



## CASE STUDY: Supporting community volunteers to protect children in Kenya and Zambia

Our country offices in **Kenya and Zambia** are working to integrate child protection into our early childhood development initiative: *Assuring the Essentials of Optimal Development for Infants and Young Children Affected by HIV and AIDS*<sup>2,xx</sup>. Launched in 2013, this program uses a cascaded training model whereby ChildFund staff train networks of community health volunteers who, in turn, provide parenting support to caregivers of infants and young children ages 0 to 5 years affected by HIV and AIDS. The purpose is to help caregivers to build nurturing relationships with their children from birth, providing their infants and young children with the stimulation and responsive care they need. Through home visits, community health volunteers:

- Observe how caregivers interact with their young children and show them how to **discipline children** in ways that don't involve harsh words or slapping.
- Teach caregivers the **benefits of childhood play**.
- Help families to create **safe homes** so that children are protected from injuries and accidents.

- Serve as a **focal point** between families and local health and social welfare systems. For example, if children lack identification papers, the volunteers support parents to obtain birth certificates and other documentation.

Our community volunteers support families in situations of poverty, illness, and household violence, and work with caregivers to solve problems in overwhelming situations – all of which can take a personal and emotional toll. A critical challenge has been supporting and building the capacity of these volunteers, who joined the initiative with very different skill levels, so that consistent support could be given to all families. While pre- and post-training test results revealed an overall increase in participants’ knowledge, skills, and abilities, they were not brought to the same level. In response, we have worked closely with our partners to establish a **reflective supervision approach** that provides structured coaching and mentoring to community volunteers, identifies areas for tailored further training, and helps to keep them motivated and committed.

**“They are given space to come together to share their challenges, successes, and learning. We also have a clear process for providing them with feedback and praise.”**

-ChildFund Early Childhood Development Specialist

**This approach has made all the difference to the program, which has retained over 90% of its community volunteers.** As an emerging good practice, ChildFund has expanded this learning into its work in **Guatemala**, where reflective supervision approaches have been incorporated into parenting initiatives.

While endline results are still pending for this program, qualitative data from community consultations in late 2017 and field visits in 2018 highlight important caregiver behavior changes, including enhanced caregiver understanding regarding the importance of:

- Disciplining young children in positive ways instead of with physical and verbal abuse and communicating with them “more softly, less harshly.”
- Spending more time with their children, especially providing better supervision and playing with them.
- A balanced diet for their children and exclusive breastfeeding.
- Health and hygiene practices such as bringing their young children to the health clinic when ill, taking measures to prevent malaria, and adhering to immunization schedules.