Nurturing and supporting childhood development is a priority for USAID. With U.S. Government assistance, over the past two decades, Zambia has made tremendous progress in reducing the mortality of children under the age of 5, with a reduction from 197 to 61 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1996 and 2018. The USAID Scaling Up Early Childhood Development in Zambia (SUpErCDZ) project provides early childhood development (ECD) initiatives to improve physical and cognitive health outcomes for children between ages 0-6, which are the critical years for a child’s healthy long-term development, productivity, and social cohesion.

Operating across four districts in Zambia’s Southern and Eastern provinces, SUpErCDZ works with local resources, including Safe Motherhood Action Groups (SMAGs) and maternity waiting homes, to establish community-based parenting support groups. These groups work with caregivers to enhance their ability to respond to the needs of young children through topics that include cognitive stimulation, child nutrition, and positive parenting. Recently, the SUpErCDZ project distributed a Zambian folklore book, available in Zambia’s seven key local languages, to caregivers to improve reading skills for children under five.
The SUpErCDZ project also provides training and mentorship to healthcare workers, community health volunteers, early childhood development workers, and caregivers to improve ECD-related knowledge and behaviors in their communities.

**Expected Results**

Through parenting-support programs, SUpErCDZ is expected to contribute to the improvement of physical and cognitive development for over 10,000 children in Zambia. The program will also integrate community-based parenting groups and the curriculum into the health system, supporting Zambia’s journey to self-reliance, and sustaining the impact of the program beyond its lifespan. Data and evidence will be generated on the effect of community-based parenting groups and culturally relevant children’s books on children’s development to inform future programming.