POSITIVE PARENTING

Cost-Benefit Analysis

NOTE

This technical summary presents the Positive Parenting Economic Analysis for projects funded by World Vision Canada from 2019 to 2021, conducted by Limestone Analytics. Updates to this analysis will occur as additional projects are implemented and new evidence is continuously collected. As a result, figures may change to reflect a more accurate understanding of the pathways through which the approach achieves its effectiveness and efficiency. All dollar values are reported in 2023 USD with a 9 per cent discount rate.

Economic Study
World Vision Canada | OCTOBER 2023

Introduction

Child protection is a core pillar of World Vision's work, embedded across all sectors of programming. We define child protection as safeguarding children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. World Vision's child protection approach addresses these harms by empowering children, transforming social norms, strengthening support systems and improving legal protections.

Positive parenting interventions, which focus specifically on transforming social and parenting norms, are a key component of the approach. These interventions address the abuse and neglect of children by equipping parents with evidence-based, non-violent discipline strategies, fostering stronger family relationships and building supportive community networks. They are integrated into World Vision's programming across all sectors—including child protection, education, health, livelihoods, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Between fiscal years 2019 and 2021, World Vision Canada (WVC) invested $6,487,692 to implement 67 projects that incorporated positive parenting interventions across 24 countries. Consulting firm Limestone Analytics was engaged to conduct an economic analysis of this portfolio. Using data from the positive parenting projects, Limestone applied a cost-benefit analysis to assess the social and health impacts of this portfolio, including each project's cost effectiveness and socio-economic returns.

The results show that positive parenting is a strong investment, delivering positive real impact™ in children's mental health and well-being. These interventions save lives and avert long-term harm, demonstrating the lasting value of supporting parents to protect and nurture their children.

Highlights (2019-2021)

- *149,024 children reached through 67 projects in 24 countries*
- *$4.36 in mental health benefits for every $1 invested, on average*
- *16 lives saved and 2,842 disability-adjusted life years averted over three years*
- *Over $34 million generated in benefits for children*

Positive Parenting Interventions

World Vision uses three main positive parenting interventions in its child protection approach. These intervention methods help parents and caregivers to process their own childhoods, learn new positive parenting skills, strengthen their relationships with their children and develop a supportive network of peers.

- Celebrating Families is a faith-based model—adapted across various faith contexts—that empowers parents and caregivers to create a safe and nurturing environment for children's spiritual nurture within families. The primary target group is parents/caregivers and faith leaders. The three-day workshop is facilitated by volunteers and ideally attended by 15-25 parents or caregivers.
- Families Make the Difference[1] equips parents and caregivers with knowledge and skills to apply positive discipline as an alternative to physical and emotional punishment. The series of 10 sessions is organized at convenient times for the target group.
- Parent Support Groups encourage parents and caregivers to use the skills they have learned and build supportive relationships with each other through ongoing bi-weekly meetings facilitated by community volunteers.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to participate in all three interventions to maximize their engagement with positive parenting skills and techniques. The end result is that parents and caregivers demonstrate behaviours that provide a caring and protective environment for all girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable.

Methodology

A cost-benefit analysis (CBA) framework was used to evaluate the social and health impacts of 67 positive parenting projects funded by WVC and implemented across 24 countries between 2019 and 2021.

The model was populated with project-specific participant and cost data from WVC, supplemented with evidence from international studies on child maltreatment, mental health

[1] 2014 International Rescue Committee Families Make the Difference Parenting Curriculum

outcomes and economic valuation methodologies. The analysis used WVC estimates of the number of participating caregivers to estimate the number of children reached and WVC-recorded costs per project to approximate the costs associated with the positive parenting interventions.

Benefits and costs were evaluated across three key stakeholder groups:

- Children benefiting from reduced exposure to harsh parenting
- Parents and caregivers participating in training sessions
- WVC as the funder and implementer

Benefits were assessed through this channel:

- *Increased positive parenting practices reduce the lifetime risk of adverse mental health outcomes for the participants' children* (anxiety, depression, substance use, and suicidal behaviour), *which interact with the children's lifetime mortality and morbidity*.

The analysis did not include physical health outcomes due to a lack of conclusive evidence. Costs include the direct costs of implementing positive parenting programs borne by WVC and the cost of participants' time spent attending positive parenting training sessions.

Portfolio-Level Results

The analysis indicates that WVC's positive parenting projects have been an effective use of development funding and a cost-effective portfolio overall. Between 2019 and 2021, WVC-funded implementations incurred **$7,993,779** in costs across **67** projects. These projects reached approximately **149,024** children across **24** countries, costing approximately **$54** per child. The portfolio has an overall benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of **4.36,** meaning that every $1 invested in the positive parenting implementations generated an estimated **$4.36** worth of social benefits. WVC's investments in this portfolio have saved an estimated **16** lives and have averted morbidity[2] equivalent to **2,842** disability-adjusted life years[3] (DALYs). **Table 1** presents the overall portfolio results.

Table 1. Headline results at the portfolio level

Present Value of Benefits	Present Value of Costs	Net Present Value	Benefit-Cost Ratio	Children Reached	Deaths Averted	DALYs Averted
$34,854,048	$7,993,779	$26,860,270	4.36	149,024	16	2,842

[2] Morbidity is the condition of having a disease or illness.
[3] Disability-adjusted life year (DALY) measures the total burden of disease. One DALY represents one year of healthy life lost due to illness, disability or early death. It combines years of life lost and years lived with disability to estimate the total impact on population health.

Figure 1 shows the relative impact of each category of benefits and costs. The financial costs of implementation are the largest cost item in the portfolio, accounting for 81 per cent. The remaining cost is attributed to the opportunity cost of time for parents attending the training. All benefits are due to adverse mental health outcomes averted, which include reductions in both mortality and morbidity.

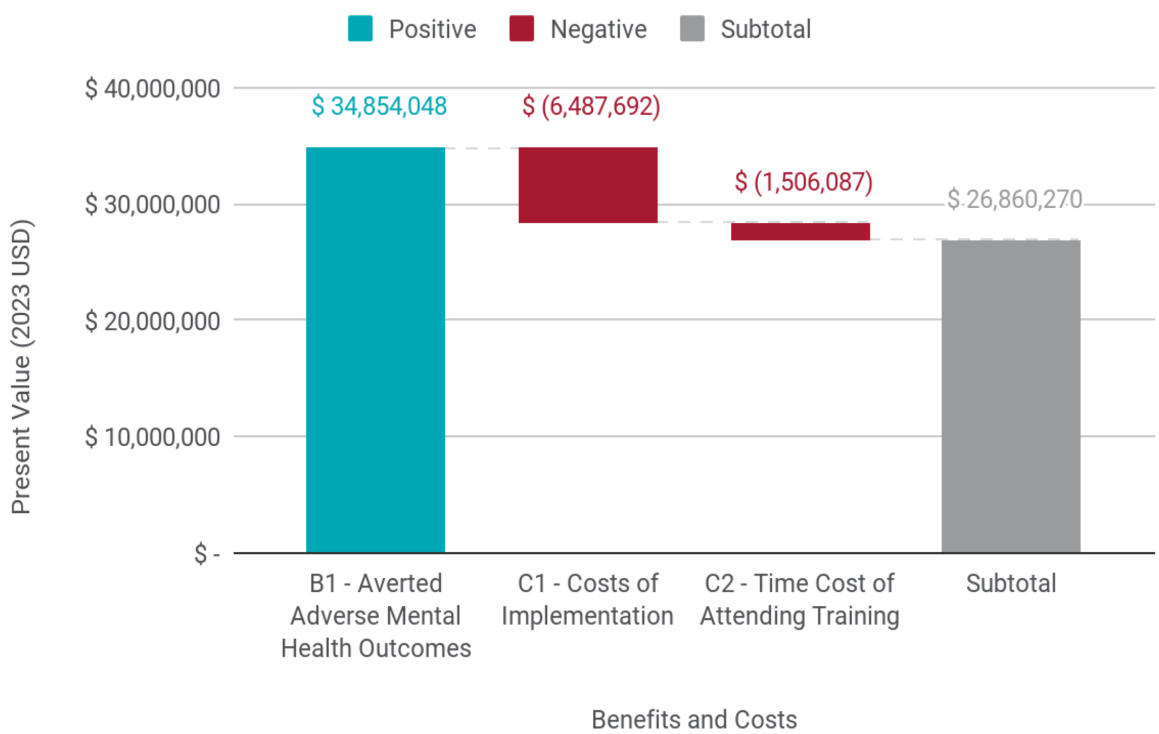

Figure 1. Present value of benefits and costs by type

Figure 2 breaks down the present value of the benefits and costs by stakeholder category, or "perspective." As shown, children receive the entire benefit (experienced over their lives) while parents and WVC bear the costs. WVC bears the majority of the costs (81 per cent) as it is responsible for all financial costs of implementation.

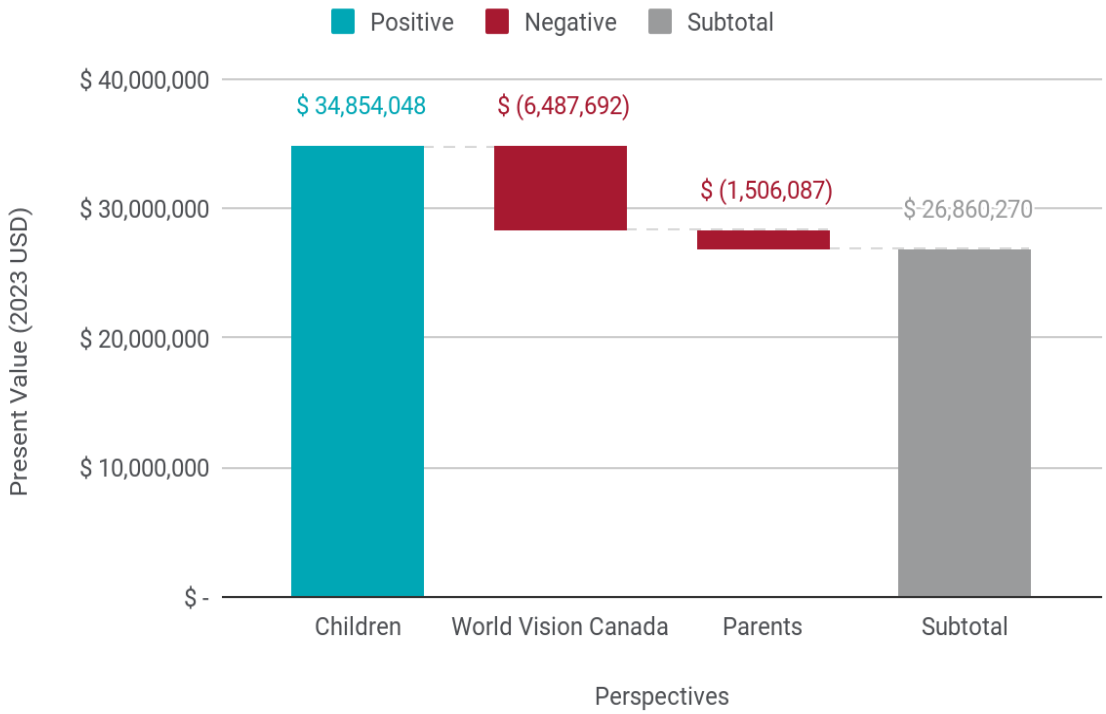

Figure 2. Present value of benefits and costs by perspective

Project-Level Results

WVC's investments in positive parenting have a positive net present value[4] (NPV), meaning the benefits outweigh the costs. This holds true at both the portfolio level and when considering the median project results. However, not all projects in the portfolio have positive NPVs.

As **Figure 3** illustrates, 30 of the 67 projects analyzed show negative NPVs. On average, the negative NPVs are relatively small in magnitude. The number of projects with negative NPVs also varies when the parameters and assumptions are shifted.

[4] Net present value is a way to determine how much money something will make or cost in the future by accounting for the time value of money. It is calculated by subtracting the present value of the costs from the present value of the benefits.

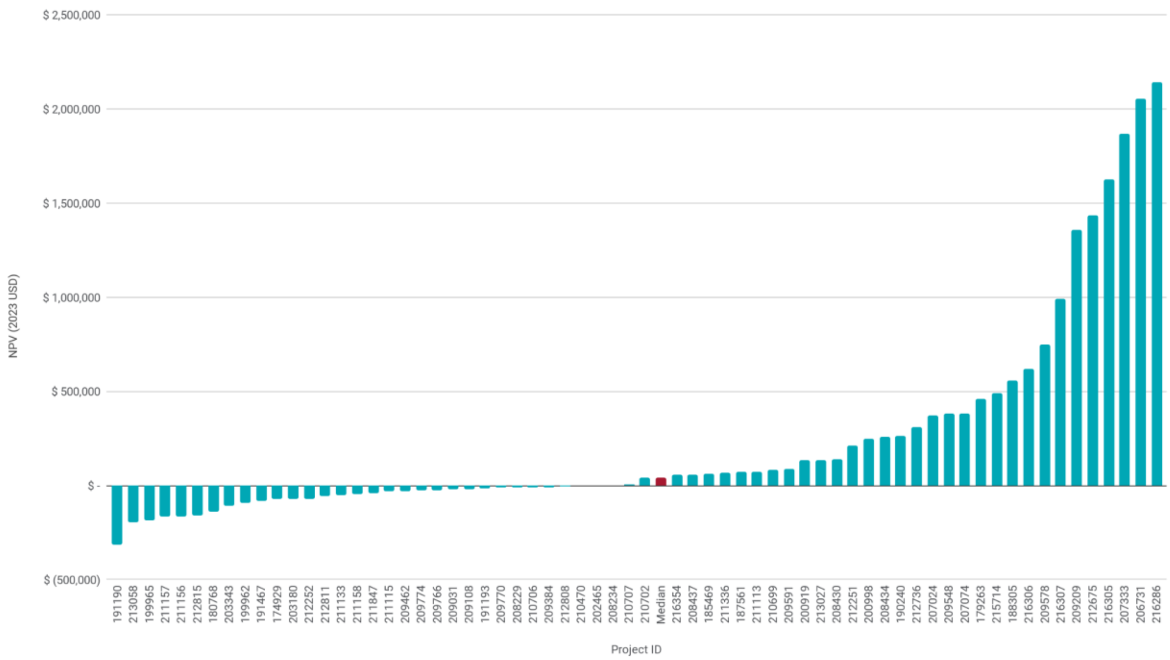

Figure 3. Net present value per project [5]

A cost effectiveness analysis (CEA) was conducted to complement the CBA results. This analysis compared a standard measure—cost per DALY averted—against World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines[6] to determine whether projects are "very cost effective," "cost effective" or "not cost effective."

Figure 4 compares the average cost per DALY averted for each project to the thresholds for "very cost effective" and "cost effective." The cost per DALY averted for 27 projects (40 per cent of the portfolio) falls within the "very cost effective" limit. A further 19 projects (29 per cent) fall above the "very cost effective" threshold but below the "cost effective" threshold, meaning they are considered cost effective. The final 21 projects (31 per cent) are "not cost effective"; among them, 20 projects also have negative NPVs and BCRs—these results appear motivated by a low number of participants relative to the estimated cost. Notably, of the 30 projects in the portfolio with a negative NPV, 10 are still considered cost effective according to

[5] Two project numbers are excluded from Figure 3 as their NPVs are so highly positive that the rest of the figure becomes difficult to read.
[6] WHO guidelines use gross national income (GNI) per capita as a benchmark for comparison. The WHO considers projects to be very cost effective when the cost per DALY averted is less than the GNI per capita. Any project with a cost per DALY averted that falls between one and three times the GNI per capita is considered cost effective. Projects are not cost effective if the cost per DALY averted is more than three times the GNI per capita.

WHO standards.

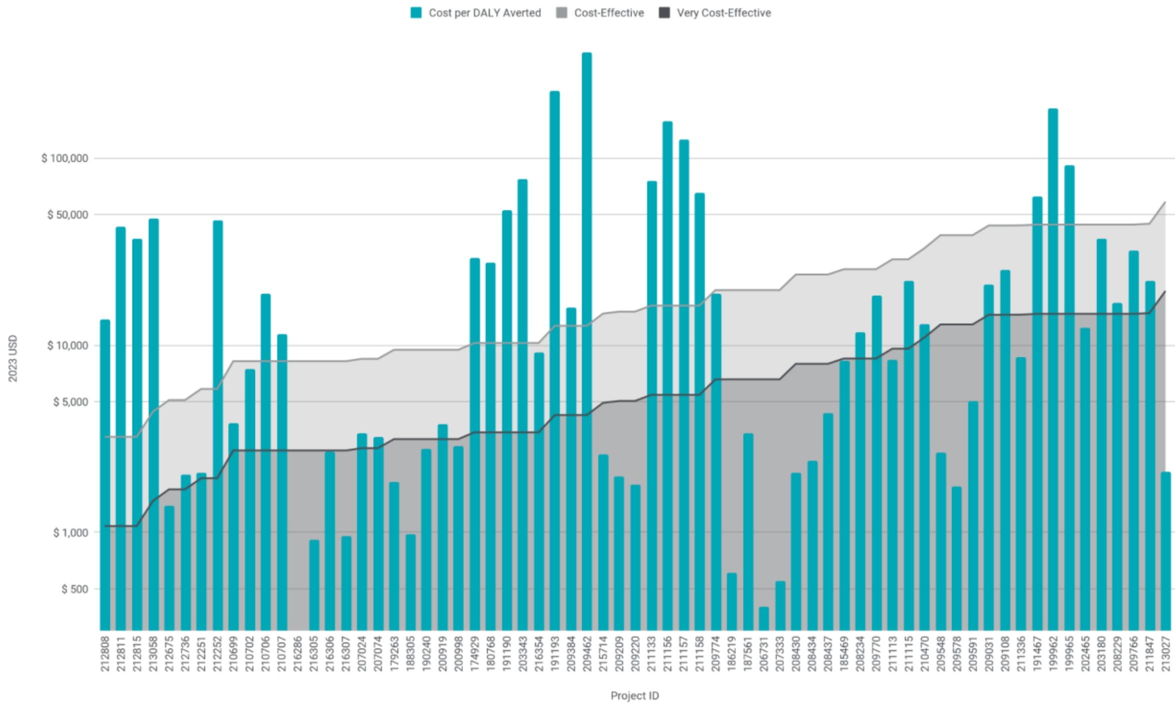

Figure 4. Cost per DALY averted against cost-effectiveness limits (using log scale)

Conclusions and Recommendations

The cost-benefit analysis reveals that, overall, the investments in World Vision Canada's positive parenting portfolio have been a cost-effective use of Canadian funds. The projects have generated over $34 million in benefits for children with a positive benefit-cost ratio of 4.36. This means that for every dollar invested, boys and girls receive $4.36 in social benefits, realized through improved mental health outcomes over the course of their lives.

While the positive parenting interventions are generally a good investment of WVC funds, variations in project-level performance suggest that their efficacy is dependent on the cost and number of children reached. Several of the projects with negative economic performance reached a very limited number of children, suggesting that projects may require a minimum scale to deliver sufficient benefits to society.

The analysis highlights several considerations and recommendations for WVC regarding future research and investments in positive parenting.

- **Collect disaggregated cost data.** Tracking cost data at the sub-project level (i.e., providing the ability to track positive parenting intervention activities separately) would allow for more robust analysis. By collecting more granular cost data, WVC can create an evidence base to inform future implementations, evaluating the relative importance of various costs to the program outcomes. The disaggregation of cost data is critical to improve the accuracy of the estimated impact of WVC’s programming investments.

- Report the number of households and children reached. Collecting data on the number of households or children reached, in addition to participant numbers, would significantly strengthen the economic analysis. WVC should encourage its National Office partners to record this information, which would improve impact estimates across the positive parenting portfolio. Linking caregivers to specific households would also enable more detailed analysis of how multiple caregiver participation affects outcomes.
- Support research to address evidence gaps. Due to limited supporting evidence, the analysis excluded some potential benefits and costs, while making strong assumptions about others. It did not include possible effects passed across generations or fully capture longer-term outcomes. To help fill these gaps, WVC could work with local partners—especially in places where World Vision has a long-term presence—to collect informal evidence from participants and their families, using tools like the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale (CTSPC). Where possible, WVC could also partner with others to study whether having more than one caregiver in a household attending positive parenting training leads to larger impacts.