

INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM

2015



ZAMBIA | EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

How can children and caregivers survive and thrive in challenging circumstances?

The last decade has witnessed great success in bringing down HIV infection rates among adults and children. Despite the success, communities in sub-Saharan Africa still struggle with some of the most staggering consequences of AIDS – the high number of children under five who have lost a parent, have a parent who is HIV positive, are being cared for by a grandparent, sibling or extended family, are HIV positive themselves or have otherwise fallen through the cracks. Beyond the harmful effects and stressors of poverty that no child should endure, these children are at risk for suffering the long-term consequences of lack of nutrition, education, proper care and emotional support. Evidence now shows that these early years are the most important to a child's cognitive, psychosocial and physical development.

Episcopal Relief & Development's cutting-edge, volunteer-driven, community-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) program model is empowering communities to increase the possibility that children are able to reach their full developmental potential, that primary caregivers¹ are healthy and that children live in safe, stable and consistent caregiving environments. With support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, what began as a pilot program in two provinces in Zambia in 2012 has now scaled to five provinces, serving the development needs of nearly 6,228 families with 9,937 children under six years of age.

Integrating Early Childhood Development to Support Families Meeting their Basic Needs

As with all of its programs, Episcopal Relief & Development and its implementing partner, the Zambia Anglican Council, designed the Zambia ECD program in collaboration with the community. The program's backbone is the *Essential Package for Holistically Addressing the Needs of Young Children and their Caregivers Affected by HIV/AIDS*² developed by the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development and other stakeholders.

¹ Primary caregiver refers to the parent or the person (such as grandparent, sibling) who is filling the parental role for the child.

² For *Essential Package program* resources, visit www.melycaba.com.

Global HIV/AIDS Statistics

34.2 million people globally live with HIV/AIDS

3.4 million children under the age of 15 live with HIV/AIDS

17.8 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS

1.7 million HIV deaths in 2005 compared with 1.3 million HIV deaths in 2013

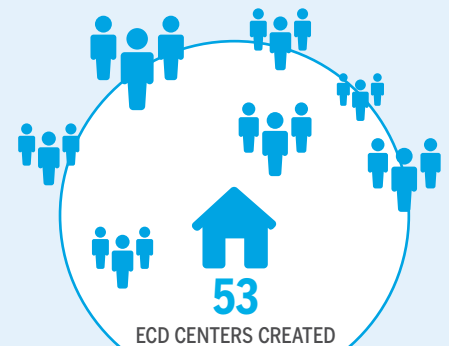
2005

2013



Supporting ECD in Zambia

1,457
ECD VOLUNTEERS TRAINED



Other organizations have used the Essential Package with paid employees at centers in urban areas, but this approach could not cost effectively reach the many families living in low-density rural areas. Episcopal Relief & Development adapted the approach for a rural setting and is leveraging the assets of the Zambia Anglican Council and other faith institutions with holistic integration of programming on maternal and child health, family livelihoods and nutrition and food security. By building a cadre of trained ECD volunteers and engaging the physical facilities associated with the Church, Episcopal Relief & Development is able to cost-effectively reach remote, rural communities.

Training Volunteers to Strengthen Families

Some organizations have added ECD through the Essential Package to community health workers' (CHW) tasks. However, CHWs already have a very full set of health responsibilities. Therefore, Episcopal Relief & Development recruited other people to serve specifically as ECD volunteers, focusing on critical areas of child development (cognitive, language, psychosocial and motor skills) and complementing the child and maternal health work of the CHWs. In three years, Episcopal Relief & Development has trained 1,457 ECD volunteers to work with families through home visits and caregiver support and learning groups, as well as children's playgroups. A cornerstone of the Essential Package volunteer training and the support that volunteers provide to caregivers is to identify positive behaviors and reinforce these with constructive feedback. In addition, the Essential Package uses cards with pictures so that volunteers can use them as conversation starters to dialogue with caregivers on key messages and actions for the age of their own children.

The volunteers and caregivers convene twice per month at 53 Early Childhood Development centers located within existing churches and schools. These convenings provide additional learning opportunities, as well as socialization and solidarity for caregivers. One of the two monthly meetings includes growth monitoring of the children. In addition, the ECD program provides organized playgroups either weekly or daily depending on the community. One program element that sets Episcopal Relief & Development's approach apart from other organizations using the Essential Package is the monthly, one-on-one visits by the volunteer to their assigned families providing customized support, including psychosocial counseling and referrals to other services.

Adapting an Existing Model

While adapting the Essential Package tools, Episcopal Relief & Development found that the baseline survey tool did not effectively capture all of the program elements in a rural context. Subsequently, the second phase of the project that started in 2014 expanded the indicators to include measurement of change in parenting knowledge and behaviors and of volunteer effectiveness. The final results of the second phase will be available in 2016.

Impact and Building on Success

Episcopal Relief & Development has seen significant positive changes among caregivers as a result of the ECD program in Zambia. The agency is now building on the success in Zambia by initiating ECD programming in Kenya. Partner organization, Anglican Development Services-Nyanza (ADS), is working with rural families who are HIV-affected.

Care & Development Training Tools



Physical Development

Examples for Birth to 6 Months:

- Copy your child's sounds.
- Tell the child stories.
- Place object near the child for him or her to look at.
- Sing softly to the child.



Thinking and Communication

Examples for 6 Months to 1 Year:

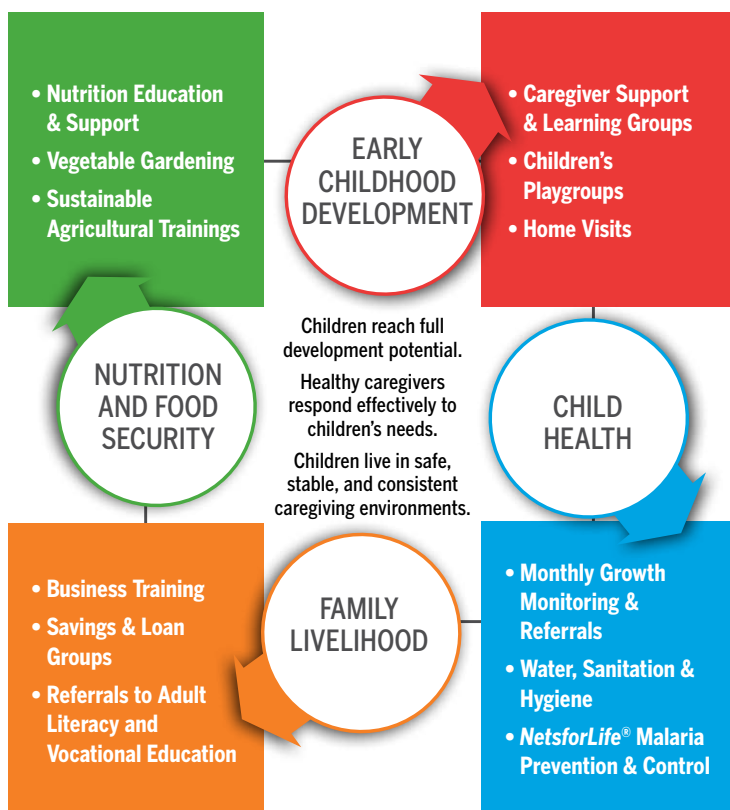
- When your child looks at something, point to it and talk about it.
- Ask child questions about the people and things around them. For example, "Where is mommy?"

The program leverages technical resources and Essential Package training for ADS staff, mentoring mother volunteers and preschool teachers through Save the Children, which had existing trained staff. The first group is now training others. The ECD component has been incorporated into two areas: the HIV positive mothers' support groups and with teachers and parents whose children have access to government-provided preschool programs. Initially, many parents did not understand the value of preschool for their three- to five-year-olds and were not sending their children. Now, parents and teachers are collaborating so the children can get full benefit. They plan to make two sets of play materials, one for classrooms and one for home use. The parents are also contributing food for a mid-day meal for the children.

As the program expands in Zambia and elsewhere, Episcopal Relief & Development will address a number of potential challenges, including:

- How can caregivers, some of whom are very young, take ownership in their role, and can mentoring help?
- How can the stress on ECD volunteers, who are dealing with difficult issues including very young and old caregivers, extreme poverty, HIV/AIDS, be minimized, and how can support be provided to the volunteers in order to retain them?

Integrated Approach Helps Families Thrive



Positive Changes Among Caregivers after ECD

Interim assessments show the following changes:

- Caregivers know when and where to seek support and referrals for services using a community-based system.
- Confidence and trust between caregivers and ECD volunteers has led to more families seeking HIV/AIDS counselling and testing and accessing treatment, and disclosing their HIV status and accessing treatment and support.
- Caregivers are spending more time with children to provide stimulation, play and learning.
- Caregivers are taking increased responsibility in managing ECD Center activities.



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Episcopal Relief & Development works with more than 3 million people in nearly 40 countries worldwide to overcome poverty, hunger and disease through multi-sector programs. An independent 501(c)(3) organization, it works closely with Anglican Communion and ecumenical partners to help communities create long-term development strategies and rebuild after disasters. In 2015, the organization is celebrating 75 Years of Healing a Hurting World.