

# LESSONS FROM THE CHILDREN IN FAMILIES PLUS (CIF+) PILOT - VOLUME 3:

Introducing the Hotspot Community-Based Approach to Support Child Reintegration



# PREFACE

## **PURPOSE OF THE LEARNING BRIEF**

The CIF+ learning brief serves to provide partners with a consistent bi-annual progress/flash report with a focus on lessons learnt during the review period. The brief is informed by one on one review between CRS, partners and the GHR M&E consultant. It is hoped that the brief will provide reference information to inform deliberate changes for improved service delivery and case management during the life of the pilot.

Given the goal of the CIF+ pilot, the learning brief is potentially a reference resource for ultimate future replication of the project at larger scale in other districts in the country.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **CREDITS**

Photography:

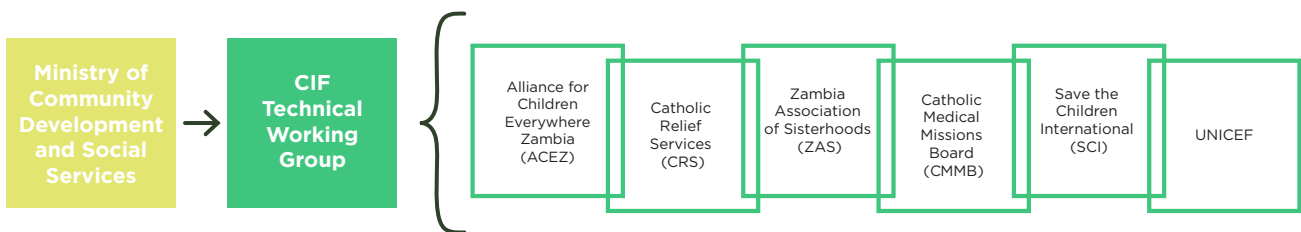
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## BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) leads the Children in Families (CIF) Technical Working Group, a consortium of child-focused organizations promoting family care for institutionalized children in Zambia. The consortium is implementing the CIF Plus (CIF+) pilot, a holistic, integrated approach to reintegration case management. Each partner is leveraging their strengths and capacities towards a collective effort to successfully reintegrate 81 children from child care facilities (CCFs) in Lusaka district into families over three years (2019-2021). See [Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#) learning briefs for more details.



To complement the CIF partner interventions targeting the child and family and to enhance the sustainability of reintegration efforts, the project is using a **Hotspot approach** to address community-level, environmental factors that may contribute to a child's increased risk of family separation. The collective application of the Hotspot approach is completely innovative in the Zambian child care reform space. In this brief, we spotlight the Hotspot approach and promising observations to date in undertaking this strategy.

## WHAT ARE HOTSPOTS?

The pilot is targeting four Hotspots in Lusaka: Kanyama, Misisi, Matero and Ngombe compounds. These areas record the greatest number of children admitted in CCFs in Lusaka district according to assessments conducted by the Lusaka District Social Welfare office. The Hotspots are densely populated, poverty-stricken, and have limited access to education, food, and other basic services.

Through the Hotspot approach, CIF is increasing community-level understanding of child protection issues while recognizing pull factors leading to increased child admissions in CCFs. The project has observed that one child admission to a CCF heightens the risk of more admissions from the community. These compounds also have a great sense of group cohesion which further underscores the importance of community-level engagement to empower members to act as their own gatekeepers to prevent child admissions.



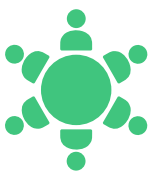
Key activities used to target and support households within Hotspot areas include:



**Community support groups** foster peer-to-peer support among target families and provide a platform to discuss shared experiences and child protection issues in their communities. These interactions provide a consistent resource for target families and support successful and sustainable child reintegration.



**Radio talk shows** that discuss child protection gaps and promote family care bring to light the push and pull factors of child-family separation and the short- and long-term effects of institutionalization on the child, family, and society.



**Collaboration with diverse community stakeholders and local service providers** ensure targeted children receive comprehensive support as they transition to living with their families within their communities. The pilot is networking and strengthening links with entities like local clinics, schools, the media, government offices, and NGOs to provide critical support such as education and health care services.



**Cultural discussions on the implications of child-family separation** secure buy-in and promote family care. Zambian culture encourages care for children within the family to avoid “losing” them. The term “losing” or “ukulufya abana” means the breakdown of family bonds and the loss of opportunity for children to know their family, and for relatives and family members to teach their tribal language and cultural values. These conversations are more relatable than generic messaging or references to global data or literature on the negative impacts of institutionalization. These discussions secure participation of target families and influence their subsequent conversations with peers and community members on the importance of family care.

## PROMISING OBSERVATIONS



### **Strategic community engagement facilitates successful tracing in Hotspot communities.**

Due to poor case documentation, CIF field workers have to be creative in soliciting information from these communities to successfully trace families to begin the process of reintegration for targeted children. The project works with formal institutions such as the Child Protection Unit, Community Welfare Assistance Committee, and the Church, and informal community structures to fish for information on the families. Seemingly inconsequential, anecdotal information provided by marketeers and bus station attendants have led to breakthroughs in family tracing efforts. These sources of intel know their communities exceptionally well and have led the team in the right direction, even in compounds where most roads are not clearly marked and home addresses are not well labeled.



### **Participants act as their own community's champions for family care.**

The project has facilitated peer exchanges between successfully reunified families and families who were more skeptical of the reintegration process. The Lusaka District Social Welfare office noted an increase in the number of families who asked for the return of their admitted children home after such interactions.

## NEXT STEPS

The Hotspot community-based approach is still a new initiative, though demonstrating some encouraging developments. Intentionally collaborative, the approach is building connections among families and community members to promote family care by reintegrating children and preventing primary and secondary separation. However, more data needs to be collected to analyze the effectiveness and impact of the approach. The CIF+ pilot will conduct an assessment and share final observations and learnings in a future learning brief.

Furthermore, the project is continually seeking opportunities to strengthen existing activities. For example, the project is exploring implementation of community listener groups to complement the radio talk shows and encourage discussions on the topic of the week.