



**DOCTORS
WITH AFRICA**
CUAMM

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EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

CUAMM'S EXPERIENCES
AND BEST PRACTICES



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)

“**Early childhood**”, defined as the years between conception and age six, is the most important developmental phase of life in which crucial advancements in physical, social, cognitive, emotional and language domains take place. This is especially true of the period between conception and age three, whereupon children attain 80% of their adult brain volume (Martorell R. et al., 2010). Poverty, malnutrition and other socioeconomic challenges often give children a poor start in life, followed by long-term, irreversible consequences. Approximately 43% of all children under age five in low and middle-income countries are at high risk of developmental challenges. Given this overview, scientific evidence emphasizes that investing in early childhood and ensuring universal access to comprehensive quality services is the **most efficient way to reduce inequities** (OECD, 2017).

This is why **ECD** is increasingly becoming a key **integral part of CUAMM's intervention strategy** and services, embracing the **Nurturing Care Framework** made up of five components necessary to reach children's full potential.

NURTURING CARE FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS



GOOD HEALTH



ADEQUATE NUTRITION



RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING



SECURITY AND SAFETY



OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLY LEARNING

CUAMM APPROACH: HEALTH SYSTEM AS A PRIVILEGED ENTRY POINT

CUAMM believes that the health system represents a privileged entry point to support early childhood development. **Integrating ECD into health platforms** facilitates the provision of comprehensive interventions, which are critical to child growth and well-being, making it easier to identify the most vulnerable children and to support their caregivers.

Notably, integration efforts in existing health infrastructure have shown to be **feasible, affordable, and effective**. In order to implement comprehensive interventions and services, we draw on the **expertise** and collaborate with experts and **technical advisors** in the field of early child development, particularly UNICEF, Centro per la Salute del Bambino (CSB), international and local NGOs, Ministries of Health, among others.

CUAMM STRATEGY DEVELOPS AT THREE DIFFERENT LEVELS:



POLICY AND HEALTH SYSTEM LEVEL

- **training** of district managers on national strategies and basic tools;
- **carrying out** joint supervisions;
- **strengthening** the national technical group;
- **supporting** the definition of standard indicators to be included in the national data collection and registration system.



HEALTH FACILITY LEVEL

- **identification** of children with possible delay or overt delay, low birth weight, premature and follow-up in the community for access to check-ups;
- **ECD counseling** by trained health facilities staff in all entry points (RCH, OPD, CTC, Malnutrition Unit. etc.);
- **ECD corner** in health units to show and practice brain stimulation exercises to parents and children, encouraging their interaction.



COMMUNITY LEVEL

- **strengthening** ECD components during awareness-raising activities in the villages (e.g. Village Health and Nutrition Days - VHNDs);
- **orienting** community health workers (CHWs) on ECD and child protection package;
- **supporting** the establishment and management of community based day care centres (DCC).

BEST PRACTICES

NURTURING CARE COMPONENTS

GOOD HEALTH



ETHIOPIA

Establishment and management of **Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC)** Unit and **Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)**; Clinical **management of SAM and MAM** cases in CUAMM supported facilities.

MOZAMBIQUE

Piloting of the **MDAT Malawi Development Assessment Tool** at health units.

TANZANIA

Supporting the hospital and peripheral health centers in **clinical management of severe acute malnutrition**.

Designing and conduction of **KAP Survey** (Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices), and development of tailored **awareness campaigns**, with specific focus on **breastfeeding**.

Home follow-up system for premature, underweight born and children identified with risk factors, carried out by trained community health workers.

Training health care workers on Care for Child Development (CCD) and on the integration of parenting and responsive caregiving activities as part of their routine.

ADEQUATE NUTRITION



Training modules on nutrition approved by the Ethiopian MoH with an ECD component and on **Community Based Care of Malnutrition**; Conducting **cooking demonstrations** to improve and diversify the diet.

Implementation of the Ministry of Health strategy on the **Integrated Nutrition Package**, which includes monitoring the status of pregnant women and children, support for a balanced diet, stimulation activities for cognitive development.

Promotion of the **Village Health and nutrition days (VHNDs)** at community level, and active support to all the services provided through this platform.

SAFETY AND SECURITY



Inclusion of a module on **birth registration** in the national midwifery training, aiming to ensuring children's right to identity; **raising awareness**, also among families, on the importance of birth registration; strengthening the **links between the national registration system and the health sector** by encouraging correct certificate completion and family follow-up.

Implementation of the national **"Model Family" program** which supports communities in adopting observable preventive behaviors against infectious diseases, improving the health and hygiene conditions and quality of child care.

Integration of **Child Protection Package** into the training modules for community health workers and village leaders.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLY LEARNING



Creation of **ECD corners** in health facilities providing **visual, tactile, sound stimulation materials for children**: toys made of locally available materials that can be replicated by households. Other stimulation materials are provided in the outdoor spaces adjacent to the nutritional rehabilitation units.

Establishing **ECD corners** in health facilities and **community support** for the creation of **toys and tools** for sensory stimulation with recycled and locally available material.

ECD corners creation at health facility level and **community support** in making toys and tools, made of local materials, for cognitive stimulation of children; Contribute to the establishment and management of **community based day care centers** for children not yet enrolled in pre-primary and primary education.

RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING



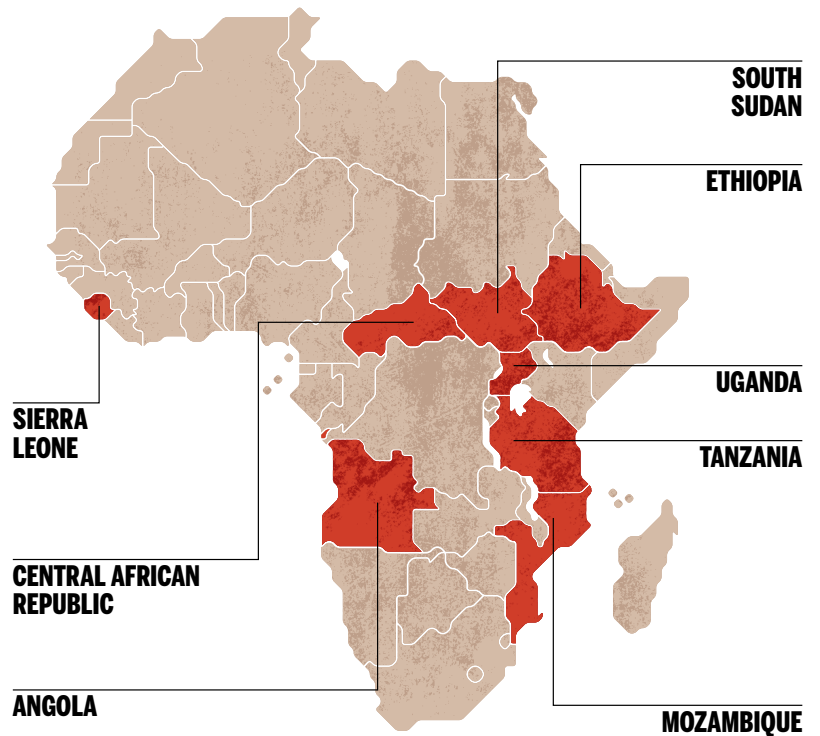
Training of caregivers on early stimulation techniques for the child at the nutritional rehabilitation units.

Support the adoption of the **"Positive Parenting Model"** at the health unit level, in the community and at **"Youth Friendly" centers** for adolescent reproductive health.

Peer-Counselling sessions on nurturing care and responsive caregiving provided by trained community facilitators.

WHO AND WHERE WE ARE

Doctors with Africa CUAMM is the first NGO working in the international health field to be recognized in Italy and is the largest Italian organization for the promotion and protection of health in Africa. With a long-term developmental perspective, CUAMM is committed to ensuring the **universal fulfillment of the fundamental right to health**, strengthening health systems and engaging in training and research. CUAMM operates in **eight sub-Saharan African countries**: Angola, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.



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