



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Group Counseling for Early Childhood Development



**M &E Framework for ECD Group Counseling
Managers, Planners, Stakeholders and Service
providers**

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**World Health
Organization**

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Acronyms

CBVs	Community Based Volunteers
ECD	Early Childhood Development
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOH	Ministry of Health
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable/Agreed Upon, Relevant/ Realistic, Time-bound
SPICED	Subjective, Participatory interpreted and communicated, Compared/Cross-checked, Empowering, Diversity/ Desegregation
ToTs	Training of Trainers

1. Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation

The ECD group counseling Monitoring and Evaluation framework has been designed for regular systematic collection and analysis of information in order to track the implementation and the progress of program against pre-set targets and objectives. Monitoring of the group counseling process will clarify the program objectives, link activities and their resources to objectives, translates objectives into performance indicators and sets targets. It will provide routine collection of data on these indicators, compares actual results with the set targets.

Monitoring the implementation of ECD group counseling will provide information on where and how the group counseling process will be conducted and rolled out to all stakeholders, in consideration of the respective targets and expected outputs/outcomes. Group Counseling Monitoring will primarily focus in particular on efficiency, effectiveness and behavior change in the targeted communities as will in turn provide record of activities and results, and signals problems to be remedied in the process of implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) group counseling approach will enhance the effectiveness of provision of ECD counseling services as well as provide information to affirm the feasibility and cost effectiveness of the approach. It will further help in providing relevant information that can subsequently be used as the basis for programmatic fine-tuning, reorientation and planning. Without monitoring and evaluation, it would be impossible to judge if work was going in the right direction, whether progress and success could be claimed, and how future efforts might be improved.

The purpose of this ECD group counseling framework is to provide a consistent approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the group counseling programme as an alternative to individual family counseling approach that is done through home visits and other service delivery contacts with caregivers. It will provide alternative opportunity for capturing sufficient data and information for reviewing the progress and impact of implementation of ECD interventions. Lessons learned will as well be used to inform best practice guidelines.

In consideration of the fact that individual ECD counseling approach is already in place and ongoing, the ECD group counseling approach results indicators and performance measurements will be mainly at input, process and output levels. This Framework sets out the proposed minimum monitoring and evaluation requirements to enable effective review of the group counseling approach.

2. Reasons for conducting monitoring and evaluation

The main reason of conducting monitoring and evaluation of the ECD group counseling approach will be to help improve performance and achieve results. To clarify further, the overall purpose of monitoring and evaluation is the measurement and assessment of performance in order to more effectively manage the processes, outputs and contribute to the overall programme outcome. In understanding performance which is a key to any given programme, performance is described as progress towards and achievement of results, therefore the need to demonstrate

good performance in turn places demand on monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation of the ECD group counseling approach as earlier stated will focus on assessing inputs and implementation processes. The focus is on assessing the contribution of this counseling approach and other factors to the intended outcome of having children that will not only survive, but grow, thrive and develop their full potential.

3. Purposes and Definitions of terms

All programme managers and implementers are advised to actively use the information obtained through monitoring and evaluation to improve strategies, programmes and other activities. In addition the information obtained from monitoring and evaluation should be used in decision making, planning and the general coordination of any give project or programme.

The main objectives results-oriented monitoring and evaluation of ECD group counseling programme are to:

- Enhance ECD group counseling programme and performance learning
- Make available ECD group counseling information for decision-making
- Support ECD group counseling substantive accountability and programmes's refocusing
- Build the capacities of ECD group counseling implementers in areas of monitoring and evaluating functions in general.

4. Definition of terms

Monitoring

Monitoring can be defined as a continuing function that aims primarily to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. An ongoing intervention might be a project, programme or other kind of support to an outcome.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a selective exercise that attempts to systematically and objectively assess progress towards and the achievement of an outcome. Evaluation is not a one-time event, but an exercise involving assessments of differing scope and depth carried out at several points in time in response to evolving needs for evaluative knowledge and learning during the effort to achieve an outcome. All evaluations, even project evaluations that assess relevance, performance and other criteria need to be linked to outcomes as opposed to only implementation or immediate outputs.

Reporting

Reporting is an integral part of monitoring and evaluation. Reporting is the systematic and timely provision of essential information at periodic intervals. Monitoring and evaluation take place at two distinct but closely connected levels: One level focuses on the outputs, which are the specific products and services that emerge from processing inputs through programme, project and other

activities such as through special arranged assistance delivered outside of projects and programmes.

The other terms that are mostly used in monitoring and evaluation are defined below:

Feedback

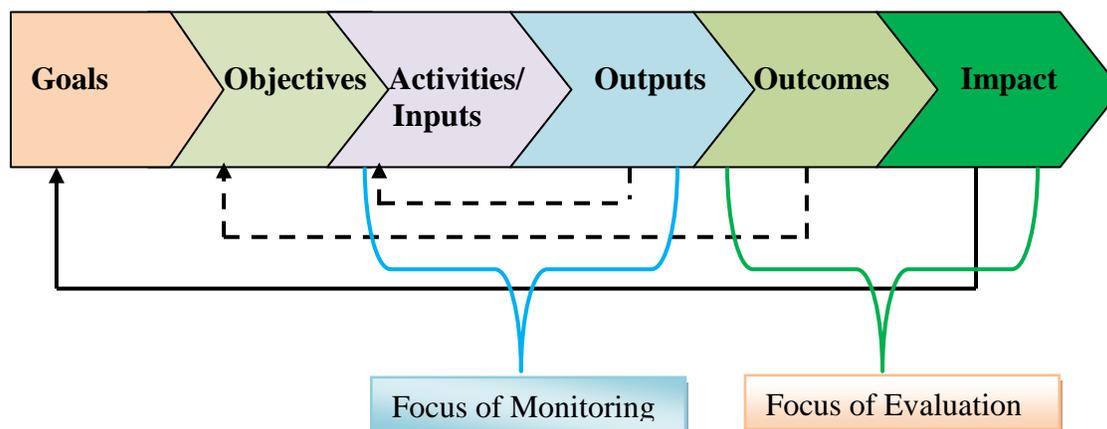
Feedback is a process within the framework of monitoring and evaluation by which information and knowledge are disseminated and used to assess overall progress towards results or confirm the achievement of results. Feedback may consist of findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons from experience. It can be used to improve performance and as a basis for decision-making and the promotion of learning in an organization.

Lesson learned

A lesson learned is an instructive example based on experience that is applicable to a general situation rather than to a specific circumstance. It is learning from experience. The lessons learned from an activity through evaluation are considered evaluative knowledge, which stakeholders are more likely to internalize if they have been involved in the evaluation process. Lessons learned can reveal “good practices” that suggest how and why different strategies work in different situations valuable information that needs to be documented.

5. Structure of Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

It is explained that monitoring tracks mainly the use of inputs (activities) and outputs, but in some degree it also tracks (intermediate) outcomes. It is further said in contrast that, evaluation takes place at specific moments, and permits an assessment of a programme’s progress over a longer period of time. This framework therefore is developed within the premise of the aforesaid. It has to be reiterated that evaluation tracks changes and focuses more on the outcome and impact level. This description is illustrated by the graphic below, which shows the link of the chain of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts with the planning cycle.



It is explained that output measurement shows the realization of activities; whilst outcome measurement shows in what degree direct objectives and anticipated results are realized and that the impact assessment shows the degree in which the overall objective or goal of the program is realized. Without defining clear and measurable goals, objectives and activities at the design stage, M&E becomes an impossible endeavor. This requires the development of measurable indicators which need to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable / Agreed upon, Relevant/Realistic, Time-bound (SMART) that permit objective verification at a reasonable cost. At the same time more qualitative indicators also need to be developed, particularly for the outcome and impact level categorized as Subjective, Participatory interpreted and communicated, Compared/Cross-checked, Empowering, Diversity/Desegregation (SPICED). These SPICED qualitative indicators address more subjective aspects in M&E, but will not be the focus for this ECD group counseling M & E framework. In order to focus on measuring the effectiveness on the approach the indicators will mainly be aligned to input, process and output levels.

The first step is to decide on the scope, recognizing that all the activities described above may be necessary, but that the resources and capacity of the programme for M&E are likely to be limited, in this regard, focusing on specific M&E requirements will be inevitable. Beyond these, a careful balance is needed between investing resources in management activities and in assessing their impact. In addition, appropriate indicators that will be backed by units of information that, when measured over time, will document change must be selected, as it is not possible to monitor every process. A baseline assessment of ecological and socioeconomic characteristics and of the threats is therefore essential. In many cases, unrealistic indicators are selected that are too difficult to measure regularly with available skills and capacity, or that are found later not to measure impact or success.

It has to be noted however that ECD group counseling evaluation at the levels shown in the graph above will be done with consideration of the approach being one of the contributing approaches to the results or findings at these levels. This is due to the fact that the ECD counseling implementation approach is not currently solely through group approach, there are already existing ongoing ECD individual caregiver counseling approaches through home visits and during caregivers individual contacts at various service delivery levels where they visit for other services for example when they take sick children to be seen at health facilities or during nutrition programmes and follow ups.

6. Performance Indicators

Performance indicators are measures of inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, and impacts for development projects, programs, or strategies. When supported with sound data collection—perhaps involving formal surveys—analysis and reporting, indicators enable managers to track progress, demonstrate results, and take corrective action to improve service delivery. Participation of key stakeholders in defining indicators is important because they are then more likely to understand and use indicators for management decision-making. Setting performance targets and assessing progress toward achieving them. As earlier stated for this group counseling

M &E framework the selected indicators that will assist in solely tracking progress and measuring the effectiveness of the ECD group counseling approach are at the levels of inputs, processes and outputs.

Performance indicators being key components in general performance of a given project/programme, precisely they also assist in the following:

- Identifying problems via an early warning system to allow corrective action to be taken before the problem escalates.
- Indicating whether an in-depth evaluation or review is needed.

7. Selecting Indicators

Selection must be based on, a careful analysis of the objectives and the types of changes wanted as well as how progress might be measured and an analysis of available human, technical and financial resources. A good indicator should closely track the objective that it is intended to measure. For example, increasing coverage of caregivers receiving key messages on Nurturing for ECD, the outputs indicator like proportion of caregivers who receive key messages on Nurturing for ECD, proportion of group counseling sessions conducted against the planned would be good indicators if the objective is to increase coverage of creating awareness of the programme at community level. Selection should also be based on an understanding of threats. For example, if some cultural beliefs and traditional practices are a potential threat to a programme, indicators should include resources and mechanisms to be put in place to reduce the impact of cultural beliefs and traditional practices. In this regard it is advised that two types of indicator are necessary:

1) Outcome / Impact indicators (that measure changes in the system (e.g. resource allocation for developing action plans or implementation plans)

2) Output / Process indicators (that measure the degree to which activities are being implemented (e.g. number of stakeholder developed Strategic Action Plans). Note that it may be difficult to attribute a change, or effect, to one particular cause, other factors should be taken into consideration as well. It should be reiterated however that, a good indicator should be precise and unambiguous so that different people can measure it and get similarly reliable results. Each indicator should concern just one type of data (e.g. number of ECD group counseling supported Strategic Action Plans rather than number of Strategic Action Plans in general). Quantitative measurements (i.e. numerical) are most useful, but often only qualitative data (i.e. based on individual judgments) are available, and this has its own value. Selecting indicators for visible objectives or activities (e.g. early warning system installed or capacity assessment undertaken) is easier than for objectives concerning behavioral changes (e.g. awareness raised, community empowerment increased). These become in most cases costly to track as they mostly require survey approach to correct data.

8. Criteria for Selecting Indicators

Choosing the most appropriate indicators can be difficult. Development of a successful accountability system requires that several people be involved in identifying indicators, including those who will collect the data, those who will use the data, and those who have the technical expertise to understand the strengths and limitations of specific measures. Below are some of the suggested questions that may guide the selection of indicators are:

- **Does this indicator enable one to know about the expected result or condition?**

Indicators should, to the extent possible, provide the most direct evidence of the condition or result they are measuring. For example, if the desired result is a reduction in human loss due to disasters, achievement would be best measured by an outcome indicator, such as the mortality rate. The number of individuals receiving training on ECD Group Counseling approach would not be an optimal measure for this result; however, it might well be a good output measure for monitoring the service delivery necessary to developmental delays due to a numbers of risk factors. Proxy measures may sometimes be necessary due to data collection or time constraints. For example, there are few direct measures of community preparedness. Instead, a number of measures are used to approximate this: community's participation in nurturing care for ECD initiatives, government capacity to address risk factors, and resources available for implementation of ECD and risk factors reduction. When using proxy measures, planners must acknowledge that they will not always provide the best evidence of conditions or results.

- **Is the indicator defined in the same way over time?**

Is data for the indicator collected in the same way over time? To draw conclusions over a period of time, decision-makers must be certain that they are looking at data which measure the same phenomenon (often called reliability). The definition of an indicator must therefore remain consistent each time it is measured. For example, assessment of the indicator successful employment must rely on the same definition of successful (i.e., monthly implementation of ECD group counselling sessions) each time data is collected. Likewise, where percentages are used, the denominator must be clearly identified and consistently applied. For example, when measuring children accessing ECD services over time, the population of target community from which children are counted must be consistent (i.e., children ages between 0 - 5). Additionally, care must be taken to use the same measurement instrument or data collection protocol to ensure consistent data collection.

- **Will data be available for an indicator?**

Data on indicators must be collected frequently enough to be useful to decision-makers. Data on outcomes are often only available on an annual basis; those measuring outputs, processes, and inputs are typically available more frequently.

- **Are data currently being collected?**

If not, can cost effective instruments for data collection be developed? As demands for accountability are growing, resources for monitoring and evaluation are decreasing. Data, especially data relating to input and output indicators and some standard outcome indicators, will often already be collected. Where data are not currently collected, the cost of additional collection efforts must be weighed against the potential utility of the additional data.

- **Is this indicator important to most people?**

Will this indicator provide sufficient information about a condition or result to convince both supporters and skeptics? Indicators which are publicly reported must have high credibility. They must provide information that will be both easily understood and accepted by important stakeholders. However, indicators that are highly technical or which require a lot of explanation (such as indices) may be necessary for those more intimately involved in programs.

- **Is the indicator quantitative?**

Numeric indicators often provide the most useful and understandable information to decision-makers. In some cases, however, qualitative information may be necessary to understand the measured phenomenon.

9. The importance of monitoring & evaluation of group counselling

This ECD Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework will greatly assist in implementing ECD group counselling in Zambia by way of using a multi-sectoral approach which will in turn help those involved with any type of ECD projects/programmes to assess if the desired progress and targets is being achieved.

The ECD group counselling M&E framework also will further in other ways like at execution level providing guidance for data collection and generating information for decision making and justification for support, partnership and funding. Internally, the framework will measure results and justify continued funding and provide basis for clarifications for the return on investment of community ECD empowerment efforts to programme managers and shareholders. Externally, the results of ECD group counseling M&E framework will demonstrate commitment to and competence in community ownership, and thus help communities to participate in leading the programme. This will empower communities to make sound decisions concerning nurturing care for ECD and further enhance development of a sense of programme ownership.

For community members and partners, participating in M&E issues provides an opportunity to influence the design and execution of ECD group counseling programme. Furthermore, by providing feedback on whether programs are achieving aims in line with community and other stakeholder's needs and expectations, M&E becomes a powerful accountability mechanism.

10. Pre-testing the ECD Group Counseling Manuals through Provincial Trainer of Trainers,

The main objective of this component is to provide room for further improvement on the developed/adapted group counseling materials. In this regard the materials will be pre-tested in selected districts. This will involve strengthening and validating the documents through incorporation of the inputs and feedback from the participants. The final documents that will be validated and consolidated include:

- 1) The ECD Group Counseling Charts
- 2) The CED Group Counseling Charts Guide
- 3) The ECD Group Counseling Participant's Manual
- 4) The ECD Group Counseling Facilitators Manual
- 5) The ECD Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

11. Finalizing the manuals based on feedback from the pre-test

The objective of this component is to input the feedback obtained from the participants.

Activities to be done will include:

- a) In putting data from the feedback from piloting
- b) Editing and typesetting the documents
- c) Validating the document by the stakeholders and line Ministries.
- d) Printing the documents.

12. Map provinces and identify participants to be trained as Trainers of Trainers (TOTs)

The objective of this component is to identify and put in place provincial core teams of ECD group counseling trainers that will spearhead acceleration of ECD group counseling roll out and scale up in provinces and districts. This process will include the following activities:

- a) Identification of provincial core teams
- b) Conducting of the ToTs

13. Map Districts and identify service providers to be trained

This process will include the following activities:

- a) Identification of district core teams
- b) Conducting of the ToTs
- c) Conduct trainings of service providers

14. Map community groups, community platforms, leaders and identify Champions for promotion of community level group counseling for ECD

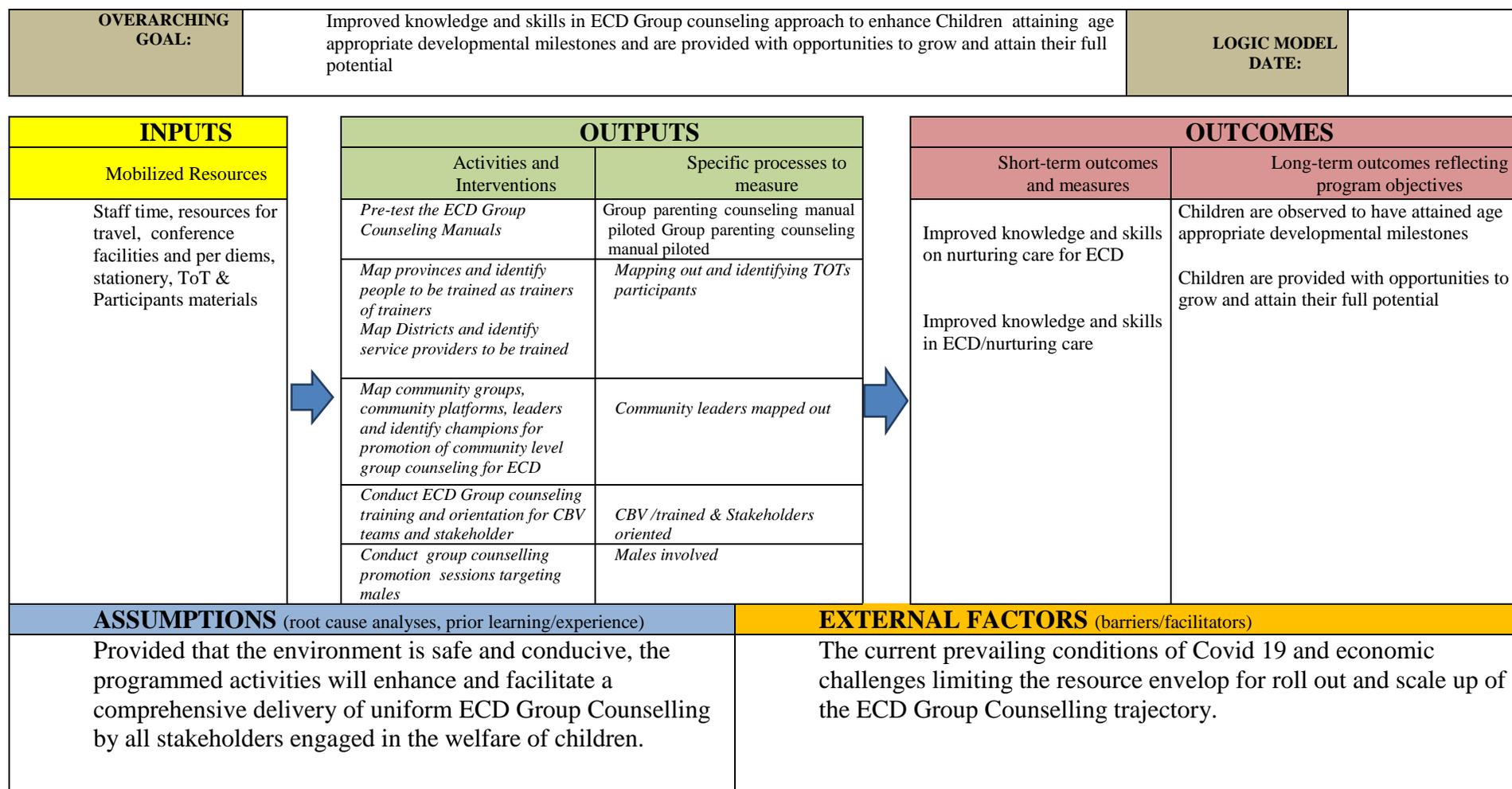
This process will include the following activities:

- a) Identification of community based stakeholders and service providers
- b) Conducting ECD group counselling orientations for community based stakeholders
- c) Identification of ECD champions
- d) Conducting trainings for community based service providers

15. Reporting and data collection

Reporting will be done monthly through existing Management information systems at all levels of implementation. Data reporting will be done according implementation level ECD group activities/interventions being provided.

16. Logic model



17. ECD Group Counseling M & E Results Frame Work

Goal /Objectives: Improved knowledge and skills in ECD Group Counseling to enhance Children attaining age appropriate developmental milestones and are provided with opportunities to grow and attain their full potential

Inputs/resources (What we invest)	Activities (What we do)	Target Group(s) (Who we deliver to)	Outputs (Direct products from program activities)	Output Indictors	Short-Term Outcomes	Long- Term Outcomes
Staff time, resources for travel, conference facilities and per diems, stationery, ToT & Participants materials	Pilot the group parenting counseling manual for provincial ToTs, District Trainers and CBVs	Service providers	Feedback to strengthen finalisation of the manual	ECD Group counseling manual pre-tested		
Staff time, resources for travel, conference facilities and per diems, stationery, ToT & Participants materials	Finalise the manual based on feedback from Pilot	Master Trainers	Group counseling manual finalised and approved	ECD Group counseling manual in place		
Staff time, finances for travel and perdiems, Stationery	Map provinces and identify people to be trained as trainers of trainers	Provincial Teams	List of Provincial Trainers identified & recruited	# of provincial trainers recruited		
Staff time, finances for travel and perdiems, Stationery	Map Districts and identify people to be trained to offer group parenting counseling to communities	District multisectoral teams & Community Based Volunteers	List of Districts Trainers identified & recruited	# of district trainers recruited		
Staff time, finances for travel and perdiems, Stationery, Gifts to traditional leadership	Map community groups, community platforms, leaders and identify champions for promotion of community level group counseling for ECD	Existing community groups	List of community groups Identified	# of community groups identified		
Staff time, resources for travel, conference facilities and per diems, stationery, ToT & Participants materials	Conduct ECD Group counseling ToT for provincial teams	Provincial Core Teams	Skilled ToT provincial core teams	# of provincial staff trained	Improved knowledge and skills in ECD Group counseling	
Staff time, resources for travel, conference facilities and per diems, stationery, ToT & Participants materials	Conduct ECD Group counseling training for district multisectoral teams	District multisectoral teams	Skilled district multisectoral team	# of district multisectoral staff trained	Improved knowledge and skills in ECD/nurturing care	1)Children are observed to have attained age appropriate developmental milestones 2) children are provided with opportunities to grow and attain their full potential
Staff time, resources for travel, conference facilities and per diems, stationery, ToT & Participants materials	Conduct ECD Group counseling counseling training for CBV teams	Community Volunteers	Strengthened capacity of CBVs to provide group parenting counselling support	# of CBVs trained		

Inputs/resources (What we invest)	Activities (What we do)	Target Group(s) (Who we deliver to)	Outputs (Direct products from program activities)	Output Indicators	Short-Term Outcomes	Long- Term Outcomes
Staff time, resources for travel, and per diems, stationery & Participants materials	Conduct ECD group counseling sessions for existing community groups	Church Leaders/Care givers/Cooperatives	Strengthened community based mechanisms for the transmission of group parenting counselling support	# of community groups trained # of people trained within the community groups	Improved knowledge, awareness, attitudes and practices in ECD/nurturing care	
Staff time, resources for travel, and per diems, stationery & Participants materials	Conduct ECD Group counseling counseling sessions for communities	Traditional Leaders	Strengthened community based mechanisms for the transmission of group parenting counselling support	# of traditional leaders trained		
Staff time, reporting forms, registers	Monthly reporting on implementation of ECD and Nurturing care activities	CBVs and Multisectoral Teams	Enhanced data management	# of reports made on a monthly basis	Reports to aid monitoring performance of ECD/nurturing care activities	Improved quality of reporting
Staff time, resources for travel, and per diems, stationery	Conduct monitoring and Technical Supervisory visits to lower service	National Team, Provincial & District Multisectoral Teams	Strengthened practices in the provision of parenting counselling sessions	# of monitoring and supervisory visits made # of Technical Supportive visits made	Improved skills, knowledge and attitudes	
Staff time, resources for travel, s and per diems, stationery, ToT & Participants materials	Conduct ECD Group counseling counseling sessions targeting male	Men in the communities	Strengthened community based mechanisms for the transmission of group parenting counselling support	# of males involved in ECD Group counseling sessions # of male involvement sessions held	Improved knowledge, awareness, attitudes and practices in ECD/nurturing care	1)Children are observed to have attained age appropriate developmental milestones 2) children arprovided with opportunities to grow and attain their full potential
Staff time, resources for travel, conference facilities and per diems, stationery	Development of an observation checklist	Natonal Team	Checklist developed and approved	Checklist in place		