



# Kenya Learning Brief

## Reflections on Effective Delivery of Family Strengthening Interventions in Kenya

**Changing the Way We Care<sup>SM</sup> is working to catalyze a global movement that puts families first and puts an end to the institutionalization of children. We believe that children thrive best in safe and nurturing families.**

Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC) Kenya initiated its work in Kenya in 2018. The initiative works with Kenyan national and county governments as well as non-government partners to promote the three core components of care reform as highlighted in Kenya's [National Care Reform Strategy \(2022-2032\)](#): 1) family strengthening/prevention of separation; 2) expansion of family-based alternative care; and 3) reintegration and transition of residential care facilities.

Between 2018 and 2023, CTWWC Kenya supported families in three situations:

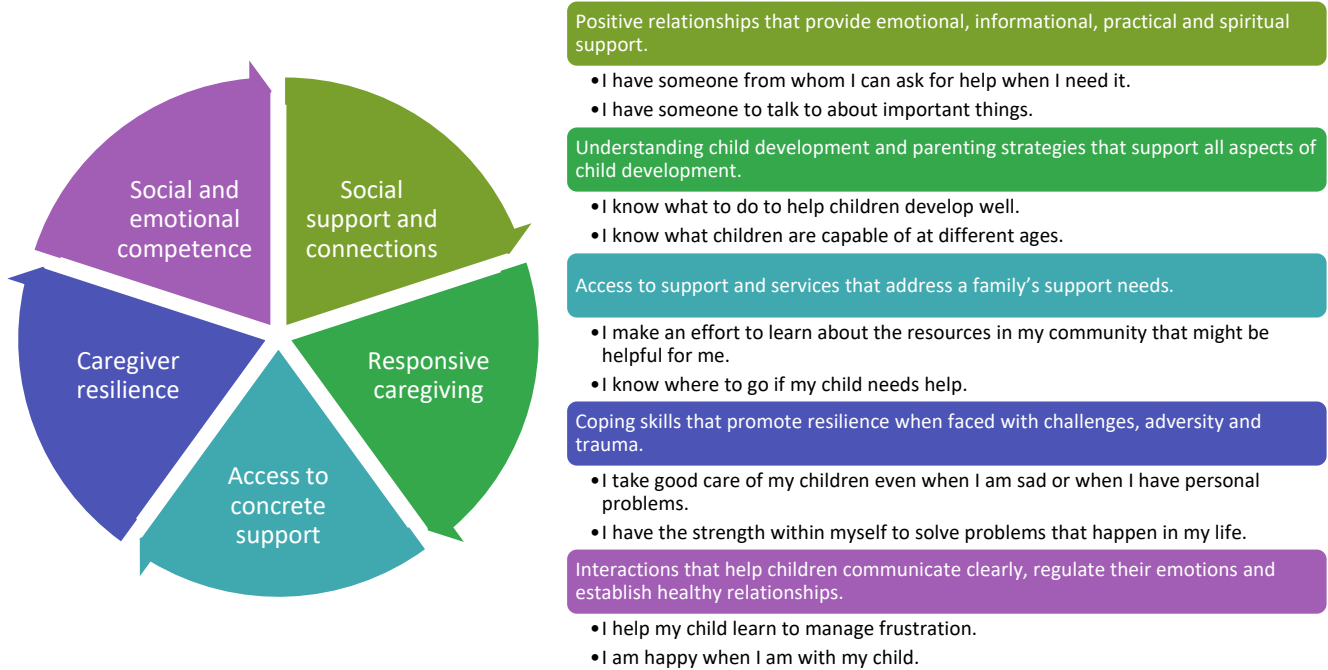
1. Families in the process of reuniting with their children.
2. Families providing family-based alternative care, such as kinship care, Kafaalah or foster care.
3. Families presenting a risk of separation.

The family strengthening approach provided by CTWWC, and partners helped these families by providing a package of interventions and support through direct service provision or referrals to existing resources.

### *CTWWC's family strengthening approach*

CTWWC works with children and families to help them recognize their own strengths, find needed support, access and utilize resources and services, and develop their capacities for providing safe, nurturing family care. Our goal is to build on and strengthen families' existing resources and resilience.

Figure 1: CTWWC’s family strengthening framework: domains (segments of circle), outcomes (rectangles) and indicators (bullet points)



The CTWWC family strengthening approach promotes **five protective factors** (figure 1) that enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes and reduce the likelihood of negative consequences when a family is exposed to risks or shocks.

In 2023, a household survey was conducted which included families that had received case management support for reintegration of children and were identified as at risk of primary child-family separation. These families received individualized or group-based support. The survey findings indicated that caregivers greatly appreciated the services and support provided by CTWWC through the social service workforce. Home visits by volunteer case managers were the most appreciated, with a 93% approval rating, followed by positive parenting training and support at 88%. These findings confirm that the capacity strengthening approaches used by CTWWC have helped create a strong, efficient and effective workforce delivering high-quality and relevant services. The survey also showed a strong correlation between positive protective factors amongst caregivers and positive well-being amongst children. This highlights the importance of strengthening protective factors.

In 2024, after five years of implementing family strengthening, CTWWC conducted a series of participatory reflection sessions with caseworkers and case managers across four demonstration counties and applied the findings of a desk review to answer two primary learning questions: **Which social service workforce capacity strengthening approaches contributed to the effective delivery of health strengthening interventions?** and **What is the preferred sequence for layering of family strengthening approaches?**

The purpose was to learn from front line experience, and, by sharing our learning with practitioners and other stakeholders, build a stronger, more resilient social service workforce and achieve positive family outcomes.

### *Learning about family strengthening*

To capture the experiences and perceptions of the caseworkers and case managers who comprised the community-level workforce, the following approaches were used:

1. Self-reflection and group discussion
2. Identification of common themes
3. Consensus building

Reflection sessions were conducted in each of the four demonstration areas. Feedback from volunteer caseworkers and case managers has been collected in this document and is presented below.

**Changing the Way We Care<sup>SM</sup> continues to strengthen the capacity of the social workforce by encouraging self-reflection to ensure that the workforce utilizes the "Pause, Reflect, Act" process. To the left and below is a summary of the self-reflection sessions done by the community-level workforce using animals to symbolize their roles and responsibilities.**

### *Reflections on work roles and responsibilities*

As an icebreaker, volunteer caseworkers and case managers described the various aspects of their roles and responsibilities that comprise the community-level social service workforce. The exercise encouraged them to examine the breadth and scope of their work roles and articulate their thoughts by attaching animal names and characteristics to each aspect.

**The rabbit is an intelligent, curious and creative animal.** The community-level workforce needs to be well-equipped with the right knowledge and skills. They need to effectively and efficiently roll out interventions such as Child Optimized Financial Education (COFE), positive parenting and the Savings and Internal Lending Committees (SILC) methodology while simultaneously guiding individual participants and identifying and addressing challenges promptly. Matching the right intervention to the right family at the right time calls for resourcefulness.

**The cat is brave, friendly and secure.** The community-level workforce should be friendly and easy to interact with—this is how families come to trust you, listen to you and be open to feedback and information. To truly understand their needs and challenges, we start by acknowledging that "families are dynamic" and that their needs are not the same.



Photo by Khadija Karama/CRS

**The Donkey is hardworking and stubborn.** Family strengthening work requires tenacity and hard work to best serve the families that depend on the community workforce and to achieve project objectives. We work tirelessly, always pushing forward to ensure various trainings roll out efficiently and SILC groups are up and running as per the workplan. The workforce must be both patient and persistent to make sure our assigned families get what they need.

**The bata (duck) walks with his children close-by.** In the work we do, the community workforce needs to be caring and supportive. Our work is to guide and follow up with caregivers to ensure they complete all sessions and that no one remains behind or fails to graduate from trainings. There are families that need a lot of support and follow-up, and we must respond by offering extra time and support.

**The dog provides security and is always alert.** The community workforce offers security to children and families through facilitating referrals and linking them to available services. We strive to ensure our assigned families thrive in a safe environment free from harm. As a community-level workforce, we are always alert to the needs of children and caregivers, and we must ensure these needs are jointly addressed. We respond quickly to any protection concerns, making sure they are reported, and that justice is received.

**The chameleon changes its color, adapting to the situation at hand.** As a community-level workforce, we work with caregivers of different ages, religions and economic status. We find the right way to fit in with each family, all in the best interest of the child.

### *Reflections on capacity building*

In this reflection session, the following questions were used to guide small group discussions: **What capacity strengthening approaches do you recall that helped you do your work to the best of your ability? Which ones were most useful to you and why?** Their deliberations revealed the CTWWC capacity-strengthening approaches that were most effective in establishing the skills base needed for their work roles.

Through an initial brainstorm, participants listed the following approaches:

1. Training
2. Supportive supervision
3. Field accompaniment
4. Monthly/quarterly planning
5. Reflection and review meetings
6. Monitoring visits
7. Provision of training materials
8. Certification of workforce



Photo credit: Clara Mwanthi/CRS

Deeper reflection revealed the following capacity-strengthening approaches deemed most impactful, and the reasons why.

**Training** helped build their capacity and equipped them with the new skills needed to implement care reform-related interventions.

**Field accompaniment** helped build confidence during roll out of new approaches/skills, especially after a training, ensuring that gaps or misunderstandings could be identified and immediately addressed.

**Monthly and quarterly reflection meetings** provided peer-to-peer learning opportunities, experience-sharing and valuable mentorship by CTWWC staff.

**Supportive supervision** was conducted in a friendly manner, which enhanced the supervisor/supervisee relationship. CTWWC staff provided coaching and guidance rather than traditional authoritative supervision.

### *Reflections on sequencing interventions*

In the plenary reflection session, participants were asked to recall the order in which the family strengthening interventions were introduced to the households by the initiative and answer these questions: **Would you suggest a different order/sequencing that would help households benefit and build their resilience more quickly? Is there anything you would recommend ensuring effective delivery of the interventions?** Participants reflected on the layers of family strengthening interventions, specifically on the sequencing of these offerings, and proposed changes to promote optimal uptake and results.

"I am proud to be serving the community as a parenting facilitator. I noted parents who participated in the sessions, and put what they learned into practice, had great relationships with their spouses and children. Through this ... people now regard me as a useful person and come to seek my services."

- Johaness, Child Protection volunteer

The CTWWC family strengthening interventions had been introduced to families in the following order:

1. Positive parenting
2. SILC
3. Ekisa Ministries Finding Value package
4. Skills for Marketing and Rural Transformation (SMART) Skills
5. Life skills
6. COFE

Upon reflection, participants identified the following sequence of approaches as the most impactful and included their reasons for this preference.

1. **Positive Parenting:** Caregivers with positive parenting skills help bring their families together and strengthen relationships.
2. **Ekisa Ministries Finding Value Package:** Children with disabilities and their caregivers must not be forgotten. When caregivers understand their worth and the worth of the children in their care, they develop confidence and feel empowered to participate in community and group activities.
3. **Life Skills:** Children equipped with basic life skills are better prepared to address life's challenges. With these new skills, they can participate in activities that strengthen the family. When the family is more resilient and understands how to cope with change and stress, they are ready to be introduced to the idea of financial planning.
4. **COFE:** Empowering caregivers with financial literacy and the use of a seasonal financial calendar teaches and encourages them to make a budget, set financial goals and distinguish between a need and a want.
5. **SMART Skills:** The SMART Skills training program is a comprehensive approach to building capacity among smallholder farmers, covering a wide range of skills necessary for rural development and improved livelihoods. Caregivers can be grouped into common interest groups where they can learn how various value chains (i.e., local vegetables, poultry, etc.) work and what is needed to create a reliable income stream. These groups also serve as support systems for caregivers
6. **SILC:** SILC training and group formation enables caregivers to save money earned through income-generating activities for the purpose of borrowing a lump sum in the future. The money is safe and well utilized. Group membership promotes togetherness and commitment to strengthening livelihoods that help the whole family thrive.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations offer guidance on how to best develop a strong community-based social service workforce that effectively builds resilience in families at risk.

- Ensure clear, consistent coordination between partners to better support the community-level workforce. Provide a central coordination point for monitoring the roll out of activities designed to support volunteers and build their capacity.
- Use a systematic case management approach to guide the delivery of interventions and services.
- Sensitize community members on the project implementation cycle to better prepare families for planned activities.
- Train government officers on project interventions to enable them to support implementation.
- Ensure that the ratio of workforce volunteers to project participants is manageable and efficient (e.g., 1 caseworker to 20 households).



Photo credit: Clara Mwanthi/CRS

---

**Need to know more?** Contact *Changing the Way We Care* at, [info@ctwwc.org](mailto:info@ctwwc.org) or visit [changingthewaywecare.org](http://changingthewaywecare.org).

Changing The Way We Care™ (CTWWC) is implemented by Catholic Relief Services and Maestral International, along with other global, national and local partners working together to change the way we care for children around the world. Our principal global partners are the Better Care Network and Faith to Action. CTWWC is funded in part by a Global Development Alliance of USAID and the GHR Foundation.

This product is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Changing the Way We Care and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

© 2024 Catholic Relief Services. All Rights Reserved. This material may not be reproduced, displayed, modified or distributed without the express prior written permission of the copyright holder. For permission, write to [info@ctwwc.org](mailto:info@ctwwc.org). The photographs in this publication are used for illustrative purposes only; they do not imply any particular health, orphanhood, or residential care status on the part of any person who appears in the photographs.

Catholic Relief Services | 228 W. Lexington Street, Baltimore, MD, 21201, USA | [crs.org](http://crs.org) | [crspanol.org](http://crspanol.org)