

# EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

## PREPARING YOUNG CHILDREN FOR A HEALTHY, MEANINGFUL, AND DIGNIFIED FUTURE

An estimated 200 million children growing up in the developing world will struggle to reach their full potential because they face numerous risk factors: poverty, toxic stress (prolonged exposure to violence or abuse), nutritional deficiencies, and limited access to education. Studies show that quality early childhood development (ECD) programs are one of the most cost-effective ways to mitigate these risks and promote a healthier, more resilient society—yet marginalized children are the least likely to have access to early childhood education. The Global Fund for Children is committed to giving children a strong start in life by promoting, supporting, and strengthening grassroots ECD initiatives for vulnerable children worldwide.

### HIGHER ACHIEVEMENT

Consistent early childhood care and education improves learning outcomes and closes the achievement gap among marginalized groups.

### IMPROVED HEALTH

ECD programs improve children's well-being and reduce the risk of malnutrition, stunted growth, and communicable diseases.

### SMART ECONOMICS

Investing in children's early years yields some of the highest rates of return for society, particularly in disadvantaged communities.\*

## OUR BENEFICIARIES: SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE

From rural villages to urban slums, GFC supports grassroots ECD programs for vulnerable children, including refugees, orphans, children with disabilities, and children living with HIV. Many have been impacted by war; some are children of trafficked teens or survivors of gender-based violence. Our grassroots partners deliver the following critical interventions to these often overlooked children:

### PROTECTION

Safe spaces with nurturing caregivers, to ensure that children feel loved and are protected from violence and hazardous conditions

### EDUCATION

Access to quality education to improve children's learning outcomes and prepare them for primary school

### SOCIAL STIMULATION

Enriching, playful environments and activities to develop children's cognitive, physical, and social skills

### COUNSELING

Individualized psychosocial support to help children heal from trauma and abuse

### HEALTH SUPPORT

Nutritional supplements and meals to promote healthy growth; hygiene education and vaccinations to prevent diseases

### FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Parenting and life skills classes, home visits, and family events to strengthen bonds between children and their families

**Going the extra mile:** Vulnerable children require holistic care. Our partners offer additional support—such as procuring birth certificates, providing school uniforms and paying school fees, and supporting families with food, income-generating programs, and health education—to meet the children's varied needs.

Sources: Brookings Institution, UNICEF, The Heckman Equation

\* The investment return on quality ECD for disadvantaged children is 7–10 percent per year through better outcomes in education, health, socialization, and economic productivity, along with reduced crime. (The Heckman Equation)



## OUR APPROACH: MAXIMIZING RESULTS BY BUILDING CAPACITY

GFC finds, funds, and strengthens grassroots organizations around the globe that are best positioned to reach children living on the margins of society. We develop long-term partnerships and help our partners improve, scale, and replicate their programs to reach more children in need. Our strategies include:

### COACHING & MENTORING

**Our experienced staff provides tailored coaching over a period of 4–7 years to help our partners become lasting community resources.**

### PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

**We help our partners develop culturally appropriate curricula, track learning outcomes, expand services, and improve program effectiveness.**

### TEACHER TRAINING

**We support technical training in ECD and motivate our partners to join professional ECD networks.**

### KNOWLEDGE SHARING

**We form local networks and hold regional conferences to enable our grassroots partners and issue experts to share knowledge and resources.**

### COMMUNITY BUILDING

**We support our partners' local advocacy efforts to boost community and parental support for ECD.**

### RAISING VISIBILITY

**We introduce our partners to new donors and help them gain recognition so they can scale and replicate their programs.**



*Asociación Comunitaria Hilarte / Guayaquil, Ecuador*

## OUR RESULTS: TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

We work with our partners to track their progress and achieve meaningful results. Measurable outcomes for improving ECD programs include lowering student-teacher ratios; providing teachers and caregivers with specialized training; helping children reach age-appropriate learning milestones; reducing dropout rates; boosting parental engagement; and successfully transitioning children to primary school.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

**498** The number of children who received holistic education and care at *Asociación Comunitaria Hilarte* last year. Hilarte's innovative preschool program provides daily art-based education, healthy meals, and art therapy sessions to children with disabilities and other disadvantaged children in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

**100%** The percentage of *Little Rock ECD Centre's* program participants who transitioned to primary school last year. The first inclusive ECD center in Nairobi's Kibera slum, Little Rock provides holistic education to children with disabilities, orphans, and children with HIV. Its services also include medical care, occupational therapy, and parent support groups.

**1,630** The number of children who found a safe haven at *Shobujer Oviyan Foundation (SOF)* last year. By running daycare centers at garment factories in Bangladesh, SOF promotes women's rights, keeps children safe from harm, and provides individualized ECD programming to support children's mental, physical, and social growth.

## GET INVOLVED

*The Global Fund for Children specializes in finding small organizations with big potential and helping them to grow into sustainable resources for their communities. We support a robust portfolio of more than 30 grassroots organizations around the world that are providing critical ECD programs to children who would otherwise have no access to early education and holistic care. To learn more about how you can contribute to this vital initiative, please contact senior development officer Susan Berkun at [sberkun@globalfundforchildren.org](mailto:sberkun@globalfundforchildren.org).*



*Little Rock ECD Centre / Nairobi, Kenya*