community to participate in sessions, since you will need their buy-in for your messages to be accepted by others, and they can help reinforce the messages later in the community.

Thought leaders will differ according to the culture, location and context. Consider if any of the following are thought leaders in your context.

- Grandmothers
- Grandfathers
- Elder uncles or aunts
- Religious or spiritual leaders
- Educators
- Prominent religious persons
- Women's association leaders
- Local chiefs or village councils
- Family members of chiefs and elders

Here are key questions to ask when identifying what community thought leaders to engage.

- Are there key elders you need to have present in some of the sessions about parenting/caregiving?
- Do grandmothers and grandfathers need to attend along with parents in order for change in actual caregiving practice to take place?
- Would it be helpful for local officials such as chiefs, village council members or other local institution representatives to participate in some of the sessions? Will it benefit your work to help them become familiar with its purpose?
- Are there other key community members who have a say in how child-upbringing happens, who should be present in the sessions?
- Do you need to have religious and spiritual leaders or religious authorities participate in some of the sessions?

First, build strong relationships with these persons. Then, consider organizing meetings with them to share in advance about what you want to do, its importance, and the benefits it will have for the community. Finally, consider inviting them to participate in some sessions, when appropriate, and when they do, ensure that they join in as full participants and not just as observers.

Booklet for participants

Prepare a small booklet for participants that provides information about the content of the sessions, duration, objectives, what is required of them, what they will experience and how best they can prepare. In the case of participants who are not able to read, you can prepare an audio or video briefly narrating the important aspects of what you will do.

Giving a booklet to participants in advance will facilitate their preparation, stimulate their curiosity and allow them to articulate their expectations.

What could the booklet include?

1. **Introductory message:** Welcome the participants, state the duration, who is organizing it, who the facilitators are, how many participants there are, and give the general background and underline the importance of their full participation for the success of the program.
2. **Objectives:** Outline what you expect to achieve - the benefits to the participants - by the end of the program.
3. **Agenda:** Provide information about time slots for every session. Make sure there is time for breaks, and meals.
4. **Provide information about care provided for children.**
5. **Explanation of the sessions:** Outline the overall content, the type of sessions, the approach and methodologies that will be used, how they can prepare, and any logistical information required for each session.
6. **Learning log:** Explain to the participants that as part of this learning journey, they will be asked to keep a diary or journal - a learning log of their experiences along the way. Example questions for use as prompts in the learning log can be found in the next section of this booklet.
7. **Practical information.** If it is a residential program, make sure you inform them about the venue, weather, the kind of clothes they need to bring and the facilities they will have at the venue, for instance, public phone, green areas, Internet access.



Make sure that the information you provide is clear and concise. If your participants have low literacy, you might want to have just one page or a couple of pages that illustrate what the meeting will be about.

During the Sessions

The program is based on the Learning Program for Adults (see Booklet II) that is made up of the suggested modules, thematic sessions and related activities to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to nurture and support the spiritual development of children in the early years, and ultimately to help foster spiritual capacities in young children. It is based on the Toolkit's Conceptual Framework (see Booklet I) and is built with a methodological approach designed to enhance internalization of concepts, promote dialogue and strengthen support networks.

The Learning Program for Adults, explained in detail in Booklet II, is then the basis for the sessions with parents, caregivers and educators, and can be customized to meet the needs of participants and the local objectives.

The following is an overview of the Learning Program for Adults:

LEARNING MODULE	SESSION
Module 1: Importance of Children's Spiritual Development for the Protection of Children from Violence and for the Promotion of Their Holistic Well-Being	Session 1: Child Dignity and Child Rights
	Session 2: Early Childhood and the Holistic Development and Well-Being of Children
	Session 3: Spiritual Development of Children
	Session 4: Violence Against Children
Module 2: Nurturing One's Own Spirituality	Session 5: My Understanding of Spirituality
	Session 6: My Spiritual Well-Being
Module 3: Conditions for Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years	Introducing Module 3 (for Trainers to Do with Facilitators in Training Only)
	Session 7: Nurturing Positive Relationships Between Parents, Caregivers, Educators and Children
	Session 8: Safe Environments
	Session 9: Empowering Experiences
	Session 10: Exploring the Activities for Children

Delivering the sessions

It is suggested that the participating parents, caregivers and/or educators experience the full Learning Program for Adults suggested in this Toolkit (found in Booklet II). This will allow them to gain a full understanding of all the key topics and the interrelations among areas that support the spiritual development of children in the early years. It will also help them internalize the importance of nurturing their own spirituality to better understand how spiritual development can be nurtured in children. The Learning Program for Adults also gives these parents, caregivers and educators an understanding of the conditions that enable the spiritual development of children in the early years and concrete ways to foster those conditions.

All sessions follow an approach based on interactive and collaborative methodologies. This means that there are no lectures, but instead, practical activities that allow for internalization of concepts and reflection.

Setting the scene

You may begin with a prayer, song, poem, or any other practice that is common in your group's religious and spiritual tradition(s). You might also want to pause for a few moments of silent contemplation before beginning.

You can start the program with an activity to get to know each other, if the participants have not met before. Sufficient time should be allocated for this activity to ensure that everyone feels safe, and you get to know your participants better. You can use icebreaker activities during the sessions to build trust in the group.

The participants should be provided with a safe, comfortable environment in which they feel free to share their experiences, thoughts and ask questions.

Participants who come to the program with their child can be encouraged to leave the child with the co-facilitator(s) and the other children in the child-friendly space, if not a baby. There will be fun activities for children to do there. However, the facilitator may have to use discretion to gauge if this works for the parent and child or not. If the child is not yet ready to separate, make sure to be flexible about allowing the child to attend with their parent/caregiver, and always be sensitive about the age-appropriateness of the information you share in sessions, when children are present.

Creating a safe space

On the first day, when you introduce what you will be doing, it is recommended to ask participants to set together some common agreements on working procedures, the use of time, and ways of

communicating that allow the group to interact as a team. The creation of these “ground rules” can help build synergy in the group and create a sense of ownership. Create ground rules by encouraging brainstorming among participants. Here are some examples you may want to share.

- We will practice confidentiality by not sharing what particular people in this group say with other people later.
- Be open to various opinions! There is no right and no wrong in whatever we do or say. We will not judge, criticize or argue with what group members say.
- Everyone is different and will have different experiences to share. They are all welcome.
- Everyone will have opportunities to speak and participate.
- We will respect each other by taking turns to speak, paying attention, and listening to each other.

The sessions for parents, caregivers and educators will touch on topics that may be sensitive - such as experiences of violence, or experiences of depression - so it is important to create an atmosphere that is as safe and accepting as possible. However, not everything that may come up for an individual participant can be addressed effectively within the boundaries of the session, considering the needs of the overall group. For this reason, we recommend, whenever possible, to have a professional counselor on call, or such referrals available, in case something in a session triggers strong emotions for a participant. If this happens, acknowledge their experience, empathetically reflect back to them the feelings you see them going through, and let them know kindly that you would like to touch base with them personally about this in more detail after the session is over. If they need to take a break or step outside for a while, that is fine. Your co-facilitator can check on them. Following up after the session is a good time to offer a referral, etc.

When small children are brought into the session for adults, they tend to freely roam, may nurse, or are sometimes even silenced or hit by parents or caregivers when they distract adults. Bigger children in some locations may peer in the doorways or windows. This can mean there is little confidentiality and make the space feel less safe. Safe space is very important when discussing issues of violence or talking about examples of how to care for and nurture children.



Conducting sessions with a team of two (or more) facilitators can allow to create a child-friendly room or separate space facilitated by one of the facilitators, for those parents who cannot leave their children in childcare. This will enable parents to better focus on the activities, which may be a precious opportunity for them. Whenever possible, assign dedicated co-facilitators to work with children in a separate, child-friendly room using the Activities for Children (see Booklet III).

A few tips for keeping the space safe

- If someone expresses something about another person’s comment that makes others uncomfortable, you want to intervene in that moment. Remind them that, in a safe space, we only look at our own selves, and we do not judge others.
- If there are dominant persons who always seem to talk, thank them for their contributions before they go on too long, and then move on to the quieter participants and give them a chance to speak.

- Sometimes quiet participants do not want to speak, and that needs to be respected. Silence is powerful as well. The focus of the facilitator is to give an equal chance for all participants to speak, but no one should be forced to talk.
- Use different methodologies that cater to the diverse participants and that help them to engage and connect with the content, for instance, creating small group discussions, using visuals, speaking about participants' realities, providing examples that bring ideas to mind, and sharing about your own religion or spiritual beliefs. If there are participants who are not able to read or write, adjust materials and activities so they will feel fully included.
- You may want to redefine what the term "discipline" means in child-upbringing, or you may choose to use alternative terms such as "positive caregiving" or "nurturing children" or "helping children learn."
- You may want to focus on developing the bonds between participants and reinforcing confidentiality among participants around what is shared during the sessions.
- Ensure that participants' ideas, opinions and suggestions are taken into consideration, and that they are reflected in the discussions and activities you do. This will allow you to build knowledge together and make participants feel valued and recognized.
- Conclude each session with an activity that encourages motivation and serves to connect learning with real life. You may wish to use a poem, a religious/spiritual or inter-religious prayer, or reflection to close a session.
- Encourage the creation of a network of contacts and friends among the participants and invite them to continue the dialogue after the program ends.

As a facilitator, you too may have emotions that arise from a session. You may consider setting up a regular debrief or check-in times with your co-facilitator or implementation team.

Duration: suggested calendar

It is suggested that the work with parents, caregivers and educators is organized in several sessions during a certain period of time. The suggested duration of the Learning Program for Adults is 46 hours if implemented stand-alone. When the program is mainstreamed into already existing programs, this may vary.

It is recommended that parents, caregivers and educators go through all 10 suggested sessions and all 29 activities in the Learning Program for Adults. Each session can comprise two or more activities that each take 90 or 120 minutes, depending on the number of participants. It is important that you give ample time for participants to go through the sessions. If there are time constraints, you can resume the activity in the following planned session and adjust the program accordingly. The full program can last between 12 to 24 months if organized on weekly basis.

The following suggested program includes other activities that can help to create a conducive environment for the participants to share, engage and participate freely.

Note: Use the Program Planning Template found in Annex II to help you plan your program.

SEGMENT	TOPIC	INSTRUCTIONS/LEARNING OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	DURATION
Setting the scene	Welcome and getting ready for the workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Welcome participants. › Share the objectives and agenda. 		30 minutes
	Getting to know each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Facilitate participants getting to know each other and start to build a safe learning environment. › Engage participants in reflections among themselves so they can discover connections with one another. 		90 minutes
	Sharing of expectations and considerations for the time together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Ask participants to share their expectations. › Guide participants to define the important considerations for working together. 		30 minutes
About the Learning Program for Adults	Introduction to the Learning Program for Adults, its relevance and innovative approach to nurture the spiritual development of children in the early years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Get acquainted with the program and how it contributes to the development of children’s spiritual capacities. › Understand the relevance and contributions of the program to them as parents, caregivers and educators. 	Learning Program for Adults	60 minutes
Module 1: Importance of Children’s Spiritual Development for the Protection of Children from Violence and for the Promotion of Their Holistic Well-Being	Session 1: Child Dignity and Child Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Discuss with participants child’s rights. › Identify how children’s rights support the holistic development of children and their spiritual well-being. › Identify and reflect on the importance of the dignity of the child as a fundamental principle found in all religious and spiritual traditions, and understand how religious and spiritual traditions can help with protecting and affirming children’s dignity. 	Conceptual Framework and Learning Program for Adults	270 minutes for the three activities of the session.
	Session 2: Early Childhood and the Holistic Development and Well-Being of Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify the critical importance of the early years for the development of children and for their spiritual and holistic well-being. › Describe the different aspects of holistic development and well-being and the central role that spiritual development of children plays in their holistic development. › Identify the role of parents, caregivers, educators and the community. 	Conceptual Framework and Learning Program for Adults	270 minutes for the three activities of the session.

SEGMENT	TOPIC	INSTRUCTIONS/LEARNING OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	DURATION
Module 1: Importance of Children's Spiritual Development for the Protection of Children from Violence and for the Promotion of Their Holistic Well-Being	Session 3: Spiritual Development in Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Understand the spiritual development of children, why it is important, and how it contributes to children's well-being. 	Conceptual Framework and Learning Program for Adults	270 minutes for the three activities of the session.
	Session 4: Violence Against Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Analyze the types of violence that children face and how those affect children's holistic development and well-being. › Identify how fostering children's spiritual development contributes to the protection of children from violence and their holistic well-being. 	Conceptual Framework and Learning Program for Adults	270 minutes for the three activities of the session.
Learning Circle		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › At the end of the activities, a shared space is created for participants to share and reflect, breathe, and connect. It happens both in circles and in pairs - what went well, what challenged them, what have they learned. 	For more information, check the section below on Learning Circles.	30 minutes
Module 2: Nurturing One's Own Spirituality	Session 5: My Understanding of Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Explore and reflect on their own understanding of spirituality, practices and factors that foster its development. › Identify how their own religious and spiritual beliefs and practices contribute to their spiritual development. › Show a greater understanding of different religious and spiritual beliefs and new insight into their own and others' spirituality. 	Learning Program for Adults	270 minutes for the three activities of the session.
	Session 6: My Spiritual Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify how, by fostering their own spiritual well-being, they can enhance their parenting practices and relationships with children, foster positive environments and experiences for them, and contribute to children's well-being. 	Learning Program for Adults	90 minutes
Learning Circle		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › At the end of the activities, a shared space is created for participants to share and reflect, breathe, and connect. It happens both in circles and in pairs – what went well, what challenged them, what have they learned. 	For more information, check the section below on Learning Circles.	30 minutes

SEGMENT	TOPIC	INSTRUCTIONS/LEARNING OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	DURATION
Module 3: Conditions for Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years	Session 7: Nurturing Positive Relationships between Parents, Caregivers, Educators and Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify the benefits of positive and respectful relationships between parents, caregivers, educators, and children. › Identify concrete ways to build positive relationships with children that support their well-being and spiritual development. › Show awareness of the importance of modeling values and behaviors that benefit children through example. 	Learning Program for Adults	270 minutes for the three activities of the session
	Session 8: Safe Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify the factors that hinder or support the creation of environments for children that are safe, respectful and free of violence to enable their spiritual development. › Describe how the family and community, including religious and spiritual communities, contribute to children's spiritual well-being. › Explore and understand children's rights and name methods of securing an environment that enables the realization, protection and development of children's rights and dignity in order to ensure their holistic well-being and spiritual development. 	Learning Program for Adults	270 minutes for the three activities of the session
	Session 9: Empowering Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify what experiences enhance children's ability to develop prosocial behaviors, ethical values and capacity for reflection. › Describe and understand the importance of using play to nurture children's spiritual development, and how you can do it. › Analyze how the experiences children go through support them in developing their agency and sense of belonging, community, purpose and interconnectedness with others. 	Learning Program for Adults	270 minutes for the three activities of the session
Learning Circle		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › At the end of the activities, a shared space is created for participants to share and reflect, breathe, and connect. It happens both in circles and in pairs – what went well, what challenged them, what have they learned. 	For more information, check the section below on Learning Circles.	30 minutes

SEGMENT	TOPIC	INSTRUCTIONS/LEARNING OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	DURATION
Planning Activities with My Child	Support and tips for parents, caregivers and educators preparing to do activities with children	› Guide participants in planning and preparing activities to do with their children.		90 minutes
How to Understand My Child's Experience	Ways for parents, caregivers and educators to understand how the child is experiencing the activities and the changes within them due to this experience.	› Participants are introduced to concrete and simple tools that can help them understand how their child is progressing and experiencing the activities.	Monitoring and Evaluation tools	90 minutes
Learning Circle	Dialogue and sharing about practical ways to support the spiritual development of children.	› Participants are given the space to connect with other participants to freely to share ideas, experiences, challenges and success stories in their parenting practices.	For more information, check the section below on Learning Circles.	30 minutes

Learning Approach

Considerations for adult learners

Parents, caregivers and educators will bring innumerable assets and strengths to the sessions. Their good caregiving practices need to be highlighted, celebrated and shared with other participants, so that participants learn from one another.

The learning approach is based on principles of adult learning emphasizing the need to: involve adults in the design, planning and delivery process; allow them to have control of their own learning; build on their own experiences and knowledge as parents, caregivers and educators; tap into their internal motivation to create better relationships with their children and support them to be better human beings and succeed in life; and identify ways to use what they have learned to put it into practice.

Learning process and methodologies

The learning process below suggests the journey that participants take to:

- Internalize the importance of the spiritual development of children
- Connect with their own spirituality and religious or spiritual beliefs, and challenge practices that condone violence and violate children's rights; and
- Strengthen their knowledge and skills for equipping facilitators to design and deliver programs to help parents, caregivers and educators create the conditions for nurturing the spiritual development of children.

At the center of the learning approach is the use of **dialogue** as a tool to learn from one another, listen to oneself and to others' experiences, and experience encouragement and support. Other programs with parents, caregivers and educators have proven to be effective when they have a strong emphasis on putting learning into action.¹ **Dialogue is important to the Learning Program's emphasis on internalizing knowledge, strengthening positive attitudes, developing new skills, and putting them into practice.** Some of these news skills focus on strengthening the ability of adults to build positive relationships with children. Others are caregiving strategies that serve as an alternative to violence and help to create safe, empowering environments for children. Still others are skills to foster children's spiritual development by offering them experiences that allow them to develop their sense of belonging, community, purpose and interconnectedness.

Within the sessions with participants, there are presentations of new topics, real-life examples, use of stories and case studies, role plays, experience sharing, and activities to build a support network. Participants are also encouraged to implement the Activities for Children at home (see Booklet III). The activities promote a change in ways of thinking, perceiving the child, and oneself. This, over time, contributes to changed patterns of interacting with the child.

In every session, facilitators should make sure to use methodologies that are interactive, collaborative, and encourage reflection. While doing so, facilitators should model behaviors that support and enhance participation, explicitly express respect for other people and their opinions, show effective and ethical ways of handling any conflicts or tensions that may arise in the group, and work to maintain a safe learning space for the participants.

Figure 1. Learning Process²

The center, purple circle, summarizes the methodologies used throughout the learning process, the stages of which are shown in the 5 outer sections.



The learning process illustrated above shows the journey participants go on through the Learning Program for Adults, based on the Conceptual Framework of the Toolkit (see Booklet I).

- The participants' motivation for their participation stems from their vested interest in the well-being of the children in their care. Facilitators build on this motivation to engage participants in the activities and reflections.
- It is paramount that, throughout the program, participants deepen their understanding around the well-being of children, the need for nurturing their spiritual development, and the ripple effects this has for the wider community.
- It is key that, during the implementation of the sessions, parents, caregivers and educators are provided with opportunities to connect with their religious or spiritual practices and beliefs, and how they challenge practices that condone violence and violate children's rights.
- Make sure that spaces are created for parents, caregivers and educators to understand the impact of violence on early childhood and how the spiritual development of children can act as a preventive and protective approach against violence.
- Participants also need to reflect on how they nurture their own spirituality, and how that affects their children's spiritual development and well-being. Participants are given opportunities to reflect on this essential aspect of providing time and space for adult spiritual growth as well.
- As the parents, caregivers and educators journey on, they take time to re-evaluate how their spiritual beliefs and practices influence, translate, or are reflected in their interactions with children. All these reflections are then used by participants to learn and affirm the best ways to develop positive relationships with their children, to create environments that are safe, violence-free and respectful, and to promote empowering experiences for their children.

This learning process is brought about using the methodologies listed at the center of the diagram. As facilitators hold respect, empathy, kindness and compassion for the other at the center of every interaction, participating parents, caregivers and educators are helped to dialogue, share experiences and stories, and practice some of the activities that they can later carry out with their children.

It is also possible to conduct one or more sessions and their related activities as stand-alone meetings. For example, there may be an meeting focused only on understanding children's spiritual development. In this case, it is still important for the facilitators to place in context the relevance of that session for the participants and children.

It is also important to take into consideration that adults may have had learning experiences that may be both positive and negative. It is important to recognize some of these to either utilize or address during the training.

How to engage children present in the session with adult participants

As previously mentioned, there may be situations where the participants bring the children they care for with them into the session. In such cases, where possible, it is ideal for the co-facilitator(s) to engage the children in a separate area of the room. Ideally, you can use the information on the participants and their accompanying children collected in advance to help you prepare activities for the children beforehand. This could become a good opportunity to implement the Activities for Children from Booklet III.

Even as the parents/caregivers themselves are going through the session, pointing out how the co-facilitator is using the learning process, the methodologies and the activities for children effectively can be another way of inspiring them and modeling how they can do it at home.

It is recommended that everyone present in the session space - children, parents, caregivers, educators, facilitators, etc. - joins together to start and end the session, with the participants sharing something that illustrates the theme or some learning the session addressed. This could be a song, a poem, a game or a reflection. This can give parents, caregivers or educators an opportunity to put into practice a new idea or skill and provide time and space to explore some of the practical considerations in engaging the child.

Nurturing the spiritual development of children does not start or end with the planned activities during the session; rather, taking extra time to gather before and after each session helps bring the reflections from the sessions into practical activities with the children. This, in turn, fosters new understandings and motivates parents, caregivers and educators to continue the process outside of the sessions at home or in school.

Learning circles: How can we support the spiritual development of children?

While delivering the sessions, facilitators are encouraged to form learning circles with the participants to foster dialogue and sharing about practical ways they can support the spiritual development of children. These learning circles can take place at the end of each module, or as part of one or more sessions. References are given at the end of each module in Booklet II about organizing the learning circles.

The following ideas can be used to prepare your learning circles.

- Create a moment where parents, caregivers and educators can come together freely to share ideas, experiences, challenges and success stories in their parenting practices. Allow for unstructured and spontaneous sharing, but make sure to encourage participants to share how this Learning Program for Adults has helped them, what has been successful, and any recommendations they may have.
- Create a moment for joint reflections through guided questions, case studies or scenarios. This can help participants to detach from their own experiences and reflect by considering a situation that can be familiar to them. It can also open up space for them to share their own experiences, challenges and success stories.
- Create a moment to share techniques and tools for self-care and ask participants to share ideas for nurturing their own spiritual well-being so they can stay centered and positive in their parenting practices. Moments like this can complement the sessions in Module II on adults nurturing their own spirituality.

You can organize some of these moments around meals or food to create informal and yet familiar and safe spaces where dialogue can flow naturally.



It is important that these opportunities are created throughout the program to allow for ample time for internalization, connection and help to build a support network.

Learning log

As part of the learning approach designed to internalize information and reflections, and to complement the learning circles, facilitators can introduce the idea of a learning log to participants. This is a tool for them to reflect upon and document their learning and experiences. Each participant is given or could bring a notebook, which they use throughout the program.

Parents, caregivers and educators who do not know how to write can be encouraged to document their learning using images, drawings, audio clips recorded on digital devices where available, or simply keeping a box of items that serve as memories of their experiences.

The learning log is private and should be used at the end of every session by each participant to record their experiences and feelings by writing, drawing, or making a collage. The learning log is intended to strengthen the process of self-reflection. It should be completed right after the session, when the participants are alone and have time to reflect.

The participants are encouraged to write in it after each session and/or when they are alone and have time to reflect.

The following are some examples of reflective questions and statements to use as prompts in the learning log.

- What did I learn from this experience?
 - Have my ideas on the upbringing of children and my own understanding changed? If so, why?
 - Could something I normally do in my upbringing practices be done differently? Why? How could I do it? What support do I need?
 - One thing I learned today about myself and my relationship with my child is _____.
 - Today I faced a challenge trying to _____; tomorrow I will try to _____.
 - The best part about the session today was _____.
 - I used to think _____; now I think _____.
 - Today I changed the way I _____ because _____.
-

These prompts can be adapted or revised depending on the activities that facilitators carry out with the participants. Prompts should help participants to identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they have gained, as well as those they want to enhance or further develop. It is best to have a combination of practical points and some reflective questions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A critical aspect of the Learning Program for Adults is conducting monitoring and evaluation to ensure that necessary adjustments can be made throughout the process and that the learning outcomes and results of the program can be utilized for improvement, evidence-building, replication, and scalability.

Monitoring refers to the collection of information on the processes and results of sessions implemented in relation to what was planned in terms of content, activities, and resources allocated. This information allows trainers and facilitators to make necessary adjustments to the activities during the training to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. This is essential for identifying areas that need to be strengthened and introducing any needed adjustments into the calendar and adapting facilitation techniques to ensure a successful learning experience.

Evaluation refers to the assessment of participants' actual learning outcomes and the competencies they have developed, compared to the intended objectives of the program. It

can also help understand any potential impact on children. Evaluation takes place at the end of the program. It provides input to the trainers which helps to measure the success of the program and to see to what extent the main objectives have been accomplished.

→ The online M&E tools provided at (<https://childspiritualdevelopment.org>) give comprehensive information regarding monitoring and evaluation for programs directly implemented with parents, caregivers and educators as well as some that can be used to understand impact on parents, caregivers and educators' attitudes, behaviors and practices toward children, and benefits to children.

The forms found in the annexes in this booklet can also support the assessment of the training program.

- Annex III. Attendance Sheet - To track participation and retention quantitatively
- Annex IV. Facilitator Reflection Form - To help facilitators reflect on and monitor sessions as they proceed through the modules
- Annex VI. Evaluation Form for Participants - To assess the satisfaction of participating parents, caregivers, and/or educators, and their main learnings and takeaways, qualitatively.
- Annex VII. Participant Progress Sheet - To help facilitators to understand and document any changes or benefits families experience due to the sessions.

Annex I. Pre-Participation Survey

Dear participant,

We thank you for your interest in attending the Learning Program for Adults to be held at [venue] on [dates], organized by [name of the organization].

Before the sessions start we invite you to share with us some information that will be very useful for the facilitators to plan, design and deliver the program.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

First name

Last name

Date of birth

Gender

Religious, or spiritual
affiliation

Home address

Contact information
(phone number)

Occupation (what you
do for a living)

Education level

Mark with an (X) the ones that
apply

- Primary - complete
- Primary - incomplete
- Secondary - complete
- Secondary - incomplete
- Bachelor's degree or higher
- Did not have the chance to attend school

Literacy level

- I can read and write well
- I can read but writing is difficult
- I cannot write
- I cannot read or write
- Other – Please explain

Family composition

Mark with an (X) the persons
who live together in the family
home

- Father
- Mother
- Grandmother
- Grandfather
- Cousin
- Uncle/aunt
- Children __ Number of children
- Other – Please explain

Children: Let us know
about your children

Number of boys ___
Number of girls ___
Ages _____

Do you have any children with a disability?

- No
- Yes

Mark with an (X) the ones that apply

In case you do, please let us know more about it (what is the disability, how it influences their day to day life, and other details you find relevant.)

Will you be attending the program with your children?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how many and what are the ages.

It is ok for you for your children to go into the separate child-friendly room?

- Yes
- No

Do you plan to bring them to the adult session?

- Yes
- No

Please share why are you attending this program and what you hope to gain from it

What are the main issues and challenges that you face as a parent, caregiver or educator in the household/school? Some examples: providing for basic needs such as good access to food, housing, health, education; issues with children's behavior/emotions; challenges staying calm and positive as a parent, caregiver or educator; looking for ways to create safer, better environments, experiences and relationships with your children.

Is there anything else that is important to you and that you would like to share with us before the program starts?

Annex II. Program Planning Template

Dates:	
Duration:	
Objectives:	
Location:	
Facilitators:	
Number of Participants:	
Context:	What are the participants' socioeconomic background, age, religious or spiritual background (if available)? What are main issues affecting young children and families in their context?
Selected Sessions:	Identify the time allocated to each session you will work with based on your objectives.
Selected Activities:	Select the activities from Booklet II that will support the delivery of the content of each of the selected sessions

Annex III. Attendance Sheet

Date:

Facilitator name(s):

Location:

Module number:

Session number/title:

NUMBER	NAME OF FACILITATOR/PARTICIPANT
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	

Annex IV. Facilitator Reflection Form

Facilitator name(s):

Location:

Date:

Module number:

Session number/title:

Number of participants who attended the session:

Was I able to prepare for the session in advance? Yes or no? Why?

Was I able to complete all activities? Yes or no? Why?

What went well in this session?

What were the key challenges in this session and what did I learn from them?

What did I see participants learning during the session?

What attitudes and behaviours among the participants were challenging for me as a facilitator?

What reflections (testimonies, experiences, stories) from participants caught my attention the most? Why?

What activities helped participants to engage more in dialogue and open up? Why?

What activities were more difficult to conduct? Why?

What topics were more challenging for participants to discuss and understand? Why?

How did you address those challenges?

What changes did you perceive in participants at the end of the session?

Any suggestions on how to improve the delivery or content of this session:

Annex V. Evaluation from Participants

At the end of the training program, invite participants to share about their experience. You can use this form, or various other creative ways to collect helpful information, as well.

Evaluation Form

LOGISTICS	RANK*			COMMENTS
How was the place/venue where the sessions took place?	1	2	3	
How was the food (if any)?	1	2	3	
Did you like the materials shared with you?	1	2	3	

* 1. I did not like it | 2. It was ok | 3. It was good

GENERAL CONTENT

Did you like what you learned during the training? Yes or no? Why?

Did you feel involved in all sessions? Yes or no? Why?

Did you expect this kind of experience? Yes or no? Why?

Was the content of the sessions interesting for you? Yes or no? Why?

Did you have fun/enjoy the experience? Yes or no? Why?

Which session(s) did you enjoy the most?

Did you experience anything that was difficult for you during any of the sessions? Please explain.

Did you feel safe and encouraged to be yourself during the program? Yes or no? Why?

LEARNING

What did you learn? Why was that important to you?

Can you use/apply what you learned? How are you planning to use it?

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

Annex VI. Participant Progress Sheet

Facilitator name(s):

Location:

Date:

Module number:

Session number/title:

FAMILY – NAME OF PARENT(S) OR CAREGIVER(S)	INFORMATION ABOUT FAMILY		CHALLENGES PERCEIVED	CHANGES/ IMPROVEMENTS PERCEIVED	ANY OTHER OBSERVATIONS
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			
	Number of children:	Parents work: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No			

Endnotes

¹ For example: Promundo, CulturaSalud/EME & REDMAS (2013). Program P: A Manual for Engaging Men in Fatherhood, Caregiving and Maternal and Child Health. Promundo Global; and, Lachman, J. & Hutchings, J. (2020). *Parenting for Lifelong Health Programme for Young Children: Facilitator Manual-8 Session Version Developed and Tested in Thailand*. Parenting for Lifelong Health, University of Oxford, University of Capetown, Bangor University, Clowns without Borders, World Health Organization.

² Adapted from Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.

About the International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence

The Consortium, convened by Arigatou International, brings together civil society and faith-based organizations, religious communities, multilateral organizations, academia and individual experts to foster collaboration, share good practises and develop evidence-based and innovative approaches to integrate values-based education and spirituality in early childhood for the protection of children from violence and the promotion of their holistic well-being.

CONSORTIUM

on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood
for the Prevention of Violence