

Early Childhood Development in East and Southern Africa

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation’s Global Early Childhood Development (ECD) Initiative takes a holistic, two-generation approach, strengthening the capacity of public systems and community actors to support the well-being of caregivers and their young children facing adversity in East and Southern Africa. By supporting children aged 0-3 with the nurturing care they need to be ready for school and resilient to meet challenges, this work contributes to their healthy development, as well as improved economic and health outcomes for their families and communities.

The overarching goal of the Global ECD Initiative in East and Southern Africa is to improve the developmental outcomes of all disadvantaged young children (0-3 years) in Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique (the Foundation will be working to exit programming in Malawi and Zambia over the next two years). Specifically, the Hilton Foundation invests in: improving caregiving; building capacity of local organizations; strengthening the global ECD field; and research and evaluation.

Ideal state

All children aged 0-3 in the Foundation’s three focal countries reach their full long-term developmental potential and are developmentally on track at age 3, are ready for school at age 5, and are resilient to challenges. All caregivers in

the Foundation’s three focal countries have the knowledge, resources and well-being to enable the healthy development of their children. There is continued growth and increased interest in the Early Childhood Development field.

History and Background

Our early childhood development work in East and Southern Africa began in 2012 with the goal of improving cognitive, social and physical developmental outcomes for young children affected by HIV and AIDS.

During Phase I (2012-2016), the Foundation invested in five countries with high HIV prevalence rates: Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. This work reached many children (415,000) and caregivers (320,000) and helped increase awareness that early childhood interventions are a powerful equalizer and key for economic progress and sustainable growth. Early childhood was included as a specific sub-goal of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.2).

Phase II (2017-2020) then prioritized depth of results over breadth of people reached, focused on health systems and quality services, and invested in research for the adaption and scale of proven approaches in African settings. Early childhood development has been fully scaled within the health system at sub-national levels in Kenya (Siaya County), Mozambique (Maputo Province) and within two districts in Tabora Region, Tanzania. In all five countries, progress has been made to integrate nurturing care into national and subnational policy frameworks and measurement systems.

Strategy25 (2021-2025) continues to invest in young children and their caregivers while retaining HIV-sensitive programming and is described in this brief.

5-year goals

3 national governments have integrated early childhood development as part of health systems

75% of caregivers (37,500) in programs the Foundation supports demonstrate improved ECD knowledge

50% of caregivers (25,000) in programs the Foundation supports demonstrate improved caregiving quality and practices

Children living in adverse environments improve their developmental profiles, as shown through population level surveys using a representative sample for roughly 300,000 children.

National level data through a large population-based survey on the developmental status of children under 5 years becomes available in two of the Foundation’s three focus countries

15% increase in financing for ECD at global and national levels

Strategy architecture



WHERE WE WORK



EQUITY FOCUS

- Adolescent parents/caregivers
- Young children and their families living in extreme poverty
- Young children and families living with other adversities (e.g., HIV/AIDS, disabilities, families experiencing domestic abuse or child abuse)
- Ensuring that the perspectives of parents/caregivers are included
- Greater investment in capacity of African-led organizations to serve communities

OTHER KEY METRICS

- Supportive policies ensure pregnant girls and young mothers can continue their education
- National and sub-national budgets for ECD to increase by at least 15 percent in spite of COVID threats to budgets
- USAID commits an additional ~\$600 million for maternal and child health and/or nutrition

PROGRAM COSTS



**Phase I
(2012-2016):**
\$49,230,000;

**Phase II
(2017-2020):**
\$48,247,000;

**Strategy25
(2021-2025):**
Est. \$100,000,000

CHALLENGES



- Coordinating with governments and organizations on what they prioritize and need
- Maintaining quality when introducing interventions into health systems at scale, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic strains overburdened health systems
- Preserving existing HIV, maternal and child health, and early childhood gains as the COVID-19 pandemic causes loss of income, food insecurity, malnutrition and more

OPPORTUNITIES



- The Global Scale for Early Development is a promising tool to measure child development outcomes consistently and globally. It would fill critical data gaps in east and southern Africa
- Countries are in the process of developing national multi-sectoral plans for improving early childhood development that can be supported to hold governments accountable

ILLUSTRATIVE PARTNERS*	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT AWARDED (2017-2021)
PATH	Scaling the integration of caregiver support as part of health service delivery in Kenya and Mozambique	\$12.7 million
United States Fund for UNICEF	Driving the integration of nurturing care as part of policies and information systems at national and sub-national levels in Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania, and supporting multi-sectoral costed plans	\$10.7 million
Episcopal Relief and Development	Supporting the local Anglican Church and faith-based and local leaders to deliver integrated ECD programs and services to parents and caregivers	\$2.8 million
The Africa Early Childhood Network	Building the capacity of national ECD advocacy networks and advocating for the importance of nurturing care regionally	\$1.5 million

*This list is not exhaustive of the Illustrative Partners.