

We contribute to:



Early Childhood Development

Approximately 80% of a child's brain development occurs within the first three years of life, reaching 90% by age 5. Because of this critical time window, high-quality Early Childhood Care and Education is essential in providing children with a good start and compensating for growing up in adverse circumstances.

This includes responsive parenting, good nutrition, health care, and access to Early Childhood Education (ECD). Help a Child's Parenting Groups, Child-Friendly Spaces and ECD centres form the foundation of our ECD programmes and are the entry points for integrating early learning, nutrition, child protection and health interventions.

Highlights in 2025 have been:

- Upscaling of our Turakura programme, and start of the Nkuza Neza programme in Rwanda, a four-year programme financed by the Education Outcome Fund with the aim to improve the quality of 130 ECD centres in Rwanda;
- Improving teacher quality in our ECD centres through a global training on playful learning;
- National implementation of Help a Child's Parenting programme and the establishment of Early stimulation spaces in Burundi;
- Implementation of My Friend in DRC, Ethiopia and Palestine.



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.

Key statistics:



135,527

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

47,519

children enrolled in ECD centres

561

ECD centres supported



1,283

ECD teachers trained

114

trainings given to ECD management committees



33,313

parents trained in the Parenting Challenge



RWANDA IMPACT STORY:
Global training on playful learning

The power of play and of sharing knowledge, something we witnessed so clearly during a knowledge exchange on playful learning in Rwanda.

Together with childcare organisation KleurRijk, Gerjanne van Ravenhorst from Twiga Dukina and Help a Child Rwanda, a global playful learning training was organised for ECD experts from all Help a Child countries.

During the training, participants learned and shared experiences on the importance of play and how to translate national ECD curricula into practice. This is quite a challenge, given the often lack of materials and

overcrowded classes. The event however, brought new energy and confidence to participants, strengthening their ability to promote holistic ECD and to nurture children's creativity, curiosity, and overall growth through the power of play.

Participants were very enthusiastic and indicated that they only truly realised and experienced how a simple game can stimulate all areas of a child's development. "It was an amazing week, full of sharing knowledge and creativity with so many passionate professionals from different countries, and we will carry those lessons back to our own communities."





BURUNDI IMPACT STORY:

Early stimulation spaces

Despite of growing attention for Early Childhood Development in Burundi, still a little more than half of the children under age 5 suffer from chronic malnutrition and have impaired growth and development.

This is influenced by multiple causes: poverty, poor nutrition for children and their mothers, high prevalence of diseases, lack of hygiene and sanitation, and early and close pregnancies.

Recognising the critical importance of the first years of life, Help a Child Burundi, with funding from UNICEF, has established Early stimulation spaces in Gitega and Kayanza. Early stimulation spaces were created to provide children aged up to 5 years old with opportunities for appropriate early developmental stimulation.

These community spaces welcome parents and equip them with essential knowledge on proper nutrition, starting during pregnancy and continuing with recommended feeding practices from a child's



first six months to fifty-nine months. Parents also receive training on hygiene, child protection, and the role of play in supporting cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development.

To ensure sustainability and ownership of the community, Help a Child, in collaboration with local authorities, established community committees responsible for overseeing the Early stimulation space, training parents, and organising play-based learning activities. These committees also play an active role in reinforcing community involvement and encouraging parents to actively promote the well-being of their children at home.



SOUTH SUDAN AND DRC IMPACT STORY:

Building confidence with My Friend

The successful My Friend approach was rolled out in additional countries in 2025.

Training has been provided by Help a Child to the staff of Terre des Hommes and PMU in Ethiopia, and to partner organisations of PMU on the West Bank. Colleagues of Help a Child DRC also attended the training in Ethiopia. The method is now used in DRC to support children who have fled the conflict in and around Goma. Many of them have had deep traumatic experiences.

My Friend is developed to address the need for psychosocial interventions for young children growing up with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or living under violent, war or refugee conditions.

My Friend is an approach focusing on pre-primary school children (aged 5 -7), with a parallel programme for parents. In twelve sessions with trained facilitators, children and their parents learn positive strategies to alleviate



Participants of the training

stress symptoms and regulate emotions. My Friend makes use of storytelling, body-oriented exercises, the metaphor of the volcano and a hare as a role model.

Rebecca, a 7-year-old girl from South Sudan, who used to struggle with anxiety, has learned to express her fears and build confidence through My Friend. Before, she was

very shy and often isolated herself from other children. After joining the My Friend sessions, she now plays with her friends every day. She also shares that the sessions have taught her how to communicate with her parents without fear.



Mon ami Baraka



Parents know how to calm their emotions and teach children how to calm their 'volcano'



Rebecca



Small Steps, Big Dreams

Scaling up Turakura

The Turakura programme in Rwanda, focusing specifically on the young child, has demonstrated strong potential for scalability, as evidenced through the Small Steps, Big Dreams project.

Building on the Pharus Foundation’s earlier investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the same district, the project illustrates how improved ECD services can be expanded to reach the most deprived and disadvantaged communities in Rusizi.

The previous Pharus-supported intervention established a Model ECD centre, which contributed not only to improved access to ECD services, but also to continuous capacity building for caregivers.

Small Steps, Big Dreams capitalised on these achievements and lessons learned. Through the construction and renovation of 12

ECD centres, access to quality early learning services in communities, that previously had very limited educational infrastructure, has significantly increased. In parallel, caregivers’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices to support children’s

holistic development have been strengthened through Positive Parenting groups. Following the parenting education cycle, 1,400 parents transitioned into 70 Self-Help Groups (SHGs), enhancing household economic resilience



and improving families' capacity to meet their children's basic needs in a sustainable manner.

Engagement of fathers

A notable success of the scaled-up programme was its effective engagement of men as agents of positive change. Through the Men Model approach, 120 enthusiastic fathers, who participated in parenting education, emerged as champions of positive parenting and shared responsibility. They went on to actively mobilise and influence other parents within their communities.

A participating father reflected on his transformation: "Before

the training, I believed that taking care of children and household duties was only the responsibility of my wife. Now I understand that a father has an important role in nurturing, guiding, and supporting his family. My home is more peaceful, and my children are happier."

These testimonies capture the Small Steps, Big Dreams impact, where small shifts in men's engagement led to stronger families, reduced conflict, and improved child well-being, confirming Turakura's scalability and community-driven strength.



When constructing ECD centres, water tanks are installed to collect rainwater, helping to mitigate potential risks associated with excess rainfall.

Turakura

This innovative programme is designed by Help a Child to enhance ECD for children aged 0-7, focusing on providing quality education and creating safe environments. Help a Child is the first child-sponsoring organisation to take this innovative step towards community work with a focus on young children.

The name Turakura means 'We grow and learn together' in the Kinyarwanda language, and this reflects Rwanda's strong communal culture and highlights the programme's emphasis on collective growth.

9
ECD centres
built/supported

14
kitchen gardens
established at
ECD centres

451
Self-Help
Groups
supported

17,686 members
in Parenting Groups



Planting trees for kids

During the implementation of the Turakura programme, awareness of climate change and practical action to address it, are promoted through community mobilisation and Positive Parenting education. Community members are informed about the impacts of climate change and supported in adopting response strategies such as rainwater harvesting, soil erosion prevention techniques, planting trees and protecting previously planted trees.

With technical and logistical support from Help a Child Rwanda, Agri Smart Company Limited facilitated the planting of 10,450 agroforestry and fruit trees in communities where Turakura Kids Rwanda operates. These included 3,500 Cedrella trees, 1,150 tree tomatoes, 5,100 Grevillea trees, 100 grafted avocado trees, and 600 Leucaena trees.

This initiative contributes to environmental sustainability and climate resilience while providing a platform for children and families to learn about and engage in environmentally conscious practices.

Climate