



The Malezi II Evaluation in Tanzania

Assessing the effect of video job aids and enhanced supervision and mentorship on CHW counseling skills and approaches for ECD



Barnabas Kampanje/EGPAF, 2020

WHAT IS ECD AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Early childhood development (ECD) focuses on support for the holistic development of children from birth to age 8. Early childhood is a critical window of opportunity as the brain develops most rapidly in the first years of life¹. The quality of a child's early experiences can have a lasting impact on health, learning, and even income. Research has shown that the earlier we invest in human development, the greater the return on that investment in terms of improved social and economic outcomes.

Nearly **250 million children** in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of suboptimal development including over 66% of children in sub-Saharan Africa². Risk factors for suboptimal development include poverty, nutritional deficiencies, inadequate stimulation, maternal depression, family stress, violence, child maltreatment.

WHAT ARE THE MALEZI PROJECTS?

Malezi means “caring for young children” in Swahili. The Malezi and Malezi II projects, funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, were designed to improve the well-being of young children and their families by integrating ECD messages and counseling into health services at facility and community levels of the Tabora Region in Tanzania. The Malezi II Project also introduced new multimedia components to improve caregiver ECD knowledge and behavior and to increase the quality of provider-led counseling.

WHAT DID THE EVALUATION EXPLORE?

The Malezi II evaluation explored the effects of introducing two ECD multimedia components (radio messages and video job aids) and enhanced community health worker (CHW) supervision and mentorship to an existing ECD package being implemented by health providers at facility and community levels in the Tabora Region of Tanzania. This brief summarizes the results related to changes in CHW counseling skills and CHW and caregiver experiences with the expanded ECD package.

- **EFFECT:** Did the introduction of short video job aids and enhanced supervision and mentorship improve the quality of facility- and home-based CHW counseling on ECD and nurturing care?
- **EXPERIENCES:** Did CHWs perceive the short videos to be helpful in delivering caregiver ECD counseling? Did CHWs and caregivers perceive the short videos and ECD counseling helped to improve caregiver ECD knowledge and practices?

¹UNICEF 2014, Building Better Brains: New Frontiers in Early Childhood Development.

²2010 estimate, Lu C, Black MM, Richter LM. Risk of poor development in young children in low-income and middle-income countries: an estimation and analysis at the global, regional, and country level. *Lancet Global Health*. 2016 Dec;4(12):e916-e922

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE EVALUATION AND WHAT WAS MEASURED?



113 CHWs completed a **structured questionnaire** at baseline (November 2019 - January 2020) and endline (May - June 2021). Data collected include sociodemographic information, CHW training, work approaches, duration and frequency of CHW visits, use of job aids, support from supervisors, and CHW satisfaction with their work.



891 ECD Counseling Sessions were observed and scored using a **structured observation checklist**. The 113 participating CHWs were observed at 2 facility and 2 home visit ECD counseling sessions each at baseline and endline. Process observations were also collected as part of fidelity monitoring. CHWs were assigned approximately 5 caregivers to visit monthly. The observation checklist focused on 6 dimensions (see below) with a total of 23 items and was used to assess changes in CHW skills.

Observation Checklist Dimensions

INTRODUCE	EDUCATE	ASK	PLAN/ PROBLEM SOLVE	INTERACT/ ENCOURAGE	RESPONSIVE CARE
Explain reason for session	Explain importance of age-appropriate play and communication activities	Ask about current caregiver play and communication practices	Make plan for using new practices and engaging child's father	Encourage caregivers to practice play and provide praise	Discuss how child communicates wants or needs and how caregivers respond



29 CHWs participated in **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**. Four FGDs, two for male CHWs and two for female CHWs, were held in each district with 6-8 participants each. Discussion themes included perspectives on the relevance of the ECD program to their work, barriers and facilitators to implementing the program, and experiences with the short video job aids.



25 Caregivers participated in **In-depth Interviews**. Discussion points included caregiver perspectives on CHW visits, CHW authority on ECD/parenting, the expected/perceived role of CHWs in the community, perspectives on ECD counseling at health facilities, and experiences with the short video job aids.

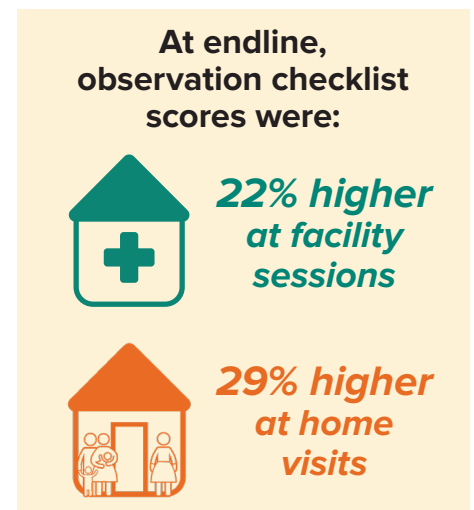
WHAT WERE THE KEY RESULTS?

CHWs' Confidence in ECD Knowledge and Satisfaction

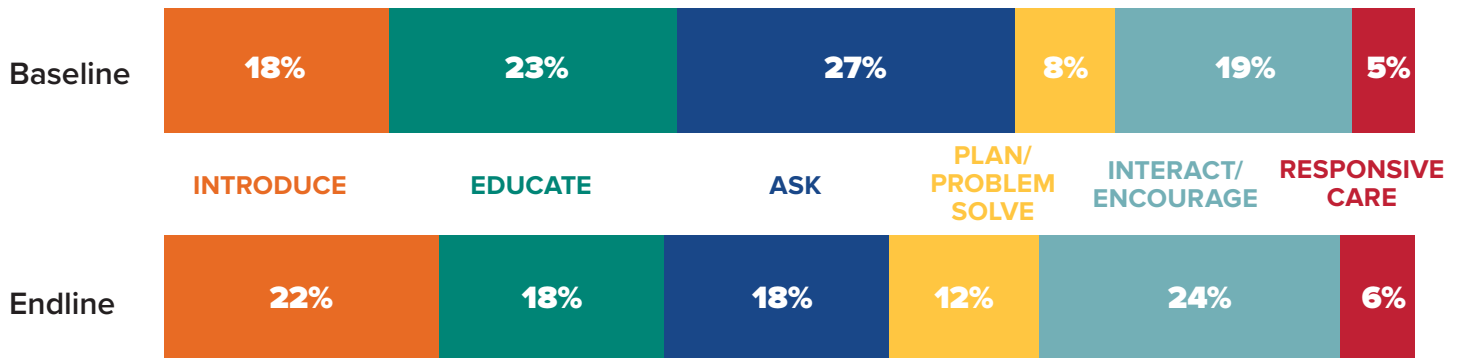
Analysis of CHW questionnaires showed significant increases in CHWs' **confidence in ECD knowledge** and **work satisfaction** at endline. The proportion of CHWs who reported spending "a lot of time" discussing nurturing care and early stimulation also significantly increased at endline (56% vs. 36%).

CHW Counseling Skills

Compared to baseline, overall observation checklist scores at endline were 22% higher at facility sessions and 29% higher at home visits, demonstrating a **significant increase in CHW counseling skills**. At both facility sessions and home visits, scores for the "plan/problem solve" and "interact/encourage" dimensions were significantly higher at endline. Scores for "introduce" were significantly higher at endline for home visits, but remained the same for facility sessions. At both facility sessions and home visits, scores for "educate" and "ask" decreased or remained the same at endline. While some scores for "responsive care" significantly increased at home visits, there were no significant changes at facility sessions, and scores remained low with less than 20% of CHWs scoring "well" at baseline or endline.



Contribution of CHW Observation Checklist Dimensions to Total Scores



As shown above, there was a **significant shift in counseling approaches**. At baseline, CHWs were more likely to focus on asking and educating parents on nurturing care concepts. At endline, CHWs focused more on introducing the sessions and using more diverse, hands-on approaches like encouraging caregivers to interact with their children, planning and problem-solving, and discussing responsive care.

Video Job Aids

The videos may have contributed to the shift in CHW counseling approaches and skills as they helped to better structure counseling sessions around specific talking points. In FGDs, CHWs felt that the videos simplified their work as they made concepts easier to explain and easier for caregivers to understand. **Over 98%** of CHWs reported showing caregivers the videos 10+ times in the past 3 months and **81%** shared the video with others electronically.



Five short videos (5-6 minutes each) were developed by partner, Development Media International. The videos follow Veronika, a CHW, as she visits local families and explains how caregivers should play with, talk to, positively discipline, and praise young children at different stages. Four videos focus on age-specific messages (0-6, 6-12, 12-24, and 24-36 months), and one highlighted expected developmental milestones from birth to 3 years.

“They [caregivers] did not understand well when we were using posters. They [caregivers] do understand better with videos because they see. They say ‘we did not used to understand when you said we should play... now we see straight away when we watch the video. There are things that I am doing for the child, for instance, hugging the child.’ They narrate it. Therefore, the video is very important.”

(CHW)

CHWs also used the videos as a tool to illustrate model behavior. CHWs mentioned pausing the videos to discuss, plan, and observe caregivers as they practiced the modeled behaviors.

“I feel good because the video has made us learn a lot of things which we were not aware of. The video has taught us how to take care of and develop the children.”

(Caregiver)

Father Involvement

In FGDs and interviews, CHWs and caregivers both noted that the CHW home visits, and particularly the videos, empowered male participation. **Significantly more fathers participated in CHW visits** at endline compared to baseline (18% vs. 6%). The videos showed that fathers participating in nurturing care can have a positive effect and demonstrated activities a father can do with the child at home. CHWs also encouraged male caregivers to learn about and practice nurturing care behaviors. **Two-thirds of caregivers said that the father's involvement with their child increased due to CHW visits**, with more fathers interacting and playing with their child, even when they had never done so before. Other changes in behavior included the father now comforting and calming his child, carrying and bathing his child, talking more softly when correcting a behavior or action, and making or buying toys.

“Before, fathers didn’t know that they are also supposed to play with children but they are now aware, especially when they look at the videos and see other fathers playing with their children. They get motivated to also play with their children.”

(CHW)

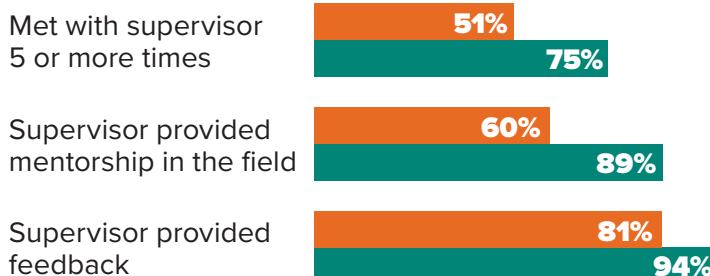
“Because sometimes, let me just say in the past, he didn’t use to play with his children. But when he saw its greatness and how [the CHW] advised him, that’s when he started playing with the child.”

(Caregiver)

Supervisor Engagement

Measures of supervisory engagement and appreciation increased from baseline to endline. Significantly more CHWs reported that supervisors met with them one-on-one frequently and provided mentorship and feedback (see right). **Twice as many CHWs rated their supervisors as “excellent”** at endline (43%) compared to baseline (19%).

Proportion of CHWs who reported that in the past 3 months:



CONCLUSIONS

- The Malezi II Evaluation found a shift in the CHW counseling skills and approaches, and an overall increase in nurturing care counseling performance after the introduction of video job aids and enhanced supervision and mentorship.
- Videos helped CHWs to better structure counseling sessions, emphasize key messages, and illustrate model behavior.
- The evaluation documented improved father engagement in CHW home visits, with qualitative results highlighting the videos as a good tool to demonstrate how fathers can practice nurturing care.
- Supervisory engagement and appreciation increased over time, which may have been an important factor contributing to improved CHW skills and performance.

Additional resources on the Malezi II Project:

- See www.pedaid.org for a second Malezi II Evaluation brief, which presents the comparative effect of two Malezi II interventions on caregiver knowledge and practices.
- To view the Malezi II short videos, see DMI's website: <https://www.developmentmedia.net/project/malezi-ii/>

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