

Untapped Potential of Faith-Based Systems in Integrated Early Childhood Development (I-ECD) Kenya, Tanzania, & Mozambique

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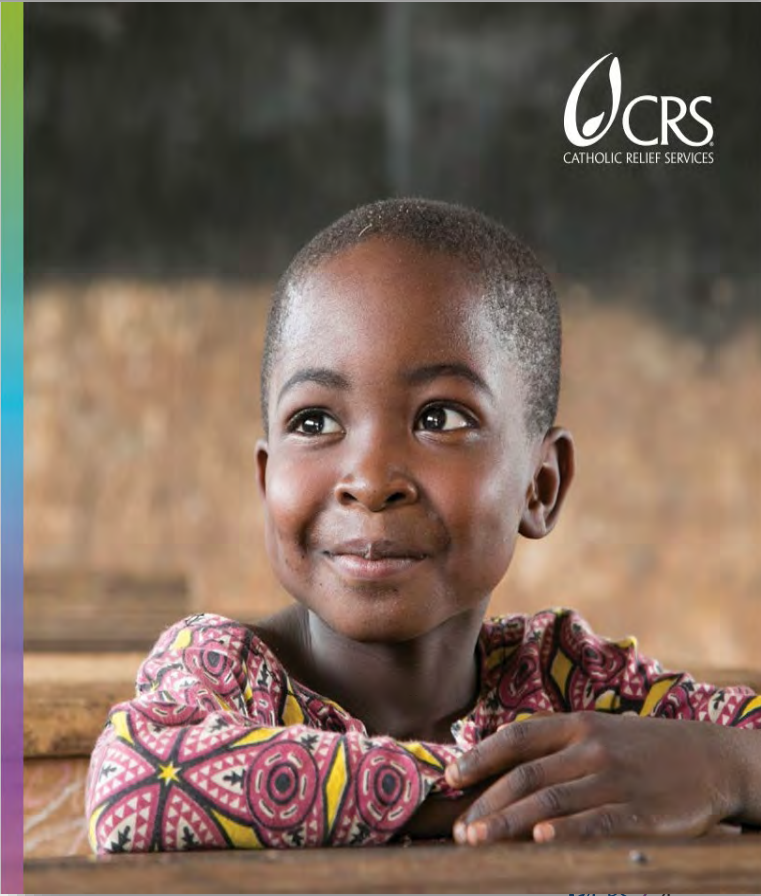
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Partners: International, National, County, & Community



Background and Rationale for Investing in I-ECD & Faith Systems

- Investing in ECD is a strategic approach to **building essential human capital**.
- However, more than 250 million children face developmental setbacks.
- CRS addresses ECD through its agency strategic Goal Area 4.
 - CRS with partners supports-- All children reach their full health and development potential in safe and nurturing families.



Strengthening Faith Systems for IECD Program –Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique

Duration: June 2022 – May 2025.
Donor: Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.
Countries:

- Kenya (Kisumu, Siaya, Homabay, Nyamira, Busia, Kakamega & Vihiga Counties)
- Tanzania (Mbeya & Tabora regions); &
- Mozambique (Nampula)

Direct target: 19,800 adolescent/ young mothers & adult caregivers, faith leaders.
Indirect target: Over 10 million people
Goal: Faith-based systems are leveraged to contribute to improved early childhood development outcomes for children
Objectives

- Strengthen the capacity of faith-based leaders/ systems to advocate for nurturing care
- Strengthen the capacity of partners in Kenya, Tanzania, & Mozambique to deliver quality IMBC & ECD services for caregivers



Approaches: National, County & Community Levels

- National Advocacy**
- Seek buy-in from top faith-based system leadership
 - Develop, adopt & approve nurturing care for ECD advocacy job aids
 - Identify & Train FL ToT for scaling ECD advocacy within faith networks/systems.
 - Develop/ implement ECD advocacy action plans
 - Engage FL at national/ international ECD platforms e.g., National, county assembly etc.
- County/Community Advocacy**
- Identify & train community faith leader champions on nurturing care for ECD advocacy & equip them with job aids.
 - Implement ECD advocacy activities within faith systems & communities.
 - Gather emerging community needs for ECD & evidence for national advocacy initiatives.



Kenya: Achievements at National, County & Community Levels (Endline Report)

- National Level**
- Coordinated faith networks/systems through Inter Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK)
 - Co-developed **nurturing care ECD handbook with religious teachings/scripts** from Bible, Gita & Quran, adapted by Tz & Mt.
 - Trained 30 (18M/12F) National ToT Faith-Leaders to scale ECD
 - Engaged FB leadership in National Events & Platforms for ECD advocacy & Learning
 - E.g., National ECD Technical Working Group drafting National I-ECD Policy Framework –completed- different sectors have to sign- MoU; MoE signed; MoLSP; MoAg before enactments during the Day of African Child hopefully
- County Level – 7 Counties**
- Identified & trained 780 (594M/186F) Faith Leaders in targeted Counties
 - County faith leaders' appointment in the county NCRCED TWG, County Children advisory council, WASH TWG, Health TWG to promote inclusion of faith communities.
 - Engaged in County advocacy platforms & Activities such as radio talk shows, commemorating global international days including Malezi Bora, Day of the African Child, world prematurity and pneumonia day, International Day of Disability.
 - Submitted a memorandum and inputs to the Kisumu County ECD 2023 Bill/now enacted 2023. Child protection welfare policy in Homabay and Busia counties
 - Established breast feeding corners in places of worship such as churches and Mosque
- Community Level**
- Advocated for ECD through press briefings & radio programs E.g., Bulala Radio FM, Vihiga FM etc.
 - Advocated for ECD through Interfaith Meetings & Events
 - Integrated ECD in sermons during church/ mosque sessions



Tanzania: Achievements at National, Regional & Community Levels

- National Level**
- Four (4) existing Faith System Networks
 - Reviewed ECD advocacy job aids (with holy scripts from Bible & Quran)
 - Trained 48 (21M/27F) National ToT Faith-Leaders
 - Engaged FB leadership in National & Events & Platforms for ECD advocacy
 - E.g., NM-ECDP Stakeholders Meetings, National Family Day Events, East African ECD Conference.
- Regional Level**
- 151 (141M/10F) FL in Mbeya & Tabora regions improved ECD advocacy skills
 - E.g., Train community faith leaders on ECD & use existing platform for imparting ECD skills to caregivers
- Community Level**
- Reinforced ECD & IMBC messages during community sessions
 - Increased caregivers' enrolment in community ECD groups through FB advocacy
 - Increased collaborations by FL & Community Health Workers advocating ECD skills at churches +/- mosques events
 - FL increased abilities to integrate ECD messages during faith ceremonies/ event E.g., Maulid, Easter etc.



Mozambique: Achievements at National, County & Community Levels

- Regional Level**
- Engaged Nampula Interfaith Network in ECD advocacy agenda in regional events.
- Community Level**
- 20 (16M/4F) community FL promoters/ champions improved skills to integrate ECD in group sessions.
 - Integrated ECD messages during household visits by laymen, and in church/ mosque sessions.
 - Reached > 500 men through household visits



Challenges



- Slow paced (+) deliberations by faith systems and actors as advocates for ECD, as opposed to worshiping practice.
- Different beliefs in child rearing by faith actors/ systems (e.g. immunization; 3-months old should be kept inside the house)
- Some weak and/ or inconsistent networks
- Minimized possibilities for sustained intervention. (e.g. Traditional worship practice –small villages- do not have a focal point to link to county, national structure)
 - Interdenominational barriers and/or differences.
 - Community expectations for refreshments and transport.
 - Cultural challenges around nurturing care especially on male involvement.

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Key Lessons Learned



- Key lessons**
- Advocacy:** FL & systems can advocate for and influence their governments for conducive policy and financing environment, provided that FL continue to build their IECD capacities through the established IECD TWGs networks.
 - Impact:** FL have the respect and trust of their communities, could have an enormous and sustainable influence on ECD outcomes:- (e.g., pilot study on child outcomes)
 - Male involvement** in the project was very important in influencing male community members to embrace the advocacy project.
 - Radio talk shows** can reach more targets even beyond the project areas.

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Sustainability and Scalability



- Top faith-based leadership engaged throughout the process for **buy in and ownership**.
- Institutionalizing ECD priorities** by embedding ECD advocacy into various county departmental work plans, use of congregational platforms and integrating ECD messages into place of worship activities in rural communities.
- Increased **Pool of Trainers** & tailored job aids for ECD advocacy.
- Leverage existing structures** within faith-based organizations for continued IECD delivery within systems e.g., men ministries, youth ministries, women ministries, pre-marital sessions. (e.g., identification of children with special needs at the household level)
- Use of own radio stations** for advocacy and incorporation of nurturing care ECD messaging.

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Conclusion

Faith Leaders:

Policy. Influenced the development and review of critical policies and legislation which have the potential to sustain nurturing care for ECD practices.

Integrated ECD-Faith Messages. Championed in integrating nurturing care for ECD within the context of Islam and Christianity quoting Quran and the Bible teachings.

Behavior change in disability-inclusive ECD. have raised awareness on key nurturing care components for ECD to promote positive behavior change and positive parenting practices including disability inclusion.

Male engagment. Influenced notable increase in male involvement in childcare, indicating a shift in traditional roles, and further demonstrating the faith leaders' influence on caregiver behavior.

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Key Recommendations

- Strengthen follow up mechanism to the ToT model for better skills transfer.
- Inco-operate quantitative ECD outcomes for evaluation of the project.
- Consider undertaking County co-creation at design stage
- Expand social inclusion plan to include all special category populations, e.g. youth
- Consider translating the nurturing care handbook into Swahili and major dialects
- Expand ECD messaging channels beyond regular radio talk shows to reach the youth such as social media platforms
- Consider the urban or peri-urban home-based childcare providers context to ECD

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Potential Partnership - CCIH - CRS – Interfaith Organizations

Collaborative Opportunities – Technical

- Curricula development and review
- Capacity building/Training of faith leaders
- Pilot impact studies within faith systems
- Resource mobilization (e.g. Proposals; Donor mapping,

Inter-Faith Networking

- Membership, Conferences; Consortium

