Frequently Asked Questions

■ What is the Essential Package?

The Essential Package (EP) is a comprehensive set of tools and guides for policy makers, program managers, and service providers to support the developmental, health, nutrition, protection and livelihood needs of young children and their caregivers living in extremely difficult circumstances. Tools are designed to support the age-specific and developmental needs of young children who are without appropriate care, affected or infected by HIV/AIDS, and risk never achieving their developmental potential. The EP supports an integrated programming platform across 5 key areas: health, food & nutrition, care & development, rights & protection, and economic strengthening.

■ What is the evidence behind the Essential Package?

Emerging data from studies on the impact of HIV on infected and affected children show detrimental effects on mortality, health, cognitive development, and emotional adjustment. It is clear from research that integrated and age appropriate programming for young children affected by HIV and AIDS (CABA) is needed to promote their optimal development. Moreover, the evidence also concludes that to effectively reach these children, we must also support their caregivers. While most African countries have proactively undertaken initiatives to develop quality standards on services for CABA, these standards generally do not take into account children's different needs by age and stage of development. Similarly many early childhood development (ECD) programs do not adequately address the special education, health, and psychosocial needs of CABA or reach children outside of centers. While the EP is designed to be HIV-sensitive, early evidence shows that the tools can be used for all vulnerable children irrespective of cause. A rigorous study is currently being conducted in Malawi. Results from this study will provide the evidence-base for the impact of the EP on child development and protection outcomes and caregiver wellbeing.

■ What are the specific components of the EP?

The EP provides guidelines and tools to address these gaps in current models and improve delivery of services of vulnerable children at home or via other points of service.

1. **A literature review** that provides the rationale for mainstreaming ECD into programming for CABA and providing needed care for caregivers;
2. **A Framework for Action** that highlights the critical needs of young children and their caregivers living in adversity and potentially affected by HIV and AIDS, poverty, and social isolation, with recommended actions to meet these needs in the areas of care and development, health, nutrition, child rights/protection, and family livelihoods;
3. **A Toolkit** to support the integration of ECD programming into programs targeting young, vulnerable children and their caregivers, volunteer and program staff guides, evaluation tools and other pertinent information for program design and implementation; and
4. **eLearning modules** that correspond to EP training and engage those involved in ECD and/or vulnerable children programs, including practitioners, academic audiences, and all those who plan, manage, implement, and support programs.

■ How can I access the eLearning modules?

With support and technical guidance from PEPFAR/USAID, Save the Children and CARE, in collaboration with Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs' Knowledge for Health (K4Health) Project, launched a six module eLearning certificate program on Early Childhood Development for vulnerable populations. These modules are a compliment to the EP and can be accessed by logging onto: www.globalhealthlearning.org. Once registered, you can work through each of the six courses, completing knowledge checks, and earn a certificate of completion.

■ What are the age ranges that the EP targets?

There is good evidence that an ages and stages approach to addressing the needs of OVC – looking at age-specific needs and responses – is an appropriate strategy. The EP is broken into distinct age/developmental stages 0-8 and designed to address these age specific needs, which are often overshadowed in programs that collapse children across all ages. Specific age groups include:

Prenatal to Birth	Birth to <3 Years	3 to < 6 Years	6 to 8 Years

◼ Who is the end-user for the EP?
Policy Makers, CABA/ECD Program Managers, and Volunteers/Home Visitors.

◼ Which tools are included in the Essential Package?

Essential	**A Framework for Action**	Highlights the critical needs of young children and their caregivers within an HIV/AIDS context and the essential actions at the volunteer level to address these needs.
	Situational Analysis	Provides guidance on how to map the local resources specific to ECD and CABA and services that are currently available within a community as well as identify gaps and potential solutions.
	Baseline/Endline Questionnaire (Comprehensive Checklist)	Used to collect quantitative data in order to track changes over time. The checklist identifies barriers, opportunities and assets that are available in a household and captures data on socioeconomic status, child status, caregiver status, and the caregiving environment.
	Visual Guides for Caregivers and Children	Pictorial guides to be used by paraprofessionals to provide key messages to the caregivers on the critical needs of young children and their caregivers and suggested actions for addressing these needs. The guide also provides reflection questions to assist the home visitor in identifying the key needs within the household and probes to better understand the household situation.
	Household Care Plan	Case management tool to assess child status, caregiver status, and the caregiving environment looking at the needed actions and documenting the outcome. This tool can help the volunteer to follow up on the concerns that were discussed in a previous visit, referrals that were made, and indicate any major emergency needs at the time of the visit.
Complementary	**Community Mobilization Guide**	Describes the step-by-step process to inform key stakeholders on the new activities of addressing young children's needs and their caregivers within an HIV and AIDS context.
	Program Manager Implementation Guide	Outlines roles and responsibilities of the program manager and community agents as well as guidance around monthly reflection meetings in order to gather data and monitor the volunteers on how well they are effectively using the tools.
	Monitoring and Evaluation Framework	Highlights the inputs, activities, outputs, indicators, and outcomes at the levels of child, caregiver, and caregiving environment.
	Policy Brief	Provides information on why addressing ECD in HIV and AIDS contexts matters, what the research says, policy implications, and examples of strategies for advocacy.

◼ Where is the EP being implemented today?
The EP is being rolled out nationally in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia with planned expansion into Kenya and Tanzania in 2014 with support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, as well as Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire and Lesotho with funding from USAID.

◼ How can my organization be trained on the EP?
Country trainings have been held in Malawi and Zambia and are forthcoming in Mozambique. Save the Children also provides on demand training for interested organizations. Please contact Kendra Blackett-Dibinga at kblackett@savechildren.org, Nicole Richardson at nrichardson@savechildren.org, or Colleen Farrell at cfarrell@savechildren.org to be added to our mailing list and stay abreast of regional and country level trainings on the EP.

The Essential Package
©2013 Save the Children Federation, Inc.

Save the Children®