



## Chance for Childhood – Technical Capacity Overview ECD

Chance for Childhood is an award-winning charity working in Africa to support the most vulnerable children. Our vision is of a world where no child is forgotten.

Chance for Childhood works with and strengthens the capacity of **African visionary community-based organisations** to implement **effective, locally-relevant projects**. This enables us to focus on **'hard to reach' children**, both in terms of their complex needs (e.g. street children with learning difficulties) and location (e.g. urban violent slums or remote rural areas).

At Chance for Childhood (CfC), one of our prioritised areas of work is in inclusive education. We strongly believe in the benefits of inclusion to create an environment that is accepting, nurturing, and responsive for all. Inclusive learning and development is one of the key prerequisites to fostering an inclusive society and we believe that promoting inclusion and tailored teaching needs to start as early as when a child is conceived.

Specifically, the first 1,000 days are the most important in a child's life. It is during this period that the brain grows fastest and is most responsive to the outside world. Early childhood is therefore the most rapid period of development in a human life. As such, what happens or does not happen at this stage affects one's life, survival and productivity in adulthood. This is particularly critical for children with disabilities (CwD), who are often subject to stigma, neglect, and are at high risk of being excluded from early care and education. There is therefore an urgency to ensure that adequate provisions are made for all children to access quality ECD services, and in turn have the best start possible in life.

CfC has track record in the following strategic areas:

### Identification of CwD aged 0-3 years old

Under a current partnership with UNICEF Rwanda, CfC has been leading the identification of children between 0-8 years old who might be at risk of developmental delays or have a disability. Through numerous consultations with key local and national stakeholders such as NCPD, VSO, UNICEF, Humanity & Inclusion, we have developed three screening and early detection tools that enable non-medical personnel such as **Inshuti z'Umuryango (IZUs)** to administer the identification activity. These tools are based on the universal instruments of Washington Group Question Sets and WHO's International Classification on Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF):

- Inclusive ECD at-risk screening tool for children between 0 – 3 years old
- Inclusive ECD disability screening tool for children between 3 – 6 years old
- Inclusive ECD disability screening tool for children between 6 – 8 years old

The tools for age 3 and above measure a child's level of functioning against their hearing, vision, communication/comprehension, learning, mobility and emotions, and can generate disaggregated data for robust monitoring.

**CfC is the only specialist organisation in Rwanda who is leading on the early detection of young children at risk of developmental delays / developing a disability.**

We have already tested these tools by training 7 ECD caregivers in Muhoza Sector in Musanze District as well as 16 Community Health Workers (CHWs). Feedback received so far indicated that the tools are easy to use and the CHWs have identified 31 young CwD who have never been identified before in the community. We are in the process of training a further 60 enumerators across 20 districts in Rwanda on these screening tools. We are in the position to also roll out training to village leaders, most of whom are parents, so they could support the identification in their respective villages.

**The National Early Childhood Development Programme (NECDP) under the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) is currently working with the Ministry of Health and Rwanda Biomedical Centre to validate our tools in March 2019.**

## Parenting Education

Since 2015, CfC has been supporting parents with young children with severe and complex communication disabilities in the form of home-based ECD. **These children have Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Down Syndrome or Severe Learning Disability and are some of the most forgotten children amongst all CwD.** Our team of specialists, including Speech and Language Therapist and Physiotherapist, have designed a family-centred ECD programme that can be easily delivered in rural settings, at a low cost and using locally sourced materials for props and toys, and **cover child-parent simulative interaction and communication skills, play and feeding techniques.** To date, 351 parents and their 195 children have benefited from our Communication Camps. Follow-up visits with 42 families revealed that 98% of families now have more positive attitudes and are more accepting towards their children with communication disabilities; 95% reported to now understand how to support their children; 93% reported that they now have access to support mechanisms and 93% are no longer frequenting hospitals with their children to receive treatment on conditions caused by poor feeding techniques.

In addition, we have created **inclusive ECD home messaging materials (also known as inclusive toolkit for children 0-3 years old) for CHWs and IZUs** to deliver to parents supporting children between 0 – 3 years old. Topics covered include introduction to ECD, developmental delay/disability, child rights, access to ECD services, inclusion, families, resources, activities, support systems and referrals. Under the project supported by UNICEF Rwanda, we are training 70 staff from 7 NGOs working in ECD on this inclusive tool.

Our approach is to deliver training to NGO staff, frontline workers and any other institutions and government personnel using a 'Training of the Trainers' (ToT) methodology. **Inclusive toolkit for children 0-3 years old can guide these frontline workers, including CHWs and IZUs, to enhance their support in the community as they visit parents at household level and deliver targeted messaging on inclusive ECD.**

Outside of Rwanda, CfC also works with local partners in Accra, Ghana to ensure children aged 0-6 years old and most at risk of developmental delays successfully fulfil their cognitive, motor and social development potential. Our 'Learn2Care' project targets street-connected adolescent girls and young mothers living and/or working on the streets of Accra lacking the resources, behaviours and knowledge to provide quality care essential to their children's healthy development. Our approach to parenting education consists of harnessing young mother's unmet needs in health, peer support and saving groups as an entry point to deliver additional coaching activities on nurturing care, including health, nutrition, early stimulation and protection for children aged 0 to 6. Findings of the project pilot, completed in May 2018, highlighted significant reductions of punitive discipline and abuse amongst targeted mother participants, and above-target enrolment and retention rates (up to 38%) amongst the ECD centres supported.

Finally, CfC has delivered **child protection training** to parents of deaf children in Rwanda, highlighting some of the unique risks faced by deaf children and how they can prevent abuse and violations to their rights. We also encouraged parents to practice **positive parenting** techniques in both Rwanda and Kenya.

## Achieving successful school transitions for children with special learning needs / disabilities

In Rwanda, CfC successfully implemented our flagship 'Education, Equality, and Empowerment' (EEE) project across 3 districts between 2013-2017. Over 4 years, using our community mapping methodology, we identified 23,396 persons with disabilities across Gakenke, Musanze and Nyabihu districts. By supporting their transition into 26 partnering mainstream State Schools, we improved learning outcomes for 154 children with special educational needs (over-achieving our target by 214%). Better learning outcomes were achieved through training 417 primary school teachers in inclusive teaching methodologies and piloting a programme of individual classroom support from a cadre of 36 Learning Support Assistants, recruited from the local community and trained to deliver additional support to children with special learning needs. Learning from the project was later incorporated into the Ministry of Education's '**Guide to Inclusive Education in Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education in Rwanda**' (2016).

To support the transition of children to the 4-6 years age group, we have an **inclusive toolkit for children 4-6 years old**. This toolkit is predominately created for ECD caregivers but encourages them to engage with the parents of CwD and continue to provide parenting education. In addition, we have **specific monitoring tools** (baseline, midline and end line) to follow up with children, including those with disabilities, who have transitioned from home-based/community-based to centre-based ECD services. **These tools measure the following:**

- Access to ECD services
- Quality of ECD services
- ECD caregivers' attitudes
- Community and parental awareness and provision of nurturing and responsive care to young CwD
- Nurturing and responsive care practices amongst parents and community members

To date, 50 NGO staff across 5 NGOs working in ECD have been trained by CfC on how to utilise these tools.

## Collaboration and input at policy level

CfC has been recognised by NECDP as one of the few inclusion experts in Rwanda. Over the past year, CfC has collaborated closely with NECDP in reviewing the national '**Minimum Standards, Norms and Guidelines of ECD Services in Rwanda**'. We have successfully reviewed and adapted this minimum standard through multiple consultations both at the community and national level in order to ensure that inclusion is integrated and followed by all ECD providers in Rwanda.

We have also participated in the 6-day workshop in September 2017 organised by Rwanda Broadcasting Agency in partnership with UNICEF, IMBUTO Foundation and MIGEPROF on '**Innovative Communication for Early Childhood Development**'.

Our inclusion trainer has recently completed his training from NECDP for **ECD Master Trainers**. One of the sections was on '**Parenting Education**' which covered positive parenting, responsive caregiving, roles of parents in promoting ECD, male involvement in caregiving, and parental involvement in children's education.