

We contribute to:



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

**One of the expertise areas of Help a Child is Early Childhood Development. What happens in the early years of a child's life lays the foundation for future health, education, and economic outcomes.**

Although the importance and benefits of investing in Early Childhood Development services is globally acknowledged, nearly half of all deaths in children under five are attributable to undernutrition and around 75% of all three- to six-year-olds in low-income countries are not enrolled in Early Childhood Education (WHO, Unicef). Help a Child therefore continued in 2023 with the establishment and strengthening of Early Childhood Centres in our community development programmes but also put more focus on ECD activities in humanitarian settings. Our parenting programme has become a niche in the early childhood development work of Help a Child. Experience shows that starting with capacity building for parents establishes a good foundation for further interventions. Since more donors and governments are interested in our approach of community-based ECD centres, improvement of our monitoring and evidence collection was an important part of our ECD activities in 2023.

### Key statistics:

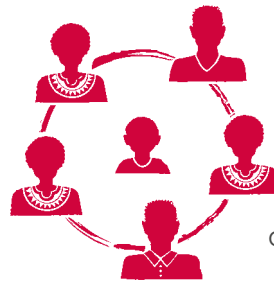


# 60,275

young children (0-7 years) in development programmes supported



ECD centres supported



# 16,623

parents involved in parenting and awareness sessions



## MALAWI

# Building a future for children



**Help a Child Malawi has been investing in communities that are able to raise their children in the best way possible. This has been done through various community empowerment programmes that include Self-Help Groups, training, and empowering of parents, CBCC (Community-Based Childcare Centres) caregivers (pre-school teachers), CBCC Management Committees, and other community committees.**

As a result, the number of community-owned CBCCs increased: Help a Child Malawi constructed three model CBCCs, with funding support from Universitas for two centres and Atos Foundation for one.

These model CBCCs will directly benefit 180 learners, with 60 in Zilakoma and 120 in Mwalweni, while indirectly reaching an additional 900 others from feeder CBCCs that will utilize the model CBCCs for capacity-building and sharing of resources. CBCC management committees (with representatives of parents, early childhood education, primary education, and government) are trained and coached in their process to mobilize and lobby for resources, to create awareness of the importance of ECE (Early Childhood Education), and to monitor the quality to ensure sustainability and access for all children.

### ECDs in Malawi in 2023



**8 complete ECD centres** built with the help of Help a Child

**7 ECD centres** supported with additional construction to improve physical infrastructure

**52 ECD centres** supported with training



## RWANDA

# Growing health and sustainability: avocado seedlings for ECD centres

**Over the past fifteen years, there has been a notable reduction in malnutrition among children under the age of five in Rwanda. However, the levels of malnutrition remain high at 33%.**

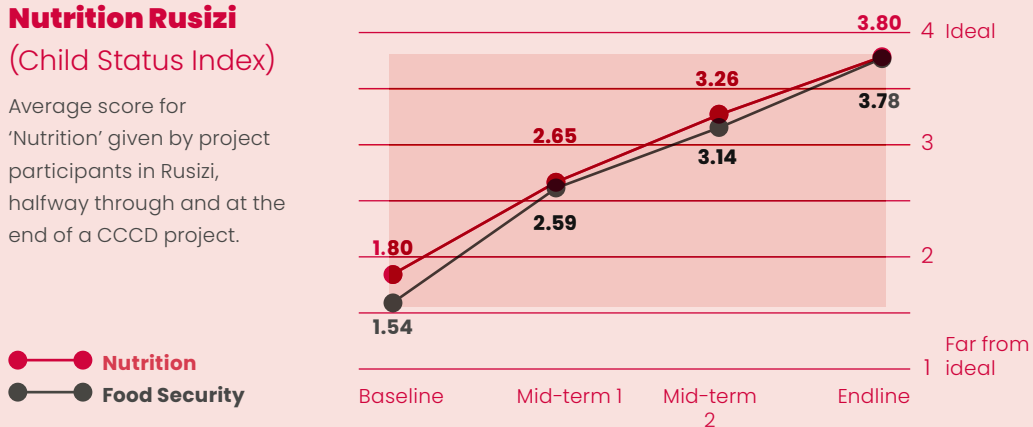
To improve nutrition status at household level and to create awareness of the importance of environmental protection at a young age, partners from Help a Child Rwanda distributed about 850 avocado seedlings via parenting groups to be planted around ECD compounds and on individual farms. The same practice is being promoted among ECD centres with vegetables from kitchen gardens. To

ensure good transition from ECD to primary school ECD centers are often built close to primary schools, the head teacher participates in the ECD management committee and knowledge exchange takes place between ECD teachers and primary school teachers.



### Nutrition Rusizi (Child Status Index)

Average score for 'Nutrition' given by project participants in Rusizi, halfway through and at the end of a CCCD project.





## BURUNDI

# Innovating Early Childhood Development: a holistic approach

**ECD centers as providers of holistic services including education, WASH, child protection, nutrition and health – that is what Help a Child Burundi has been focusing on since 2023. The goal is for every ECD centre to meet minimum standards.**

In 2023:

- 10 centres were rehabilitated and equipped with child-friendly materials;
- 52 caregivers were trained on early stimulation, while committee members received training on ECD management and operationalization using the government manual;
- as a result, 422 children had access to services related to stimulation, nutrition, health, protection, and hygiene.

Nutrition community agents provided knowledge on balanced nutrition for parents and supported them in setting up kitchen gardens in collaboration with the project staff. The parents played an active role in the operation of the ECD centres by supervising children, participating in their activities, and providing porridge, as well as by opening their homes for home-based ECD.

The collaboration between Early Childhood Development centres and other structures has been strengthened. Community health workers visited ECD centres once a week to assess children's health and provided vaccinations and other treatment. As part of the collaboration and strategic positioning, Help a Child Burundi organized a workshop to reflect on the development of a module on positive parenting that is harmonized with the Burundian context. A roadmap was drawn up for the subsequent stages.





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0-7  
years

## Challenging parents to parent

**Raising children is a beautiful but tough responsibility. Like everywhere else in the world, parents in the countries we work in often struggle with parenting, while most of their challenges are very recognizable to other parents. Help a Child provides useful guidance with the set of Parenting Challenge modules. In 2023, Help a Child together with some other NGOs and the University of Utrecht organized an event on the challenges of parenting in the Global South.**



*The 'Challenging Parents to Parent' event was replicated in Malawi.*

With this successful event in the Netherlands, Help a Child drew greater attention to the importance of parenting interventions in development work and strengthened collaboration with donors and other NGOs. After an inspiring lecture from Prof. M. J. de Haan of the University of Utrecht on 'Good parenting' in International Development, Roreen Mzembe, ECD expert of HaC Malawi, gave a presentation on the impact of our parenting programme, 'The Parenting Challenge'. Roreen explained why starting with capacity-building for parents establishes a good foundation for the start of an ECD centre. Experiences from both Malawi

and Uganda show that when the parenting groups are set up, awareness-raising for ECD is done within Self-Help Groups, schools, children's groups, and other community groups. This leads to the development of a community plan for the establishment of an ECD centre, resource mobilization and lobbying and advocacy aimed at the local government.

In addition, other project components focused on food security and nutrition are also linked in order to enable parents to provide good nutrition for their children. During the event, several roundtable discussions took place on parenting of children with a

disability, the playhub approach of ICDI (International Child Development Initiatives), including fathers, and addressing the funding gap. The 'Challenging Parents to Parent' event was replicated in Malawi, where a workshop was organized in partnership with the Ministry of Gender.

**16,873**  
parents participated in  
The Parenting Challenge

9,216 women	5,728 men
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**183**  
Parenting Challenge  
groups trained

