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**National Early Childhood Development Stakeholders' Conference**

**Report**

**Prepared**

**By**

**The Secretariat  
ECD Network for Kenya**

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### 1.0 Introduction: Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya

The Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya (ECDNeK) was formed in September 2015 out of a realization that there was a gap in the coordination of various organizations and institutions engaged in Early Childhood Development (ECD) service provision, capacity development, research and advocacy in Kenya. This was alongside the timely opportunity for enhanced engagement in the global development agenda; being the start of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The founding members of the ECDNeK are Kenyatta University, World Vision Kenya, Aga Khan Foundation (East Africa), Save the Children International, International Child Resource Institute, Parenting in Africa Network, Kidogo, Little Rock, Build Africa, Research Triangle Institute International, KANCO, PATH and Childfund Kenya. United Nations Children Fund - Kenya Country Office provides technical support to the Network. The ECDNeK is an affiliate of the Africa ECD Network. The Network is open to more membership from Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, Learning and Research Institutions that focus on Early Childhood Development in Kenya, development partners, philanthropist and the private sector. Currently the network is hosted by Kenyatta University's Department of Early Childhood Studies

The ECDNeK recognizes the importance of Early Childhood as a critical stage of a child's life that requires a multi-sector approach to service provision for children ages 0-8 years. Towards this, ECDNeK is committed to nurture a coordinated effort to enable the design and implementation of quality and inclusive ECD programmes for all children in Kenya.

### 1.2 Vision

Our vision is to have a society where all children, ages 0-8 years, realize holistic early childhood development for lifelong success

### 1.3 Mission

Our mission is to promote, support and sustain an enabling early childhood development environment in Kenya

#### 1.4 Strategic Goal

Our goal is to contribute to inclusive and equitable quality Early Childhood Development opportunities for children 0-8 years in Kenya by 2020.

#### 1.5 Strategic Objectives

To contribute towards the above goal, during the period 2016 – 2017, the ECDNeK will focus on the following strategic objectives;

1. To influence an enabling policy environment for ECD.

This will be actualized through the following initiatives;

- ✚ Conducting research and generate evidence for policy engagement
- ✚ Strengthening capacity of institutions and stakeholders for improved policy implementation
- ✚ Enabling citizens' engagement for policy implementation

2. To Influence increased Investment and Accountability for ECD.

This will be actualized through the following initiatives

- ✚ Conducting Budget Analysis and utilizing the evidence for budget advocacy
- ✚ Enabling citizen engagement in Social Accountability for improved ECD service delivery

3. To strengthen coordination of ECD initiatives.

This will be actualized through the following initiatives;

- ✚ Capacity development of members and other ECD stakeholders
- ✚ Enabling linkages amongst ECD stakeholders in Kenya

#### 2.0 National ECD Stakeholders conference

The ECD Network for Kenya in collaboration with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology organized for a one day national ECD stakeholder's conference that took place on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at the Kenya Institute for curriculum development (KICD). The conference was supported by funding from Africa ECD Network and the Babycare project funded by Aga Khan Foundation East Africa, Aga Khan University Institute of Human Development, Kidogo and Daraja. The conference brought together over 150 participants from different sectors.

The sectors represented in the conference included; government ministries of health, education, labour, interior and internal security, and children's department. Parliament was represented by honourable members from the parliamentary select committee of education.

County Governments were represented by County Executive Committee members, County ECD Directors, County Education Directors and preschool teachers. Civil society organizations from different counties; non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, and faith based organizations also participated in the conference. Public and private universities including, Kenyatta University, University of Nairobi, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University, Riara University, Mt. Kenya University and PAC University were represented in the conference. Development partners, private sector and United Nations Agencies were also represented.

### 2.1 Objectives of the Conference

The conference was set to achieve three main objectives namely:

1. Provide an opportunity for all stakeholders in ECD to initiate a national conversation on Early Childhood Development in relation to education, nutrition, health and protection.
2. Strengthen linkage between state and non-state actors in ECD by launching the ECD Network for Kenya.
3. Create an opportunity for advocacy on children's education, health and protection

### 3.0 Presentations during the conference

Various presenters from different sectors made presentations during the conference focusing on children's education, health, protection and nutrition. Dr. Nyakwara Begi representing the Vice Chancellor Kenyatta University in his speech pointed out that KU through the Department of Early Childhood Studies is currently hosting the ECDNeK which is in-line with the University's partnership program. He reiterated that Kenyatta University was the first university in the region to start degree programmes in early childhood to enhance capacity building for the personnel working in ECD. As a leading institution in early childhood in Kenya, KU is keen on partnering with other stakeholders to come up with initiatives that will provide trainees with hands on experience.

The Head of Secretariat ECD Network for Kenya Dr. Mwoma in her speech pointed out that early childhood development is the most important period for a child's survival, growth and development. That a child is most vulnerable to the risks of stress and malnutrition in the first eight years of life and that poor development can affect brain architecture and performance of a child in later years. According to her, providing quality ECD services to children therefore enables them become successful in life. It was also clear from her speech that over the years there has been an increase in GER and NER while infant and under five mortality rates have decreased. However, 26% of children under five years are stunted. Hence provision of ECD services require a multi-sector approach as early childhood is interdisciplinary in nature.

Mr. Darius Mogaka Director Policy, Partnership in his remarks observed that it is the role of government to provide opportunities for stakeholders to have national dialogues on issues affecting children's health, nutrition, education, survival and protection. This is because children especially during their formative years of development need concerted efforts to meet their needs. Thus having linkage between state and non-state actors, will create an opportunity for advocacy on issues affecting children. The conference was one of such forums for a joint effort by state and non-state actors to launch the ECD Network for Kenya.

Asifa from Aga Khan Foundation East Africa observed that urbanization is posing a challenge to working mothers who lack caregivers for their children. The situation according to her is worse in informal settlement which lacks child care spaces to accommodate the very young children.

Afzal from Kidogo in his remarks pointed out that mothers in informal settlements are faced with a challenge of balancing between going to work and catering for the needs of their young children. Some mothers take their babies to day-care centres some of which do not have ideal services that may result to negative effects on children's nutrition and health. He maintained that the ECD Network for Kenya as a consortium in collaboration with other stakeholders stands a better chance of tackling issues related to child care. He further argued that while the basic education act 2013 advocates for pre-primary education for children ages 4-5 years, there is no legal framework addressing the simulation and early learning needs for children aged 0-3 years which

makes it difficult for these children to have a conducive stimulating environment especially those living in informal settlements.

Honourable Kiso in his speech identified funding in ECD as a critical component of enhancing provision of quality services. According to him, using a multi-sector approach in tackling challenges experienced by young children could be the best way of promoting holistic child development.

Dr. Nyamai from Ministry of Health in her remarks revealed that out of 1.5 million children born per year, 22 per 1000 births die before the first month while 200,000 are preterm; 78,000 children die before their fifth birthday. According to her, there is need for work environments to offer breastfeeding spaces to allow mothers breast feed and bond with their babies while they are still young. She further revealed that breastfeeding and vaccination are critical in improving children's health. The biggest challenges in health however are utilization, access and barriers to quality health. Dr. Nyamai encouraged participants to encourage parents to use the Mother and Child Handbook to gain more insights on mothers and children's health. She identified the following as critical for the child's survival: immunizations, vaccinations, and treatment of common childhood diseases such as diarrhoea.

Dr. Pablo from UNICEF Regional Office in his presentation pointed out that the effects of challenges such as uncoordinated ECD services, lack of nurturing family support systems and uncoordinated action at both national and county levels may result to negative effects on child development. According to him there is need for nurturing care for all children. He also pointed out that 2017 being an election year, there is need for various actors in ECD to push for children's agenda in the political manifestos.

Mr. Darius Mogaka in reading the speech for the Principal Secretary Ministry of Education Dr. Belio Kipsang maintained that government is committed in ensuring that all children in Kenya achieve their full potential as captured in Article 53 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. According to him the constitution provides for free basic education, nutrition, parental care and child rights and therefore the focus on the best interest of the child is of paramount importance in providing quality services to children. He further maintained that government is

committed to ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality ECD and pre-primary education.

Dr. Hellen Kimanthi in her presentation pointed out that the ongoing curriculum reforms are responding to the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and approaches as well as providing value-based education for future better generations. Ms. Ann Gachoya in her presentation underscored the importance of ECD and that the MOE is working on a sector specific policy ECDE which was in the final stages of development. Ann pointed out that among the challenges encountered in early childhood education necessitating a sector specific policy include; no scheme of service for pre-primary teachers, teacher training not regulated, unmonitored curricula and lack of a regulating framework. She highlighted the role of the national government in matters concerning ECDE as developing standard guidelines for all ECD levels and TSC developing a scheme of service for ECD level teachers. The role of the county governments according to her include; ensuring implementation of approved policies in all the ECDE centers, capacity building, and enhancing smooth transition from pre-primary to primary level. Hence strengthening coordination, linkages and collaborations among stakeholders in ECDE will promote provision of quality services in ECD.

#### 4.0 Way Forward

The following was agreed upon as the way forward:

1. Government to engage various stakeholders involving state and non-state in reviewing the National ECD policy and service standards 2006.
2. ECD Network for Kenya to recruit members to cover all the 47 counties [www.ecdnetworkforkenya.org](http://www.ecdnetworkforkenya.org)
3. Push ECD into the political agenda as the 2017 elections approach by creating forums where presidential, gubernatorial and senatorial aspirants present their agenda for children aged 0-8 years.
4. Come up with ECD communication plan involving:
  - Videos
  - Radio sports
  - Signs on matatus
  - Posters
  - Health posts





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5. Have a common Core involving: Health, Education, Protection, HIV, Registration, Nutrition, Disability
6. Map all actors, resources and experts within the ECD space for better coordination within the sector
7. Have Annual National ECD Stakeholders conference

**Pictorial highlights of the conference**



Mr. Darius Mogaka Ministry of Education (left) and Dr. Teresa Mwoma Head of Secretariat ECD Network for Kenya (right) addressing participants



Dr. Rachel Nyamai Ministry of Health (left) and Dr. Nyakwara Begi Kenyatta University (right) making their presentations



Honourable Kiso Member Parliamentary Select Committee of Education (left) and Dr. Pablo UNICEF Regional Office making their presentations



Guest speakers launching the ECD Network by unfolding the ECDNeK rollup (right) and displaying the ECDNeK website (right) [www.ecdnetworkforkenya.org](http://www.ecdnetworkforkenya.org)

Teresa Mwoma  
Head of Secretariat  
ECDNeK



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