



For children ages 3-5, early childhood development is enhanced through creation of safe, stimulating environments such as this community based childcare center in Malawi. Karen Kasmauski for CRS.

PROGRAM SNAP SHOT

THRIVE: Improving early childhood development for children affected by HIV

An estimated 200 million children worldwide, or one-third of all children under age 5, fail to meet their developmental potential.¹ Poverty, nutritional deficiencies, and inadequate learning opportunities are among the primary causes of underdevelopment. HIV causes additional stress which challenges the physical, cognitive and mental wellbeing of children.

WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT?

Early childhood development (ECD) refers to a child's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development from before birth up to age 8. This is a period of intense growth and change and requires interventions specifically tailored for distinct developmental stages.

WHY IS ECD SO IMPORTANT?

ECD is important for national development: ECD activities are among the most cost effective interventions. Because children who benefit from quality ECD are more ready to learn, less likely to repeat grades or drop out of school, and later in life are more likely to earn more, the return on investment in ECD is estimated to be 18 percent.²

ECD is most vital for the most vulnerable: ECD interventions are particularly cost effective when directed at the poorest children. Early interventions that prevent inequality are more effective than those which attempt to remedy cumulative deficits.³

ECD maximizes the window of opportunity: The early years represent an exceptional time in a person's life when health, nutrition and stimulation can have a critical role in physical, language, cognitive and socio-emotional development.

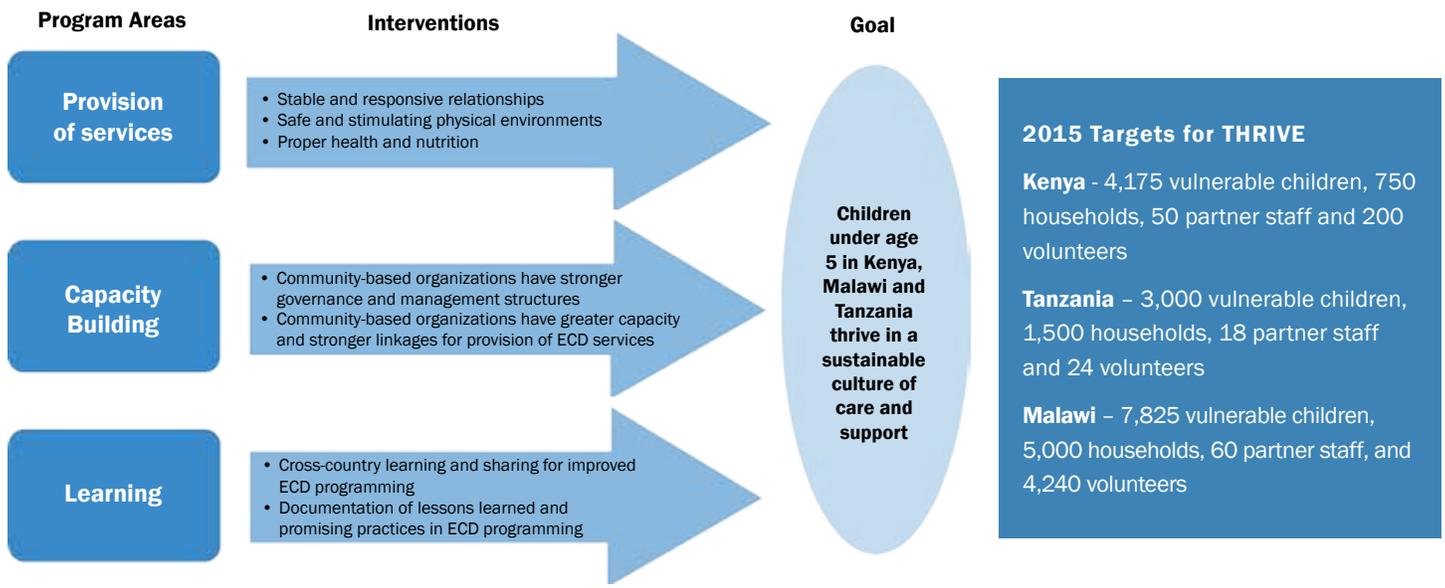
THE THRIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

CRS provides holistic support to vulnerable children in more than 60 countries. Building on this foundation, CRS is implementing the THRIVE early childhood development project in an effort to level the playing field for children affected by HIV through early childhood interventions. From 2012 to 2015, this three-year project, funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, provides 15,000 children under age 5 in Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania with a sustainable culture of care and support.

THRIVE will include three main program areas designed to help children under age 5 thrive in a sustainable culture of care and support. *Service provision* addresses the critical factors for child development such as stable and responsive relationships, safe and stimulating physical environments and proper health and nutrition. *Capacity building* addresses the gap that exists in community-based organizations' ability to lead and expand ECD services for vulnerable children. THRIVE also strives to improve knowledge and expertise across CRS and the ECD sector by active *cross-country learning*. Improvements in ECD knowledge and practices will be measured using four assessments: an adaptation of the Comprehensive Checklist⁴, a checklist of developmental milestones, the Mullen Scales of Early Learning⁵, and the Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument⁶.



Catholic Relief Services
228 W. Lexington Street
Baltimore, MD
21201



THRIVE'S INNOVATIVE ACTIVITIES

Intervening to prevent and reduce the effects of maternal depression: Early identification and involvement in support groups has been shown to reduce maternal depressive symptoms resulting in improved maternal sensitivity, infant health and stimulation.⁷ Through THRIVE, CRS Kenya will train health workers to screen mothers who come for antiretroviral treatment for symptoms of depression and support mothers through home visits, counseling groups or referral for further services.



For children under age three, early childhood development activities include encouraging positive parenting practices and nurturing environments. *Karen Kasmauski for CRS.*

Developing systems for community identification and services for children with disabilities: Childhood disabilities can limit access to school or health services and increase caregiver stress and depression.⁸ In Kenya and Malawi, THRIVE will conduct training for community health workers to be sure that this population of vulnerable children is appropriately assessed and referred for services.

Monitoring children through Child Health Days: Based on CRS' *Station Days* methodology,⁹ THRIVE will conduct Child Health Days, or local service delivery and monitoring events. Child Health Days are popular community events that lead by example in demonstrating the importance of focusing on children's holistic needs.

For more information about THRIVE and CRS' activities in early childhood development contact HealthUnit@crs.org or look for additional resources on CRS' work with vulnerable children and early childhood development at www.crsprogramquality.org.

¹ Sally Grantham-McGregor, Yin Bun Cheung, S. Cueto, Paul Glewwe, L. Richter, Barbara Strupp, and the International Child Development Steering Group, "Development potential in the first five years for children in developing countries," *The Lancet* 369 (2007): 60-70.

² "FAQs: Early Childhood Development," *The World Bank*, last modified July 2010, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTAFRREGTOPEUCATION/Resources/444707-1291071725351/ECCD-factsheet-final.pdf>.

³ Susan P. Walker, Theodore D. Wachs, Sally Grantham-McGregor, et. al., "Inequality in early childhood: risk and protective factors for early childhood development." *The Lancet* (2011), doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736 (11)60555-2.

⁴ The Comprehensive Checklist is part of The Essential Package developed by The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and available at <http://www.ovcsupport.net/files/7%20Comprehensive%20Checklist%20Final.pdf>

⁵ The Mullen Scales of Early Learning is a diagnostic assessment of five scales of childhood development that is available from Pearson: <http://psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=PAa11150>

⁶ The Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument is a tool developed by CRS to measure nine capacity areas of partner organizations and is available at <http://www.crsprogramquality.org/storage/pubs/partnership/Chapter%202%20Holistic%20Organizational%20Capacity%20Assessment%20HOCAl.pdf>

⁷ Susan P. Walker, Theodore D. Wachs, Sally Grantham-McGregor, et. al., "Inequality in early childhood: risk and protective factors for early childhood development." *The Lancet* (2011), doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736 (11)60555-2.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ More information about the Station Days approach is available at www.crsprogramquality.org.