

**Strengthening the Care Environment of Young Children: Working  
with Caregivers of children who are living with HIV using ECED  
as an Entry Point**



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# About the project

- The project is in Mufakose high density suburb which was built in 1961 and the majority of the people are immigrants.
- The area is densely populated and provides accommodation to low income workers.
- The project has established 3 informal ECED centers catering for 193 children .Thirty have been confirmed HIV positive .

# Background Information

- Children are among the more than 1.5 million Zimbabweans who are living with HIV.
- A 2006 national situational analysis conducted by CRS, Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation and the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare found that approximately 165, 000 Zimbabwean children are HIV positive – almost 3% of all children.
- The study also found out that in 2005, of the 72, 000 children under age 15 in need of ART, only 1, 700 children were receiving treatment.

- In December 2006, UNICEF announced that Zimbabwe has the world's highest percentage of children orphaned by AIDS, with almost one in every four children having lost at least one parent to the disease, for a total orphan population of 1.6 million children.

# Challenges faced By Caregivers of Children Who are living with HIV

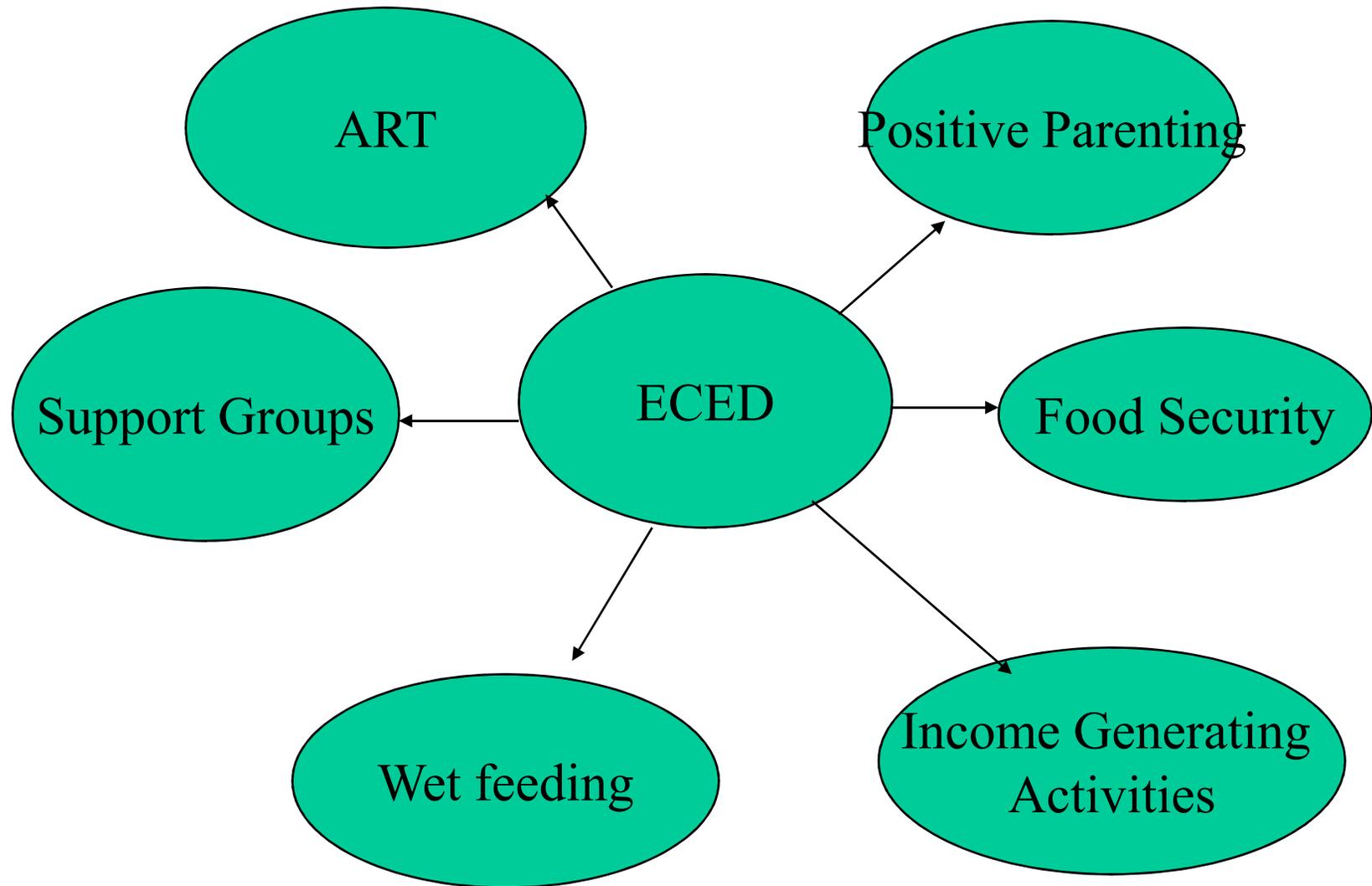
- Caregivers do not have adequate information on HIV and young children . These children have additional needs in the areas of nutrition, psychosocial support, education and health care.
- The children and their families suffer limited financial resources to pay for medical fees.

- Due to stigma and discrimination, children and their caregivers are less likely to disclose a child's HIV status and hence caregivers are less likely to seek assistance for their children living with HIV and AIDS or ask for information on children and HIV.
- It was noted that there is a knowledge gap in which households have access to information on children living with HIV and AIDS issues, but the information the caregivers have is either inaccurate or insufficiently comprehensive.
- Young Children who are positive not attending ECED

# What is being done

- Using ECED as an entry point for strengthening the home environment





# HOW?

1. Community volunteers identify vulnerable children in the community .These are linked to the informal ECED facility in the area .Among these are children who are living with HIV .This gives them an opportunity to mix with other children thus reducing stigma.Caregivers also have time to ingage in other activities .

2. Awareness raising during positive parenting meetings whilst children are at the play centers on the following:

- HIV & children
- Testing
- ART
- Nutrition
- Adherence
- Child development





3. Wet feeding for children at play centres



#### 4. Improving food security at household level

- Food security a major challenge for caregivers thus 3 communal gardens have been established at play centres to cater for caregivers who are lodgers and do not have land .
- Caregivers are trained on low input gardening and provided with inputs to establish household gardens .To date 397 gardens have been established benefiting 1588 children .



**Caregivers are trained on low input gardening**



**Male involvement**



## 5. Increasing household income

- Caregivers identified IGAs and a training in project management has been done. IGAs are yet to start. Some of the projects they will embark on include poultry, bakery and peanut butter making .

6. Strengthening stakeholder coordination in order to provide a more comprehensive care for these children and their families by:

- Linking with the local authority clinics for testing and counselling
- Referring children to Anti Retroviral Research for Watoto (ARROW) where they are provided with ARVs, transport allowances and counselling.
- Linking with organisations that provide home based care for children

7. Emotional and psychological support to parents of children who are terminally ill
  - Establishment of support groups for parents of children who are terminally ill.
  - Organising outings for children and their parents



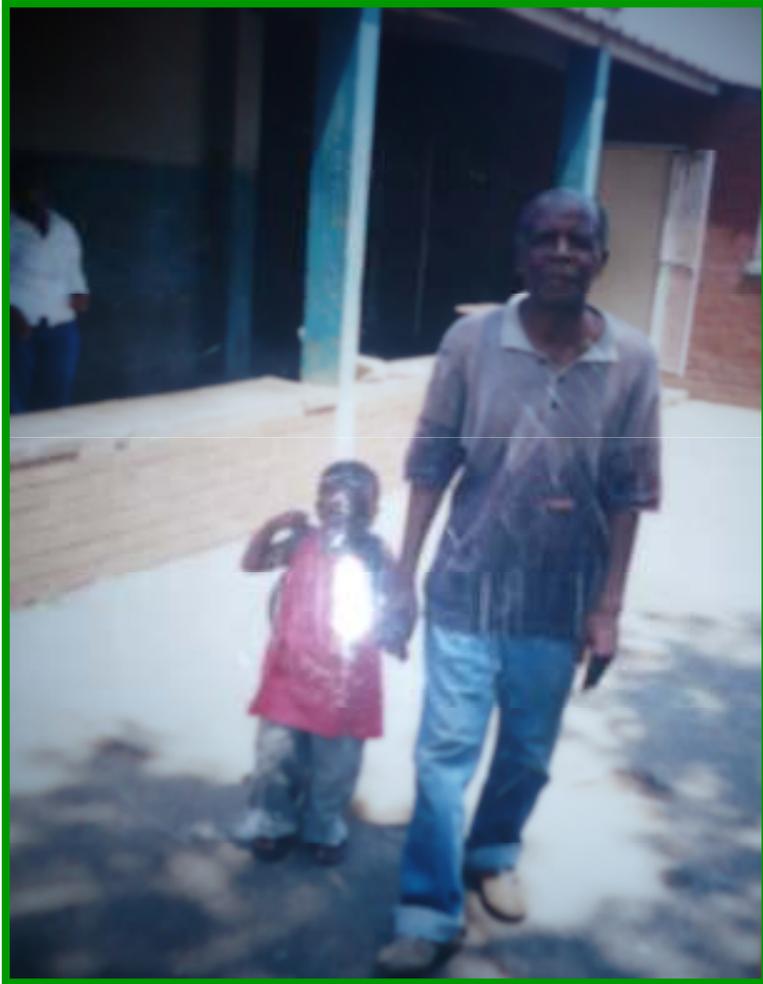
## Organising outings for children and their parents



## Lessons Learnt

- ECD has proved to be an effective medium for reaching out to caregivers of young children and introducing other interventions to improve the care environment.
- Providing appropriate and relevant information to caregivers, helps them to provide care for the children thus improving their lives.
- Community involvement in programmes increases sustainability and ownership of programmes.
- Providing skills to caregivers proved to be effective in empowering them and being in a better position to improve the care environment of the child.
- Networking with different stakeholders to meet the different needs of children results in meeting those needs holistically.

# Conclusion



“I have been given  
all the support I  
need and now I have  
peace of mind and  
am able to take care  
of my  
grandchildren”

Grandfather collecting a child from the play centre