



# SCORE-ECD NEWSLETTER

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Edition 1



## About SCORE ECD II

**Strengthening the Capacity of Religious Women in Early Childhood Development (SCORE ECD II)** is funded by Conrad N. Hilton Foundation (CNHF). The project builds the capacity of Catholic sisters in Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia to expand provision of quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) services. Now in its second phase (2017-2021), SCORE ECD II engages 19 congregations through the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA), the National Associations in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia with activities designed to increase their technical capacity in ECD, organizational sustainability, networking and learning around ECD.

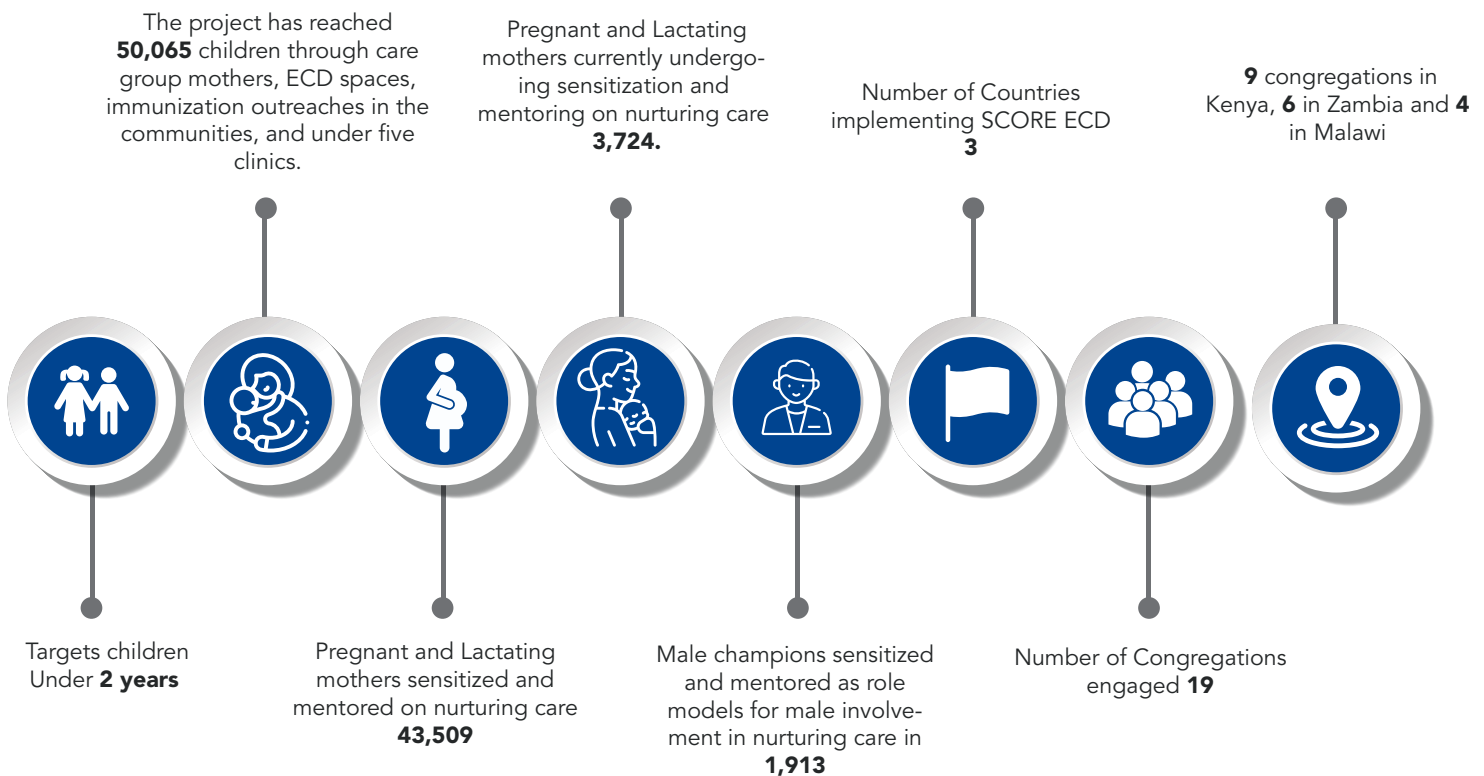
### Project Goal and Objectives

The overarching project's goal is that children under 2 years (CU2) in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia thrive in a sustainable culture of care and support. To that end the project is pursuing three strategic objectives:

- (i). Children under 2 years attain age-appropriate developmental milestones.
- (ii). Sister organizations sustain ECD at national and sub national levels. Crosscutting.
- (iii). Stronger sister organizations assume greater ownership of ECD services.

### Enhancing Sustainability amongst Congregations.

"The journey towards resource mobilization and enhancing sustainability started with institutional capacity assessment. We did a holistic assessment using the HOCAI tool. After the assessment, several gaps were identified, and we immediately embarked on addressing those gaps," said Sr. Mary Agnes Nkatha. "For an institution like this, we saw the need to strengthen the systems and set up an internal audit department to ensure that we do not have loopholes that would lead to unnecessary losses," Sr. Mary Agnes added.



The Holistic Organisational Capacity Assessment Instrument (HOCAI) is a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) tool that is designed to assist organizations conduct a self-analysis of their strengths and challenges, developing an action plan, and improve organizational functions through capacity strengthening. The tool enables CRS to create a standardized framework to help organizations engage in continuous assessment and improvement that will sustain organizational capacities.

Sr. Mary Agnes Nkatha is a member of the congregation of Little Sisters of St. Theresa, the child Jesus. She is also the Chief Executive Officer at St. Theresa Mission Hospital, Kiirua, Meru County. Sr. Mary says that they identified the following as areas of weakness; sustainability, resource mobilization, and human resource.

"After identifying our areas of weakness, we then tasked ourselves to build the capacity of the Catholic Sisters in the areas of Human Resource, networking, and resource mobilization. This was important because, during the assessment, we realised that over 60% of our resources were from a particular donor, and we asked ourselves what would happen if the donor did not have money or got fatigued. Our projects would stall," Sr. Mary emphasised.

The team went through several trainings on resource mobilization, Human Resource Management, Networking and Partnerships. They were also trained on various components of Early Childhood Development to enable them to implement the SCORE ECD project in their community.

"The training did not only target the leadership but the sisters too. Our congregation sent seven sisters for each of the training, who then acted as peer educators. We invited Early Childhood Development teachers from the nearby schools and trained them on ECD to enable them to use the skills in their ECD schools. Later we conducted follow up visits to the schools to ensure that the knowledge and skills attained were being put into good use," Sr. Mary said.

## The Hospital as a Sustainability Venture

The capacity building training enabled the sisters to be efficient and tap into available resources. They also went a step further to infuse the components of ECD in the services they offer at St. Theresa Mission Hospital.



"We decided to include nutrition talks within the health talks to pregnant and lactating mothers that come to our hospital for health services. We teach the mothers on nutrition pre- and post-pregnancy. Our goal is to ensure that when they are discharged from hospital after delivery, they know what is expected of them at every level of their child's growth and development," she added.

One of the initiatives that the hospital ventured into to cut costs is the production of Oxygen for the hospital. This, they say, has come in handy during the pandemic.

"In the hospital oxygen is a big cost centre. With the pandemic, we have many patients on oxygen. Some need between 10 to 15 litres of oxygen per minute. On average, we use 885 litres of oxygen per minute at the hospital," said Sr. Mary. "We recently set up a plant that produces 100 litres per minute to reduce the costs of buying oxygen," she added.



Sr. Mary says that since the plant does not produce enough oxygen to meet the required litres at the hospital, plans are underway to find ways of boosting production to bridge the gap.

### Expanding their Income Basket through Hospitality

The Sisters also assessed the available resources and realised that they could set up a conference and accommodation facility in one of the parcels of land that they own in Karen, Nairobi. The piece of land is located in a quiet and serene place.

"We did a calculation and realised that when we go for retreats, workshops or even conferences, we spend up to KES 3million annually. So, we decided to construct a facility for other sister congregations at a subsidized rate while offering other clients standard rates. The facility accommodates around 40-45 guests and hosts workshops.

They attest that the facility is an excellent source of income following bookings from other organizations, and savings for their meetings. The only set back is the pandemic that has slowed down business due to the Ministry of Health guidelines on gatherings.

At the onset of the pandemic, business slowed down because of the directives to curb the spread of COVID -19. For several months we did not get booking," said Sr. Mary Agnes. "However, as we learn to live with the virus, we have seen business pick up. As an institution we ensure to follow the protocols to keep people safe from COVID while at our facilities," she emphasized.



### Enhancing Sustainability through Agriculture

The congregation also set up a farm in their 23 acres piece of land. Sr. Mary says that the farm was initially not optimally used because it is located in a dry place, and they did not have a water source. The other challenge was that they did not have adequate skills in agriculture.



"We have this piece of land that is currently bringing income for our projects. CRS linked us to the Farmer-to-Farmer project, where we got agricultural experts to guide us. Our team was trained on soil testing, crop rotation, animal husbandry and many more. That was the changing point for us." Sr. Mary Agnes said.

The congregation now boasts of a herd of cattle for milk and meat, chicken, pigs, rabbits, goats and many more. They also own an orchard where they plant a variety of fruits including oranges, mangoes, lemon and many more.

"We practice horticulture, beef farming, goat rearing and fruit farming. For example, in a week, we harvest 20 bananas for KES 600-700 each. This is already a good income. We use the milk we get from our cows at the hospital and in our children's home and sell the surplus to the community," Sr. Mary Concluded.

## Male Involvement in Early Childhood Development

At his home in Siaya County, Erick Omondi is playing with his children in the compound. At the same time, his wife, Emma Adhiambo, is busy in the kitchen preparing lunch. You can hear the laughter from the children from a distance and smell the sweet aroma from the kitchen as you approach the main house.



"In my community, it is believed that taking care of children should be left to women. In my opinion, this is an outdated belief or culture that we should exit from and embrace a teamwork approach to raising children," said Erick. "When parents team up work, their children grow in an amicable environment," he emphasized.



Erick was not like this a few years back. He often left home early to go for work and came back in the evening when his first son is asleep. "My first child did not have the privilege of being raised like we have done with the twins," Erick said. "When we had him, his mother and I knew nothing about early childhood development, and so we did not pay much attention to his need as far as nurturing care is concerned," He added.

Emma says that the lack of knowledge in Early Childhood Development (ECD) meant that their first child was not fully attended to as required. "My first child did not get as much attention as needed. We have noticed how clingy he is as compared to his sisters. He always wants attention and is a bit of a slow learner as compared to the twins. I wish we knew better at that time," she said.

However, they are quick to point out that they are bridging the gap and using the knowledge they have now acquired through the SCORE ECD project on all their children. SCORE ECD - also known as Strengthening the Capacity of Religious women in East and Central Africa in ECD - is a project implemented in three countries through the associations of Sisterhood. The countries include Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia.

Funded by Conrad N. Hilton Foundation (CNHF) -and implemented through the Catholic Relief Services (CRS)- SCORE-ECD works with the community health workforce and Catholic Sisters' Associations to champion and promote the holistic development of children aged 0-2 years, at the household level. The project equally focuses on children with various vulnerabilities, including disability, and children infected by HIV/AIDs.

The overall goal of the project is for children under the age of two years in Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia attain age-appropriate developmental milestones.

We have trained more than 1,900 male champions in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. They are the ones spearheading the process of bringing other males to take ECD as paramount in their households and in the community, said Sr. Pauline Acayo, Project Coordinator – SCORE ECD. In the beginning, the male champions would share their experiences, saying how fellow men laugh at them and term them as weak. But now, they say more men are willing to take up the role of championing ECD in their communities. Sr. Pauline added.

The men are encouraged to support their wives in taking the children for clinic appointments, help with house chores, and be more cognizant of their children's nutrition and wellbeing. Sr. Pauline notes that the initial project plan did not involve the training of male champions. However, as they implemented the project they realized that men were being left behind and bringing them on board would bring about greater impact at households and the community.

"The workload at home has significantly reduced because sometimes when I am washing clothes, their father serves them breakfast or bathing them. Sometimes he takes them for a walk. Emma said. With his support, I do not feel lonely or overworked, but some people in the community say he is weak -not a real man," she added.

Erick now works at Siaya County as a Male Champion encouraging other men in his village to embrace ECD. This is made possible because of the training he has attained through SCORE ECD.

"I have been talking to people in churches, Chief Barazas, and if an opportunity is granted, I also request to speak during funeral gatherings. I sometimes get calls to go and talk about ECD. With the pandemic, things have changed, so I conduct home visits." Erick said.

Sr. Mary Wafula is a Franciscan Sister of St. Ann Lwak in Siaya County. She is a nurse by profession and has also specialized in project management. She works at St. Elizabeth Hospital Lwak. "We start journeying with the mother and father when she is pregnant. We talk to her about proper nutrition, attending clinic appointments as required, the importance of hospital delivery and getting the required tests and immunizations when pregnant," she said .

Sr. Mary says that once the child is delivered, parents/caregivers are encouraged to bring the child(ren) for all the required immunization and are also taught proper nutrition for the child(ren). She says that this is not the mother's role alone. Men, too, are encouraged to play an active role.

We involve the father figure of the child from the time the mother discovers that she is pregnant. We encourage them to accompany their wives to the clinic during appointments. When they come, we make the process faster, so they don't have to take so much time at the clinic because most of them want to go to work," she said.

Sr. Mary points out that they take advantage of their presence to give them health and nutrition talks. She says that the number of men accompanying their wives to the hospital has increased tremendously.

"We have noticed that more and more men are getting actively involved in their children's wellbeing. They accompany their wives to the hospital during the clinic appointments, delivery and after the child is born. As a project, we are happy to see such results," she said.

Through Community Health Volunteers, caregivers are empowered with skills on early childhood development and instilled with the understanding that parents and caregivers play the most critical role in the overall development of their child or children under their care.

Parents and caregivers are empowered to ensure that they spend ample time with their children, play, provide the proper nutrition for healthy growth, take them for immunization and medical check-ups as required, and practice positive discipline by picking up discipline traits. Positive parenting improves a child's cognitive, social, and practical problem-solving skills enabling them to grow up as better people

## Capacity Building in Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation guides projects to ensure implementation is on track, resources are effective. Data is used for decision making, accountability and lessons learned during project implementation are used to enhance sustainability and inform future endeavours.

As part of capacity building for congregations implementing the SCORE ECD project, Monitoring and Evaluation officers from the different congregations were invited to a training to enhance their capacity to use data for decision making.



Bryton Savaya is a Project Officer at the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK). Bryton also serves as the MEAL Assistant with AOSK. He attended a training on M&E organised by SCORE ECD.

"From this training, I have acquired some key lessons on performance indicator reference sheet, data collection and analysis and results logical framework. These are some of the things in Monitoring Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) that organisations struggle with," said Bryton.



"The knowledge I have acquired today will help me to enhance the MEAL systems at AOSK and to improve my work performance," he added.

Bryton says that aside from using the skills in his work, he plans to share the knowledge with his colleagues.

Sr. Mary Liliana is a Franciscan Sister of St. Joseph Asumbi, Homabay Diocese. Sr. Mary serves as the Regional Project Coordinator. She was among the individuals that participated in the M&E training.



"The training this week has been very beneficial to us. One of the lessons I have learned is the need to have a Monitoring and Evaluation plan in place," Sr. Mary said. "It is also important to conduct a needs assessment to establish what the community needs before coming up with a project. This ensures that the projects we come up with are needs-based and stand better chances of success," she added.

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She also pointed out the need to use data for decision making. "We also learned about data processing and how you can have meaningful data for decision making. There are a few things that surround data quality, including integrity, precision, accuracy, completeness, among others" she added.

Like Bryton, Sr. Mary is keen to share the knowledge acquired through the training with her team.

## Photo Gallery

