



CONFERENCE REPORT

Third National Early Childhood Development (ECD)
Stakeholders' Conference



*Themed
Promoting Synergies: Inclusive Approaches to Early Child Development (ECD)*

*29th- 31st July, 2019
Mombasa Continental Resort, Kenya*

#thirdECDconferencekenya



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The convening of this conference was made possible through generous financial and technical support from Government of Kenya, UN Agencies, various actors, institutions in the ECD space and *all participants who registered to participate*. Without whose support, the Third National ECD Stakeholders' conference would not have been possible.

Asanteni Sana!

Government: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Mombasa County, Council of Governors.

ECD Network for Kenya Board Members: Dr Teresa Mwoma, Lilly Oyare, Leonard Chumo, Dr Ouko Ong'ang'a, Joyce Wesonga

Development Partners: UNICEF, UN SDG Philanthropy Platform, AfECN, Children Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), Uthabiti Africa, World University Service of Canada (WUSC), Porticus, PATH, Save the Children International, Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development, Kenyatta University, Kidogo, Mother2Mother, World Vision International, Catholic Relief Services/AOSK, APHRC, County First Ladies Association, Madrassa Early Childhood Program (MECP), Community Initiatives Agenda, Daraja Civic Initiatives Forum, Little Rock ECD, Mtoto News, World Bank, KANCO, ECD Network for Kenya Secretariat and *all participants who registered to participate*.

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Videographer and Editor: Dennis Bello and Madubi Dadda (Bello Films)

Photographer: Faith Ocharo

Mombasa Continental Hotel

Thank you very much!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, JOINT CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE AND CALL TO ACTION 2019 MOMBASA

The Third National ECD Stakeholders' Conference was held in Mombasa Continental Resort from 29th to 31st July, 2019. It was presided over by the Deputy Governor Mombasa County Dr. William Kingi. The conference that was themed *Promoting Synergies: Inclusive Approaches to Early Child Development*, resulted into a Conference Communique with a Call to Action that is aimed at providing quality early childhood services for children 0-8 years.

Preamble

We the **270 delegates** from **30 Counties** and over **70 organizations**, representatives of government agencies - National and County, UN agencies, philanthropists, donor communities, Civil Society Organizations, research, academia and the media, congregated at Mombasa Continental Resort in Kenya on 29 -31st July 2019 for the Third National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Stakeholders' Conference.

The objectives of the conference were:

- i. To create awareness on the need for integration of nurturing care practices in ECD service delivery;
- ii. To advocate for strengthened structures and synergies for quality and integrated ECD service delivery at National and County levels;
- iii. To share insights on innovations and models that promote inclusivity and the wellbeing of children in the early years (including children with disabilities and OVCs);
- iv. To create awareness on the need for child-friendly spaces.

Early Childhood Development: The Kenya we want

Article 53 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) guarantees a child's best interest as paramount for national development - a shared responsibility by all stakeholders. Investing in early childhood development therefore, is good for everyone – governments, businesses, communities, parents and caregivers, and most of all, babies and young children. We are cognizant of the fact that Nurturing Care for early childhood development (NCfECD) not only ensures the survival of the voiceless children but also goes further by ensuring that *those who survive also thrive, and live to transform their communities*. This is aptly reflected in the Vision of ECD Network for Kenya, "A society where all children aged 0-8 years realize holistic ECD for lifelong success." The Nurturing Care Framework (2018) draws on state-of-the-art evidence on how early childhood development unfolds to set out the most effective policies and services that will help parents and caregivers provide nurturing care for young children. It is designed to serve as a roadmap for action, helping mobilize a coalition of parents and caregivers, national governments, civil society groups, academia, the United Nations, the private sector, educational institutions and service providers, to ensure that every baby gets the best start in life.

Conference Communique and Call to Action

This communiqué provides lobbying opportunities for stakeholders to prioritize ECD interventions in the highest political and decision-making platforms. *The communiqué is an addition to the 2018 Nairobi Call to Action: we call for the profiling and recognition of Counties that are improving investment in ECD services, aimed at showcasing best practices, for national adaptation.* We the 270 delegates therefore:

1. Call on all players, actors and sectors of government concerned with providing support and services for children aged 0-8 years, to accelerate sustainable and blended financing in the early years, as early interventions have life-long impact;
2. Embrace the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) as it articulates the important role that all sectors must play to support the optimal development of young children and reap maximum benefit from pre-school and formal education;
3. Acknowledge that many parents of young children want the best for their children but face many barriers to providing adequate care;
4. Call upon National and County governments, employers, service providers and policy makers in Kenya to collaborate in providing targeted support for parents to nurture their children;
5. Call for adequate, child-friendly and inclusive spaces for children to play;
6. Recognise that, pre-primary education, child care facilities and health care services are devolved functions in Kenya; therefore, great expectation is placed on County governments to invest in and drive the children's agenda as well as seek political leadership and championing of ECD at the highest political levels;
7. Recognise the commitment of County First Ladies Association (CFLA) to patronize and foster the championing of ECD at the highest political levels;
8. Call for the ECD Network for Kenya to be the national platform for sharing and documenting ECD stories;
9. Recognise the critical role that the media in Kenya can play in highlighting the ECD agenda and call for targeted engagement and partnership with media houses;
10. Resolve that each actor in the ECD space shall endeavour to mentor young scholars, practitioners and professionals pursuing a career in early childhood.
11. Advocate for research agenda focused on:
 - equitable childcare services for under 5's especially the hard-to-reach;

- multisectoral and coordinated programming in the early years;
- scalable and cost-effective ECD models;

12. Resolve that the National ECD stakeholders' conference shall be held biennially, and on a rotational basis, in all the 47 Counties and that the 4th National ECD Stakeholders' Conference will be held in Siaya County.

Call to Action Themes

The call to action entails the following themes: investments, childcare, parent empowerment, coordination, research and documentation.

Endorsed on 31st July, at the Third National ECD Stakeholders' Conference, held at Mombasa Continental Resort in Mombasa County.

ABOUT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT NETWORK FOR KENYA (ECDNEK)

The Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya (ECDNeK) was formed in September 2015 and registered with the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Coordination Board of Kenya in September 2019 to bridge the gap in the coordination of ECD initiatives 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 were Kenyatta University, World Vision Kenya, Aga Khan Foundation (East Africa), Save the Children International, International Child Resource Institute (ICRI), Parenting in Africa Network (PAN), Kidogo Early Years, Little Rock, Build Africa, Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International (Tayari Project), KANCO, PATH and ChildFund International. The network has expanded to include, Catholic Relief Services, Plan International, Daraja Civic Initiatives Forum, Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development (AKU-IHD), Africa Population Health Research Centre (APHRC), Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO), Mother2Mother (M2M), The Kradle, Researchers in Early Childhood Education and Care (RECEC), Community Initiatives Agenda (CIA), among others. The SDG Partnership Platform and United Nations Children Fund - Kenya Country Office provide technical support to the Network. The ECDNeK is an affiliate of the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN). Hosted by Kenyatta University's Department of Early Childhood and Special Needs Education, the Network's membership is open to ECD focused actors in the sector.

The Network works closely with National and County governments, non-state actors, parents and community members to ensure that children access and participate in high-quality, holistic early childhood development programs. Specifically, the Network seeks to:

- I. Promote equitable access to quality Early Childhood Development services in Kenya for all children;
- II. Develop and work for an enabling environment that encourages local research in Early Childhood Development;
- III. Strengthen Early Childhood Development stakeholders' partnership, collaboration and coordination;
- IV. Influence financial resource allocation and utilization towards Early Childhood Development programs in Kenya;

Our Goal and Strategic Objectives

Our goal is to *contribute to inclusive and equitable quality Early Childhood Development opportunities for children 0-8 years in Kenya*. To contribute towards the above goal, the ECDNeK has the following strategic objectives:

- I. *To influence an enabling policy environment for ECD*

- II. *To influence increased investment and accountability for ECD*
- III. *To strengthen coordination of ECD initiatives*

Our Core Values

1. **Commitment:** We are dedicated to working together through a multisectoral approach to Early Childhood Development in Kenya, in the best interest of the child.
2. **Inclusiveness:** We embrace engagement with all Early Childhood Development stakeholders, regardless of gender, disability, ability, race, religion, region and context.
3. **Mutual Trust and Respect:** We have high regard for all Early Childhood Development stakeholders and appreciate confidentiality and non-disclosure as may be appropriate from time to time
4. **Integrity:** We are transparent and accountable in all business and engagement with stakeholders.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministries of Education and Health in collaboration with ECD Network for Kenya, Council of Governors, and Mombasa County co-hosted the Third National ECD Stakeholders Conference from 29th - 31st July 2019 at Mombasa Continental Resort, in Kenya. The conference brought together over 270 ECD practitioners, researchers, policymakers and leaders from national and county governments, research institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, donors, and the media. The conference provided an opportunity for participants to discuss and share: insights on the status of ECD programs in Kenya, innovations, challenges faced, resolutions for establishing a holistic or multi-sectoral approach towards ECD in Kenya in order to enhance policy and practice through implementation of the NCF.

Noteworthy is the fact that early years (0-8 years) form the foundation of human development, serving as the most critical period for survival, growth, lifelong learning and child development. The period is marked with rapid brain development, and characterized by massive neural connectivity needed for cognitive, social, motor and emotional development. Evidence suggests that an estimated 250 million children under the age of five in low and middle-income countries are at a higher risk of not reaching their developmental potential, because adverse conditions threaten the nurturing care they ought to receive (Lancet, 2016). Specifically, in Kenya, exposure to poverty and inadequate care has been linked to malnutrition, toxic stress and lack of stimulation that is essential for children. This calls for an urgent need for a multi-sectoral collaboration and response targeted in the early years of life.

In recognizing the importance of the early years, World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF and the World Bank, and others developed the NCF that was launched during the World Health Assembly in May, 2018. The framework adopts a whole-society approach guiding families, policy makers, public and private practitioners on providing environments that would ensure that children not only survive but thrive and are able to play their part in transforming their communities (*For further reading, [visit here](#)*). Implementation of the NCF can play a critical role in advancing achievement of the SDGs 2030 and its domesticated form - African Union Commission's Agenda 2063.

In addition to deliberating on the status of ECD programs in Kenya, innovations, best practices and challenges, the third National ECD Conference also created awareness on the need for integration of

nurturing care practices in ECD related service delivery, while providing a platform to advocate for enabling policies, strengthened structures and synergies geared towards enhancing quality and integrated ECD services. Lastly, during presentations at the Mombasa conference, eight case studies or stories from actors implementing ECD projects, were documented by a team of rapporteurs, *and are viewable in annex.*



2.0 DAY 1: PRE-CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

A study¹ by Mombasa County on causes of school dropouts by young learners in the County, commissioned by the Governor, Hon. Ali Hassan Joho, revealed that modern and well-equipped pre-primary centres and nutrition interventions could help keep children in class, improve their concentration and their overall performance (Atieno, 2019). The initiative prompted the county, to build quality ECDE facilities, and provide free milk to retain the learners in school and entice others to join public schools. It is estimated that currently, about Kshs 120 million every financial year, funds the school milk program where Pre-primary One to Grade Three pupils in all the 97 public primary schools in Mombasa receive free County milk. The program was dubbed *Maziwa ya County 001*² in 2014, and in 2015, learners began to receive a 200ml packet of milk daily, every school day. Five years on, the Education Department in Mombasa County has recorded an increase in enrollment from 26,700 pupils to 32,000 in 97 public primary schools.

With this background, the County of Mombasa hosted a field visit which formed part of the network's pre-conference activities. Efforts utilized by Mombasa County towards advancing early childhood, were showcased during the field visit. In this regard, on the 29th of July 2019, conference delegates visited Utange Model ECD centre, which is hosted at Hassan Joho Primary School in Mombasa County. The school benefits from a vibrant feeding program, including free County milk, to improve nutrition outcomes in young children most of whom are drawn from low-income families. *In Annex 1, you can view details of the field visit.*

¹ Atieno, W. (2019, May 30th). Mombasa school milk initiative pushes up pupil numbers. *Daily Nation*, Retrieved from: <https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mombasa/Joho-s-milk-initiative-gets-more-pupils-to-school/1954178-5138034-60i2k0/index.html>

² Swahili for *Milk from County 001* (Mombasa)



3.0 Day 2: OFFICIAL OPENING

Conference videos footage is available on Moto News handle:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC43n36dOyd8a2g2PWVWDz2g/videos>

The entire conference was translated in sign language; this is viewable on the above U-tube link.

Day two commenced on a high note with *Children's Voices* from Central Girls' School, located in the informal settlement of Mombasa, sharing singing game songs, playful dances and a poem themed *Maziwa ya County (County Milk Program)*. The children were praising the '*Maziwa ya County 001*' initiative that is supported by the County government of Mombasa, which enables all public ECDEs in the County to receive free milk, every school day.

3.1 Welcome Address: Dr Teresa Mwoma, National Coordinator, ECD Network for Kenya (ECDNeK) & Senior Lecturer, Kenyatta University

Dr Mwoma warmly welcomed all delegates from different counties, and countries, to the conference. She thanked all for participating, acknowledging all stakeholders, National and County government, partners and development agencies for their unwavering support and commitment to the Early Childhood Development (ECD) agenda, in Kenya.

She shared the journey of the Network as well as highlighted the success of two preceding conferences – the first in October 2016 and the second one in July 2018 – held in Nairobi County, which culminated to the third conference. In addition, she maintained that the ECD agenda in Kenya has gained momentum, heightened by Kenya hosting the First International ECD Conference organized by Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) held on 16th-19th October, 2018 at Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi. The conference was officiated by His Excellency the President of Kenya Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta.

Reflecting upon the 2018 Nairobi Call to Action - which called on national and county governments to prioritize the first 1,000 days of human development and Nurturing Care for ECD, Dr. Teresa emphasized on the need to mentor young scholars and professionals into the ECD space, to push the ECD agenda in Kenya forward. She called on all stakeholders to come up with comprehensive resolutions to enhance nurturing care. She proposed that in future, the National Stakeholders' conference be held after every-two years for effective planning and resource mobilization. Dr Mwoma also commended the County Government of Mombasa for contributing immensely towards the success of the planning of the Third National Conference and reminded members that the conference was resolved to be held rotationally, in all the 47 counties.

3.2 Accelerated ECD through Nurturing Care: Dr Martin Chabi, World Health Organization (WHO)

In his address, Dr Chabi pointed out that for all stakeholders in the ECD space to change the narrative, they have to begin at the beginning of life: starting from conception and at the delivery room. *"If we change the beginning of the story, we change the whole story,"* Dr Chabi said. He indicated that gross failures often began in the delivery room during the first one hour of life, leading to infant mortality of about 1,000 monthly; four (4) in 100 children become stunted and another four (4) in 100 become overweight.

Dr Martin reiterated on the need for accelerating ECD through implementing the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF). He noted the progress that has been realized through a reduction of maternal, neonatal and under five mortality rates in Kenya, and emphasized the need to implement a multisectoral ECD approach that would ensure that all children received quality and reliable ECD services, including strong advocacy for quality services that could address Child Stunting which currently stood at 25 percent. He reminded the delegates of Sustainable Development (SDG) targets 2:2, 3:2 and 4:2 as very important targeting services for young children. *For further reading on NCF, [visit here](#)*.

3.3 Keynote Address: Maniza Ntekem, Regional Advisor, UNICEF ESARO

Maniza in her keynote address emphasized that the commitment of the highest political leadership, was paramount in enabling provision of ECD services. She noted that Kenya had markedly been at the forefront on ECD efforts - and mentioned that in 2018, for the first time, a sitting African President, His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, officiated a conference focused on advancing the early years: The First AfECN International Conference on ECD. Additionally, she maintained that through the NCF, Kenya has brought together all concerned Ministries to begin collaborating on advancing matters regarding the development of young children.

Noting that UNICEF, at all its administrative levels, was committed to fully support the ECD Agenda in Kenya, she reiterated that Kenya was significantly experiencing higher early learning access rates, rivaled only by South Africa. She further maintained, that despite tremendous and encouraging achievements in

the sub-sector, approximately 25 percent of the eligible children did not have access to ECE services, and that 25 percent were stunted. She advocated for increased investment in the ECD programs, and deliberate efforts to ensure multisectoral approaches were used in the delivery of ECD services. Her recommendations were three-pronged, as follows:

- i **To put our Money where our Mouth is:** Evidence continue to strongly advocate for early investments as critical.
- ii **United we Stand, Divided we fall:** Synergies and working together for the benefit of all children, could enable stakeholders to achieve more in the ECD space.
- iii **Mother Knows Best:** We need to support Parents to do the best they can to provide quality care to their children. Ms Ntekim called for parent empowerment, to enable families access the opportunities to tackle imminent challenges.

3.4 The Role of County First Ladies in promoting ECD Initiatives in Counties: H.E. Mrs Nazi Kivutha, First Lady, Makueni County & Chairlady, County First Ladies Association (CFLA)

Thanking the ECD Network for the willingness to include CFLA in the Network, H.E. Mrs Kivutha expressed a strong desire to champion ECD in the counties, just as CFLA had committed, during the 2018 First AfCEN International Conference on ECD. According to her, the office of the County First Lady is strategically placed to support women and children to ensure children are accorded quality care. It occupied a unique position at the pinnacle of society and the government, which provided a platform to champion important social and development goals at the Counties.

H.E. Nazi also pointed out that the CFLA was embarking on a process of reviewing its Strategic Plan to focus on education and ECD initiatives. She strongly added that the Association was eager to promote inclusive approaches in ECD, by joining the Network and champions for NCfECD. She acknowledged the importance of replicating the ECD model run by the First Lady of Siaya, to more counties in Kenya. (*Further reading on the case of CFLA in Annex 2*).

3.5 A Nurturing Care Champion's Voice: H.E. Rosella Rasanga, First Lady, Siaya County

H.E. Rosella in her address to delegates, emphasized the need for top-level leadership to commit to advancing and investing in the ECD agenda and related programs, respectively. According to H.E. Rosella, the more we invest in ECD, the greater the benefits to the communities.

In addition, she emphasized the need for embracing a multisectoral approach in order to be effective in advancing nurturing care. H.E Rosella shared about a local example of the **SMART START SIAYA** initiative which had realized tremendous achievement: reaching children of ECD age, and enhancing multisectoral

collaboration in the provision of ECD services (*further reading on the Siaya initiative in Annex 3*). She reiterated that ECD ought to start early - in the womb.

H.E. Rosella added that through implementation of the NCF, promising feedback had been received from the community. Through increased advocacy efforts, Siaya had gained renewed momentum to highlight the ECD agenda. She recommended for the nurturing care agenda to be packaged for politicians to support and finance. In her ending, H.E. Rosella noted that if stakeholders in ECD were expecting positive change in Kenya, going back to the basics was critical in relation to training, capacity building and increasing budgets for ECD. She encouraged all delegates to focus on holistic ECD, by building upon the development of young minds and good practices, regardless of how modest they appeared.

Opening Ceremony

The Mombasa County government sent a very high level delegation for the official opening of the conference. Top officials among them were Deputy Governor, H.E. Dr William Kingi Kazungu, Chief Officer for Education, Mr Innocent Mugabe and Director for ECDE and Vocational Training, Mr Mwangi Gichuhi.

3.6 Brief Remarks, Mombasa County: Innocent Mugabe - Chief Officer, Education

Mr Mugabe observed that there is need to include children with disabilities, who are enrolled in pre-school services, in nurturing care programs. He was specific on this because these children were often isolated and neglected. He appreciated the Network for choosing to hold the Third National Stakeholders' conference in Mombasa to enable partners and stakeholders speak for the voiceless. He pointed out that many of the local conferences were tailor-made for the youth and women who can vote, rather than children undergoing critical stages that have a lifelong effect. Young children were important because holistic interventions could be tailored to enhance their development.

He pointed out that research, through partnerships with other related line ministries, was needed to shape and influence development and implementation of local family policies, to enhance the development of young children and babies. He invited support from development partners and other organizations to collaborate with county governments to build evidence that can shape investments in ECD. Citing the Mombasa Child Care Act that prioritizes ECD including increased investment in the sub-sector, he added that the county had initiated robust quality assurance for both pre-primary and childcare facilities, enhanced inclusion of children with disabilities in the programs as well as developed an ECD model for replication by public and private service providers.

3.7 Implementation of Pre-Primary Education and Childcare Facilities: Gaining Insights from Mombasa County; H.E. Dr William Kingi Kazungu, Deputy Governor, Mombasa County

The Deputy Governor H.E. Dr. William Kingi, officially welcomed all delegates to Mombasa County. He reiterated that he was officiating the ceremony on behalf of H.E. Hassan Joho, Governor of the County and H.E. Wycliff Oparanya, Chairman of the Council of Governors.

H.E. Dr Kingi highlighted the achievements of Mombasa County Government since devolution of pre-primary education and child care facilities to the Counties, in 2013. He also gave a vivid account of Mombasa's implementation of a six-point-plan for ECD, as follows:

- I. Driving to develop child-friendly ECDE centres - the county had constructed eight (8) state of the art classrooms (model centres of excellence);
- II. Development of quality standards unit - to ensure quality provision of services;
- III. School milk program - where children are given a packet of milk on every school day. This program had helped reduce pangs of hunger and hospital visits;
- IV. Teacher recruitment - targeted 400 ECD teachers;
- V. Provision of teaching-learning materials;
- VI. Development and implementation of Mombasa County Child Care Act - geared to provide an impetus to multisectoral approach to provision of ECD services.

Highlighting the Case of school transition (*refer to Annex 1*), he noted that the School Milk supply program, an initiative of the County, had experienced drastic increase in enrollment. Currently, over 32,000 children of ECD age were getting free milk every school day. The initiative had enhanced children's well-being and happiness, to enable them learn and thrive in their spaces. H.E. Dr Kingi officially opened the conference, wishing all participants pleasant deliberations and stay at the coast.

3.8 Steps Made by the Ministry of Health in Implementing Nurturing Care in Kenya: Dr Caroline Mwangi, Program Manager, ECD, Ministry of Health - Division of Family Health

Dr Caroline Mwangi gave highlights of Ministry of Health's interventions in the Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health Unit at MOH, with emphasis on the 1st 1,000 days, through various approaches such as capacity building on Care for Child Development (CCD). She mentioned that efforts to finalize the National Integrated ECD policy were also underway.

Dr Caroline enumerated a number of guidelines that support provision of quality healthcare services for children including the Mother and Child Handbook; as well as the Integrated Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health policy. She reiterated that what was key for Kenya was workforce capacity building, that is, training and sensitizing the healthcare workers on nurturing care.

3.9 Importance of Pre-Primary Education as a Foundation for Lifelong Learning: Mr Milton Moka, Director Early Childhood and Teacher Training, Ministry of Education (MoE)

Representing the Principle Secretary, at the Ministry of Education, Dr Belio Kipsang, Director Moka focused on ongoing efforts that are geared towards improving access to quality pre-primary education. He emphasized ECD as a foundation for human development and lifelong learning, with the need for the necessary interventions to be holistic and multisectoral in nature. He pointed out the fact that the Constitution of Kenya (2010) under Article 53, all children have a right to access free Basic Education, with the child's interest given paramount importance. However, he observed that this was a shared responsibility involving various stakeholders including National and County Governments, partners and parents of young children. He reminded the delegates of the Africa Union Education Report 2014, which called for an integrated ECD approach to enhance children's development and learning.

Mr Moka added that reading skills were identified as key areas to be mastered within the early years of learning. He reiterated that effects of missing this basic education continued into later years. He stressed that the Ministry of Education's efforts were aligned to realise aspirations of the Kenyan Constitution (2010), Vision 2030 and the Basic Education Act (2013) with regard to provision of quality, relevant, inclusive and equitable pre-primary education across the country. He highlighted efforts the Ministry of Education has made towards improving provision of preprimary education to include:

- I. Development of the National Pre-primary education policy and service guidelines;
- II. Development and on-going implementation of Competence Based Curriculum for Early Years Education which includes two (2) years of pre-primary education;
- III. Revision of the Kenya School Readiness Test to align it with Competency Based Curriculum (CBC);
- IV. On-going revision of the Teacher Training Curriculum to be in line with CBC;
- V. On-going discussions to establish the National ECD Committee to oversee implementation of pre-primary policy and guidelines.

He closed his remarks by noting that a number of children had been left out of the ongoing efforts - especially the under threes. He emphasized that MOE was working together with stakeholders in Kenya to advance inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE).

3.10 The Role of Networking in Promoting Quality ECD Services: Janet Muthoni Ouko, Africa Early Childhood Network

Mrs Ouko thanked the partners and stakeholders in Kenya for convening the conference to highlight early childhood matters. Echoing Ms Maniza's sentiments, Janet remarked that there was need to follow through on all the pledged support for the ECD agenda, through tangible action. She added that increased funding to the ECD sector would be critical, and called for development partners to support the cause. She especially congratulated the government of Mombasa County for the tremendous work underway in the

county, and warmly appreciated their support for hosting and planning for the conference. She concluded by promising that AfECN would continue to work with the network to enhance ECD in Kenya by supporting the Kenya Network, which is the local affiliate of AfECN; and highlighting the promising efforts across the African region.



CONCURRENT SESSIONS (Day 2, 30th July)

3.11 STRENGTHENING COUNTY STRUCTURES FOR QUALITY ECD

3.11.1 Effectiveness of government led multisectoral coordination in scaling up Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD): Siaya Experience

Obinge Elizabeth Omondi¹, Rosella Rasanga², Molly Wangui³, Department of Health and Sanitation, County Government of Siaya¹, County Government of Siaya², UNICEF Kisumu Office³

Although Siaya County had previously invested heavily in ECD, they eventually realized that they had not adequately targeted children under three years. To bridge this gap, the county formed a committee chaired by a representative from the Governor's office, with multi-level stakeholders participating. Additionally, an evaluation report of the project was commissioned, which unearthed the following:

- I. Lack of awareness about the link between nurturing care and brain science;
- II. State of maternal mental health can render new parents incapable of providing responsive care;
- III. High rates of early pregnancy were found in Siaya, where children become carers for children;
- IV. Inadequate male involvement in both child care and providing responsive caregiving;
- V. High number of unregistered children – meaning, they did not have birth certificates;
- VI. Implementing interventions were in silos. Many 'buses' (organizations) were operating in Siaya, but they had not been effective in improving nurturing care.

To date, the interventions have been very successful in Siaya County, in the following ways: identified 5,000 unregistered children; free Birth certification; sensitization of media officers in ECD; increased number of facilities offering counseling/CCD; nurturance care facilities had increased from 16 to 311; integration of growth monitoring and registration in ECDE centers; nurturing care had been prioritized in all department work plans.

Best practices for replication include: emphasis on the multisectoral coordination mechanism, and implementing recommendations of the Lancet series of ECD. The ECD project in Siaya is Government-led.

Findings from the research conducted in Siaya shows that the team is bringing together many partners to help scale up. These include Health, Agriculture, Education, among others. Leading and investing in ECD has enabled Siaya to be ahead of other counties that are implementing ECD.

3.11.2 Influence of devolution of teacher management on quality of pre-primary school education programs in Kirinyaga County, Kenya

Gichobi Jacinta Wanjira¹, Dr Ong'ang'a H. M. Ouko¹, Dr. Buna Yattani¹

Devolution of teacher management in Kenya has not been smooth. A study seeking to examine the influence of devolution on teacher management on quality of pre-primary school education in Kirinyaga County, revealed that the training of pre-primary school teachers was not devolved and therefore is under the national government. The ineffective nature of teacher training, recruitment and professional development was affecting the quality of early learning.

The study recommended that County Governments set aside funds for teacher-training, recruitment, professional development and remuneration. Resource inadequacy was highlighted as a key barrier to ensuring quality of Education. As a result, few children enrolled, few got a chance to study and few transitioned to school.

3.11.3 Situational analysis of supervision and work self-efficacy levels of early childhood education teachers in Siaya County, Kenya

Moses Abiero¹

Effective supervision lies at the heart of quality workforce development in ECE. Existing evidence shows that there is weak supervision of early childhood development services, with negative effect on the quality of services provided to children and their families (Crigler, Gergen & Perry, 2013; MoE, 2017). In a study geared towards exploring existing supervision of ECE teachers as well as their level of work self-efficacy in Siaya County, Kenya, 70 ECE teachers and their supervisors were targeted. It emerged that while teachers experienced frequent supportive supervision from field officers including integration of ICT tools during supervision, the focus was on general curriculum implementation with limited support in the areas of inclusive education, school readiness and transition.

Results showed that majority of the ECE teachers had high efficacy levels. However, their efficacy varied across performance tasks with most teachers reporting high confidence in their ability to support children learn, but low confidence in community engagement. The recommendations targeted strengthening of capacities of Quality Assurance and Standard officers and supporting county field officers to improve effectiveness of supervision.

3.11.4 The promise of Early Childhood Development: Accountability for access to early childhood development

Fredrick Oginga¹, Voluntary Services Overseas International Organisation - Organization- (VSOINT.org)¹

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) schedule 4 part 2 devolved preprimary education to the county government, with an aim of improving relevant service delivery. Nine years after devolution, however, ECDE, is still facing a myriad of challenges. VSO Kenya, with support from United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), is responding to the challenges through improving accountability for access to ECD services in Laikipia and Isiolo Counties.

The project that aimed at improving accountability in the management of goods and services in ECDE, adopted a rights-based approach by ensuring that interventions are primary-actor driven, inclusive especially for Persons With Disabilities (PWD's), women and pastoralists. The project also established community ward action groups involving parents of early learners, and enhanced their participation through invited and invented spaces. A people centred-approach was also embraced through engaging community members in the design, implementation and review, to attain sustainability.

As challenges in provision of ECD(E) still exist in counties, the following was recommended: A multisectoral approach to funding ECDE; inclusivity in resourcing for ECDE is critical; enhancing citizen's consciousness to demand accountability would ensure effective use and prioritization of ECDE services by Governments.

3.11.5 Strengthening County Structure for delivery of quality ECD service: A MECP-K experience

Hezron Rumanya¹, Amina Mwititu¹, Madrasa Early Childhood Program¹

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the National Pre-primary Education Policy (2017) maintains that the role of state and non-state actors in managing and coordinating pre-primary education and provision of ECDE, respectively. In line with these overarching legal and policy frameworks, the Madrasa Early Childhood Program Kenya (MECP-K) has since its inception partnered with the government(s) and local communities in promoting provision of quality ECD.

Over time, MECP-K has engaged the county governments to shape policy and best practices through co-creation of programs and exploration of opportunities to foster learning. As a result, Public Private Partnerships have been enhanced, MECP-K has provided training opportunities to over a thousand pre-primary teachers in government ECD colleges and through its institute; as well as extended their early learning model for replication in Nyanza region.

An analysis of Jumuiya ya Kaunti za Pwani county budgets for the 2014/15 and 2017/18 financial years, and allocations to the education directorates reflects an average increase by a factor of 1.56 and 2.04 respectively implying a greater proportionate allocation to the education directorate over time. Despite this significant investment, county governments still experience diverse challenges in provision of quality

ECDE. However, a recommendation that implementers can borrow from MECP is to closely work with County Governments, within their areas of operation, to ensure improved ECD funding.

3.12 TOWARDS INTERGRATING NURTURING CARE FRAMEWORK INTO ECD

3.12.1 Public-Private Partnerships for Nurturing Care: Empowered Leadership Means Quality Programs, Services and Policies

Leonard Chumo Falex¹ Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development (AKU-IHD)²

According to Mr Chumo, ECD has a long-term benefit - and therefore was a smart investment. He pointed out the importance of strengthening the Private-Public Partnership with Government Systems and directly with families and communities. He emphasized on the linkages between early health and their impact on future years as well as comparing this with National and Global milestones. Nurturing Care Framework, a progression of the 2016 Lancet ECD Series, presents a comprehensive and compelling case for an international commitment to the scaling up of proven integrated strategies. These efforts would dramatically improve developmental outcomes for the 75% of the world's children who were currently at risk, through expanded political will and funding, creation of an enabling policy environment for children and building capacity to promote ECD through multisectoral coordination.

In this regard, AKU-IHD piloted a Leaders/Policy Makers' Workshop with the County Government of Siaya and is in the process of undertaking similar workshops with other counties and those that influence decisions, budgets and policies at the county and national government levels. The course's goal is to communicate, promote and operationalize the Nurturing Care Framework among decision makers across various sectors. Dubbed **Science of Early Child Development (S-ECD)**, the course is a knowledge mobilization initiative designed to make current research accessible to those interested in learning about the profound impact of early life (from conception to about eight years) on lifelong health and well-being. It is a tool to help share the emerging science on early brain development and overview of cross-disciplinary developmental health research and links to practice.

Findings from the IHD project, indicated that there was need for ECD data, evidence and research in Kenya and the region. Additionally, stakeholders need to challenge Policy makers on their efforts towards ECD. Integration of Nurturing Care into ECD, and self-evaluation by Policy makers was urgently needed.

3.12.2 Priority needs for the Development and Implementation of an Integrated Early Child Development Intervention in Nairobi's Informal Settlement among Kenyans and Embedded Refugees

Vibian Angwenyi^{1,5}, Amina Abubakar^{1,2,5}, Margaret Kabue¹, Linlin Zhang³, Kerrie Prolux³, Joyce Marangu¹, Ruth Muendo¹, Tina Malti³, Marie-Claude Martin³, Greg Moran⁴, Stephen Lye^{3,6}, Kofi Marfo^{1,6}, Institute for Human Development, Aga Khan University Nairobi-Kenya¹, KEMRI/Wellcome Trust Research Program, Kilifi-Kenya², Alliance for Human Development, Lunenfeld Tanenbaum Research Institute, Sinai Health Systems, Canada³, Academics without Borders, Canada⁴, Joint first authors, they contributed equally to this work⁵, Joint Senior authors⁶*

Vibian et al, in her presentation, revealed that interventions focusing on the first 1,000 days of life are widely acknowledged as a strategy for preserving developmental potential for children. She noted that Nurturing Care Framework advocated for holistic and family-centred approaches in designing and delivering ECD interventions.

A formative research conducted in Dagoretti sub-county, including a household survey and situational analysis of health and social services, explored contextual factors and priority needs required to inform development of integrated intervention packages targeting urban informal settlements. Insights from 10 focus-group discussions with Kenyan and refugee parents, and 16 interviews with community representatives unearthed the following: Parents experienced numerous challenges including financial difficulties, inadequate nutrition, deplorable home conditions, security problems, while refugee parents faced legal barriers to services.

Recommendations towards developing a skills-building program for parents included reinforcing knowledge and skills in economic empowerment, nutrition education/guidance, and paternal involvement. Using Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) as intervention delivery agents and engaging refugee leaders was valued. The research provided critical information for the second research phase, aimed at developing and pilot-testing an integrated 'package' of interventions, targeting two populations in informal settlements, delivered through community agents. Worthy to note is the fact that 60% of Nairobi's population - half of whom are children - live in urban informal settlements. Recommendations for integrated parenting interventions, as unearthed in the study, for the given contexts, include: a focus on training, building capacity of delivery agents and place of delivery.

3.12.3 Linking the Kidogo Play Based Approach with the Nurturing Care Framework: A case study of Kidogo in Nairobi's Informal settlements

Janet Mwitiki¹, Afzal Habib¹, Kidogo¹

Sabrina Habib of Kidogo Early Years, gave an overview of the Baby cares situation in the informal settlements. She pointed out that there are over 3,000 baby cares in Nairobi informal settlements. Babies aged under three years in these baby cares, experienced diverse challenges including lack of adequate stimulation, care and sanitation.

She reiterated that investing in the early years was one of the most effective and efficient investments a country could make to eliminate extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity and create the human capital needed for economies to diversify and grow. An increasingly global digital world places even greater premiums on the capacities that originate in early childhood, such as the ability to reason, continually learn, effectively communicate and collaborate with others.

She emphasized on the five components of the Kidogo Way - a capacity building package - which corresponded with the five components of the NCF. She focussed on the importance of providing safe stimulating environments, opportunities for early learning, health and good nutrition, safety and protection and most importantly, parental engagement. She concluded by calling on the counties to increase Advocacy for all children under three years, who are part of the ECD age bracket of children under eight years. Under threes were markedly excluded from ECD related regulations in Kenya.

3.12.4 Towards Integrating Nurturing Care in Early Childhood Development

Adan A. Boya¹, Ramadhan M. Mwanjama¹, Madrasa Early Childhood Program (MECP) - Kenya¹

Adan in his presentation began by stating that evidence showed that the foundations for learning were largely built in the early years of life. Although global attention to ECD has been established through the SDGs³, an estimated 43% of children under five years in low-and middle-income countries were at risk of suboptimal developmental potential (Black et al., 2007). This has been attributed to gaps in the application of emerging scientific on how Nurturing Care shapes young child development.

This strong evidence showed that caregivers need to be supported to provide this nurturing care. In this regard, MECP adopted the WHO/UNICEF CCD package to be delivered through health services and CHVs. This created a stable environment enhancing child health and nutrition as well as provided opportunities for early learning through emotionally supportive and responsive interactions. Adan pointed out that through community training, Health facilities can promote attachment, bonding and stimulation. He called for the Integration of Care for Child Development (CCD) into Health services too. Key highlights of the MECP study included: Knowledge and skills acquisition through training the CHVs; Caregiver-child interaction using CCD package; increasing the integration of the CCD in the Health facilities.

3.13 NURTURING CARE ADVOCACY WORKSHOP

Alice Kabwe¹, Janet Muthoni Ouko¹, AfECN¹

Alice Kabwe from AfECN reiterated that a key advocacy outcome that must be achieved for the provision of nurturing care, was a strong enabling environment - made up of policies, systems, budgets, programs and services - that enabled governments, communities and caregivers to overcome impending challenges

³ The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 seeks to *provide all children with quality ECD, care and pre-primary education by 2030.*

towards provision of nurturing care. In this regard, AfECN collaborates with partners in the development of national, sub-national and community advocacy initiatives that could drive the resolution of barriers, to enhance nurturing care policies and practices in Africa.

Regional documents that speak to ECD were highlighted, including the African Agenda 2063, SDGs, UNCRC, G20, African charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The Commonwealth and the Japan Education Forum are global forums, in addition to the NCF. Alice observed that AfECN as a Continental organization, provided a platform for policies and programs and worked very closely with the African Union Commission to advocate for early childhood in the region. She reiterated the Heckman curve further built an economic case for investing in young children, which resulted in 13% economic returns. Population based approaches also enable system-wide approaches to impact the masses. ECD aids in breaking generational cycle of poverty, which is an equalizer. She added that by 2025, project estimates of children or youth would be at 1 billion. This presented both an opportunity and a challenge. In this light, NCF was important in addressing the pertinent gaps. NCF brought together different actors responsible for child development (immediate and proxy actors). However, African countries had a contribution to make to the NCF: spirituality and morality.

The AfECN session was aimed at identifying a critical issue that needed to be addressed in ECD. The delegates who participated in the AfECN workshop were split into two groups. Each framed an advocacy pitch as follows: (i) *Parenting knowledge*: Young school-going children and public ECD centres; (ii) *Safety and security*: Unfriendly spaces for children. At plenary, delegates at the workshop concluded that each pitch could be disseminated using existing systems such as the media, church and the police (community policing initiative). It was unanimous that each stakeholder can be an active player in child development. Parents also needed to liaise with other actors to ensure the successful implementation of the different activities. However, there was very little awareness on the necessary referral systems to take.

3.14 INCLUSIVITY AND WELLBEING IN THE EARLY YEARS (0-8 YEARS)

3.14.1 Parental engagement in early learning for children aged 4 to 5 years among the Masaai community in Kajiado Central sub-County

Charity Munyi¹, Anne Waichinga¹, World Vision Kenya¹

The presentation focused on parental engagement in early learning for children aged 4 to 5 years among the Masaai community, in central Kajiado. Presenters reiterated that literacy levels in Kajiado were low (at 55%) compared to other parts of the country. Over the years, this had contributed to low parental engagement in pre-primary education with very few parents helping children with reading or learning activities. School meetings were poorly attended and homework rarely checked.

However, World Vision International's (WVI's) journey with parents and caregivers in this community revealed that illiteracy was not an obstacle for parents to make a meaningful contribution to learning processes. In this regard, WVIs presentation explored: (1) Knowledge, attitude and behavior on early

learning among parents and caregivers in central Kajiado, (2) Theory of change and (3) The journey of transformation. Through the WVK Learning Roots model, parents have been mobilized and engaged in ECD dialogues. They are trained on developing learning resources and play equipment's using locally available materials as well as early cognitive stimulation.

The efforts have transformed the school and home environments into safe and stimulating ones, providing the four to five year olds with ample, fun learning opportunities. Parental engagement in partnership with the Ministry of Education and CHVs had resulted in significant improvement in performance and participation has increased as a result of the use of learning materials. The rich experiences in Kajiado central demonstrate that adequate parental involvement impacts positively on a child's learning motivation, attention span, task persistence, foundational literacy and numeracy, social as well as spiritual skills. Parents' views: "they are now more informed on the school activities"; Teachers' views: "parents are now more involved."

3.14.2 Child-friendly Pre-school learning environment: The MECP experience

Naima A. Adam¹, Mas-ad O. Mohammed¹, Madrasa Early Childhood Program - Kenya¹

A six-year longitudinal study across all three countries - Kenya Uganda and Tanzania - tracked children who attended Madrasa Early Childhood Program (MECP) supported community preschools, other preschool, or no preschool at all. The study established that children from the MECP supported preschools had a higher cognitive development⁴. Further, an impact evaluation of the Tayari Project⁵ (in which MECP was subcontracted to work in 406 preschools) indicates that preschools supported by MECP (Treatment 1) had greater impact on children's school readiness.

Teacher training in the MECP curriculum; development of a variety of rich materials improvised from the environment, and use of materials in lesson delivery are practices replicable for child development contexts. The approach is geared for enhancing manipulation and language development in early learners. Children are encouraged and facilitated into utilising the materials. (*Further reading on MECP's project in Annex 4*).

⁴ Mwaura, P., Sylva, K., and Malmberg, E.L. (2008). Evaluating the Madrasa pre-school program in East Africa: a quasi-experimental study, *International Journal of Early Years Education* 16, 237-255

⁵ Impact Evaluation of Tayari School Readiness Program in Kenya by APHRC December, 2018

3.14.3 Not my crime, yet my sentence: Inclusivity and well-being in the early years (0-8 years)

Mumbi Muguongo¹, Ruth Achitsa¹, Clean Start Kenya¹



Clean Start, endeavours to reform and transform the criminal justice system. Calling for inclusivity of ECD into the prisons where children face discrimination, Clean Start stresses that this is contrary to the Constitution, as the children do not enjoy equal rights as children living out of prisons. (Watch story on [Ted Talk](#) in 2017.)

Feeding practices of a child have a direct impact on their well-being. Over time, inappropriate feeding practices have been found to hamper the growth, development and survival of children. Health and nutrition is threatened by the lack of an age appropriate diet. Makau, Ochola and Mbithe (2016), in a study of the prisons in Kenya, established the prevalence of child malnutrition. Wasting was found to be 8.9%, underweight 14.1% while stunting was 18.8%⁶. These children are during the day, left under the care of an inmate. This may pose a risk of abuse since in most cases, the inmates may not be trained in child protection and therefore are unable to provide nurturing care.

According to Mumbi, children mostly spend time with their mothers as they undergo torturous routines in the prisons. Psychologists have found this to cause negative child outcomes. The right to free compulsory basic education is inadequate in Kenyan prisons too, because the government has not actively provided facilities for learning. Moreover, in places where it is provided, there are limited resources for learning. Right to leisure and recreation is not promoted in most prisons and this is evident as children do not have playing areas or recreational facilities. *Further reading on the case of Clean Start, in Annex 4.*

3.15 MAKING THE EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS CHILD-FRIENDLY

3.15.1 Influence of Teachers' Improvisation of Sound-Producing Materials on Pre-Primary Learners' Acquisition of Science Skills in Kiambu County

Millicent Githui¹, Susan Githaiga¹, Ann Kamau¹, Phd Students¹, Mt Kenya University - Thika Campus¹

Acquisition of science skills such as manipulation, observation and experimentation is challenging amongst pre-primary learners. An academic study that sought to evaluate the influence of teachers' improvisation of instructional materials on pre-primary learners' in Kiambu County, Kenya, was designed to assess the influence of teachers' improvisation of sound-producing materials on pre-primary learners. The study was

⁶ Makau, M. N., Ochola, S., & Mbithe, D. (2016). *Feeding Practices of Children Aged 0-59 Months Accompanying Incarcerated Mothers in Selected Women's Prisons in Kenya*. Kenyatta University, Kenya. Retrieved from <https://benthamopen.com/FULLTEXT/TONUTRJ-11-1>

guided by Social Constructivism and Instructional theories. The target population in Kiambu County was 42,703 comprising of one (1) County Director of Education, 451 head teachers, 451 pre-primary teachers and 41,800 pre-primary school learners. Findings indicated that high improvisation of all the four instructional materials that is, movement materials, measurement materials, construction materials and heat-producing materials influence pre-primary school learners' acquisition of science skills. It determined that that teachers used clapping of hands, hollow sticks and strings to develop basic science concepts among children. The study recommended that the pre-primary curriculum developers emphasize the improvisation of instructional materials as much as possible and that frequent inspections are carried out.

3.15.2 Does integrating messages on early stimulation into the Health Services improve caregivers' Knowledge, Attitude Practices? Evidence from Siaya County, Kenya, Silas Onyango¹, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo¹, Kenneth Okelo¹, Milka Wanjohi¹, Hermann Pythagore Pierre Donfouet¹, Debbeet Sen², Matthew Frey², Christopher Obong'o², Dicken Omedo² Beatrice Oyugi², and Elizabeth Kimani-Murage¹, African Population and Health Research Center¹, PATH²

Inadequate cognitive stimulation is a risk factor for poor child development. ECD interventions that reduce such risk factors and address developmental delays in LMICs have been increasingly recommended. A study in Siaya County followed up pregnant mothers until birth and observed infants from three months to twelve months. The study examined whether integrating ECD messages into routine healthcare provision can improve caregivers' knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) in regards to stimulation of their children.

Data was sieved from an ECD intervention study from Siaya which is implemented by the County's Department of Health with support from PATH. Aspects studied included: Knowledge on Play box in the health facilities; Positive Discipline; Child Stimulation; Caregiver-child interaction and Child Health. 792 caregivers were recruited at the baseline, and 577 were interviewed after delivery. KAP were measured using a set of questions related to stimulation and responsive caregiving. Analysis compared the performance of caregivers at baseline and post-birth in relation to their KAP on early stimulation. Results suggested that integrating ECD messages into the health services has the potential to improve caregiver's KAP. Future assessments should provide evidence on the magnitude and sustained effects of the intervention.

3.15.3 Growing Digital 2019 Survey
Victor Omukote¹, Mtoto Newz International¹

The study sought to determine how children's stories or voices are represented in digital media. In the Growing Digital 2019 Survey, three major areas of focus included online content creators, consumers of online content and children whom the content impacted. This research employed a mixed methodology study design: quantitative and qualitative data collection, using online questionnaires, literature reviews and web crawlers for sentimental analysis of tweets. Majority of the respondents comprised youth between 25-34 years, consumers of online content, content creators and some children. 90% of the respondents were familiar with children's rights.

It was determined that little is being done to articulate and represent children’s voices in digital platforms. Children were viewed as vulnerable to all forms of abuse and mistreatment. The study recommended that children’s stories (ECD) on most (if not all) digital media platforms, should be included. Further, that training of journalists and bloggers on articulating ECD was critical; organizations and networks document and circulate documentaries on ECD; participate in ECD; and that a ECD journalist network be incepted.

3.15.4 Integrating ECD Interventions to enhance nurturing care practices in Pastoralist Communities through the Let’s Play, “Spaces for Kids to be Kids” Integrated ECD project

Joy Nafungo¹, Agnes Ngonyo¹, Caroline Linda², Risper Mboya³, Loloju David⁴, Galgalo Guracha⁵, Lentoijoni Jemen⁶, UNICEF¹, Child Fund Kenya², Life Skill Promoters³, World Vision Kenya⁴, Isiolo County⁵, Samburu County⁶

Through partnerships with Isiolo and Samburu counties, Child Fund Kenya, World Vision Kenya and Life Skill Promoters, UNICEF was modelling integrated ECD through the Let’s Play, “Spaces for Kids to be Kids” while emphasizing on the role of play. The team emphasized that Nurturing Care involves creating conditions through public policies, programs and services which enable communities and caregivers to ensure children’s good health and nutrition, and protect them from threats. It also involves giving young children opportunities for early learning, through interactions that are responsive and emotionally supportive.

Building on the ABCD⁷ approach, the project through multifaceted approaches established county level ECD multisectoral technical working groups to oversee integrated ECD services, improved play and learning spaces for 180 ECD centers benefiting 12,500 children, supported 27 health facilities to implement an integrated Care for Child Development model, acquisition of birth certificates for 1,890 children, access to better nutrition for 2,000 children through kitchen gardening and nutrition supplementation and building capacity for caregivers on CCD, among other successes.

Interim findings emphasized the urgency for collaboration among relevant sectors (Security, Agriculture, Health, and Education) for gradual development of a comprehensive framework and methodology for multisectoral ECD. Delegates were encouraged to understand why investing in children’s play is important, by providing play equipment and play spaces at home, school, communities and health facilities in addition to training every last caregiver, including grandmothers.

⁷ ABCD: “A”dvocacy for understanding and application of ECD evidence and innovation, “B”uilding capacity for government and partners, “C”ommunity empowerment and “D”emonstration of evidence generated.



4.0 DAY 3: CLOSING CEREMONY DELIBERATIONS

The final day of the conference began with a recap of the pre-conference and opening ceremony of the conference. Janet Mwitiki, read out the brief on behalf of the documentation teams and the ECD Network Secretariat.

4.1 Philosophy of Nurturing Care: Prof. Kofi Marfo, Founding Professor and Director Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development (AKU-IHD)

Professor Kofi observed that the field of ECD should be treated with utmost care to focus on the practice rather than merely on the concept. He emphasized that training and capacity building efforts be designed to transform caregivers' mindsets, rather than imparting knowledge and theories only. According to Prof. Kofi, children, family and community must be considered to bring strong foundations that can enhance the future of children. He noted that early childhood and Adolescence were connected. The problems children experience in early childhood are carried on into adolescence.

Prof. Kofi reiterated that there is need to integrate the Nurturing Care Framework in early childhood and practice through: focusing on the context of learning; understanding the meaning of ECD - is it a program, field of study or practice of study? He noted that ECD was a very comprehensive intention that was caught up in the Education Sector, as ECDE. However, he noted that Child development (ECD) was broader, hence, a continuous action that the society could take throughout the lifetime of a child. Programs could be set at every transition point of a child. These program could include critical stages of development to ensure it was seamless, from birth until when the child was eight (8). Further, he urged stakeholders to figure out how to disentangle ECD from the rigid entanglement with Education. In this regard, Nurturing Care Framework was viewed as able to seamlessly integrate all the elements of holistic child development.

4.2 The Role of Kenyatta University in Promoting ECD Initiatives in Kenya: Prof. Paul K. Wainaina, Vice Chancellor, Kenyatta University (KU)

Noting that Kenyatta University (KU) was the first University to start a department in early childhood education in Kenya, in 1995, Prof. Paul Wainaina revealed that KU at its heart, recognize the crucial role of the early years. He further noted that since that time, KU had expanded her programs in early childhood

studies with flexible modes of delivery to reach as many clients as possible. Thus, KU was also fully equipped with capacity to enable officers offering services in the ECD sector in Kenya (to all the 47 counties) and the region.

He acknowledged that over 75% of the conference delegates were products of the Higher learning institution. He reiterated that although the system of education in Kenya did not recognize ECD in the recent past, there has been a transformation and it was now more recognized as a professional field. Prof. Wainaina emphasized that the university has immensely contributed to the development of appropriate teacher training programs, and enabling professionals to advance the ECD agenda. He noted that the training and teaching program would be more focused on practice rather than content. He added that in lieu of the ongoing curriculum reforms in Kenya, there was a need to retool faculty staff and teachers in the light of the CBC dispensation.

4.3 Investing in the Early Years of a Child's Development - The Donor Perspective: Lilies Njanga, Children's Investment Child Foundation (CIFF)

Lilies started by observing that there is need for nurturing care to start as early as pre-conception stages, considering that some begin their motherhood during Adolescence. She maintained that partnerships are critical for forging a collective voice for engaging the governments to direct resources in laying better foundation for children.

Ms Njanga stressed that the NCF encourages integrated approaches through bringing together all sectors and stakeholders on board, in service delivery. She added that the support given towards ECD should utilize the existing community systems for sustainability and long-lasting impact, to the target populations such as the caregiver and the child.

Additionally, she suggested that there is need to think more about where life starts from. She urged stakeholders to prioritise preparing the execution of the ECD related visions: African Union's Agenda 2063, Kenya 2030, and Mombasa 2035. She called for partners to work together through a multisectoral and integrated approach. During her closing statements, Lilies asked two critical rhetorical questions to the conference delegates: What if we approached development partners focused on ECD, in the same way we approached those who are Health-focused? How can we support the partners on the ground i.e. those in and out of the system?

4.4 Multisectoral Partnerships, the Big Four Agenda and the Nurturing Care Framework: Arif Neki, UN SDG Partnership Platform Coordinator & ECDAN-Kenya Coordinator

Arif in his address, highlighted the need to bring on board private actors to collaborate with philanthropic organizations to fund nurturing care programs in Kenya. Normally, private players do not work together

with philanthropies. But leveraging on them would be strategic for ECD. Efforts should be geared towards bringing these two to work closely for the success of NCF.

He added that there was need to maximize investment in the NCF through innovative financing and more focus on health. In this regard, investments ought to be directed towards providing Primary Health Care. He reiterated that unlocking private philanthropy for the SDG agenda, thinking about the sustainability of programs, knowledge management and partnering at scale, would enhance impact in the field. Arif also recommended joint advocacy efforts and maximizing investments through innovative financing as critical for the network.

County Briefs - County Sharing on Progress in Early Childhood

During a special session for counties, 19 county representatives, and an officer from the refugee contexts participated. Moderated by Dr Teresa Mwoma; National Coordinator ECD Network for Kenya, presenters articulated progress on early childhood initiatives in their contexts. A unanimous recommendation was made by officers from the county governments: that all counties in Kenya should be facilitated to implement the NCF.

4.4.1 Bungoma County

Mr Silas Wanyonyi, Director for Education, shared that Bungoma County had achieved several milestones. He cited improved capacities through employing over 200 pre-primary teachers on permanent and pensionable basis; implementation of the CBC and purchasing of relevant text books most of which were published by the Kenya Literature Bureau, therefore approved by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). The county has in place an ECD policy, whose implementation was ongoing. A Child Care Facilities policy was being drafted.

4.4.2 Trans Nzoia County

The county boasted of currently reaching out to over 43,000 children and hiring 772 ECD teachers on contract basis. Trans Nzoia had constructed 120 ECD classrooms, and provided ECD learning aides for county-managed ECDs. Over the preceding two years, the county had partnered with the Ministry of Health to co-host immunization drives targeting children aged eight to fourteen years. Trans Nzoia has plans in place for enabling ECD teachers to be rehired on permanent and pensionable basis.

4.4.3 Kajiado County

Kajiado is a pastoralist county. The County through the community members have provided access to early childhood education for 38,000 children, also building 68 classrooms. A feeding program (nutritious porridge or *uji*), worth Kshs 40 million in the current financial year, was being implemented. The county is also implementing the CBC by providing teaching and learning resources in addition to supporting teacher training. ECD-focused financing gaps they face can be reduced by capacity building their political class on nurturing care. However, efforts are underway to enhance partnerships that can enable the government implement holistic ECD initiatives.

4.4.4 Isiolo County

Isiolo's CEC for Education assured delegates that the County had put in place an enhanced child protection system, and was integrating ECD. Birth registration had been heightened in partnership with teachers and CHV's through home visits. The county has further constructed ECD classrooms, empowered 34 ECD teachers and provided outdoor play materials for almost all ECDs run by the government. The CBC is also under implementation. A feeding program was initiated, worth Kshs 10 Million in the current financial year. They had also installed modernized furniture, water tanks as well as hand-washing kits in all the centres.

4.4.5 Kakamega County

Mr Boaz Lijodi informed delegates that Kakamega County had allocated Kshs 120 Million per year, for ECD-related initiatives. In about 12 sub-counties of their focus, 900 ECD centres with 912,301 children, at least 1,200 children were being supported. 266 classrooms have been constructed with every centre allocated Kshs 3.5 Million. Kshs 50 Million had also been set aside for equipping ECD centres with resource materials. Although the County lacked Quality Assurance staff, approval for hiring 16 would shortly be approved.

Lijodi further revealed that multisectoral coordination had proved challenging, and therefore a focus on capacity building was required. The county had no allocations to fund a feeding program. Although the implementation of CBC was underway, the county had faced many challenges while at it. He suggested that integrating nurturing care into ECD could be explored through the Oparanya Care Services initiative that was geared to improve skilled birth deliveries in Kakamega.

4.4.6 Migori County

The Education Officer for Migori reiterated that infrastructure strengthening existing ECD centres was valued at Kshs 500,000 per school, targeting 350 schools in the County. WVI had also supported construction of model ECD centres for the county. WASH-related equipment had been provided to the ECD centres and installing water tanks was underway. Migori's feeding program, developed in partnership with parents and Department of Agriculture, enabled children to feed on Uji (porridge). A local mama (mother) was paid to cook the nutritious *uji*. The county is partnering with MOH for immunization, right at the school level, with children from home also encouraged to attend the immunizations.

4.4.7 Embu County

Mr Jeremiah Ireri the Ag. Director for ECD Embu County, revealed that a Child Care Facility Act was in place. About 484 teachers were in 2013 hired on permanent and pensionable terms. ECD graduates had been employed too. Enrollment had improved to 17,000 being 71% Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for Embu. ECD centres had been established in low density areas, but more specifically, 174 model centres (classes, storage facilities and offices) were installed. The County partners with the Department of Health to provide milk, three times a week; nutritious porridge daily, as well as supplementation and immunization for young children. Similarly, Child protection had been enhanced with parents, caregivers and teachers being trained on actualizing the same, through the county structures. Embu has been fully implementing CBC since 2018,

and boasts of stellar performance in co-curriculum activities: they were set to represent the County during National level competitions in Nakuru, in August 2019.

4.4.8 Siaya County

The County is collaborating with the First Lady of Siaya to champion ECD and nurturing care. So far, the county is building ECD centres, and has increased employment and capacity strengthening for ECD teachers. The county is proud for implementing the NCF. A multisectoral approach to ECD has been taken to the highest political levels: sectors of Interior, Agriculture, Environment, Water and all departments linked to ECD are collaborating. The County government is working hand in hand with Offices of the Governor, and his Deputy. The County has initiated termly stakeholders' meetings on nurturing care. Updates are regularly shared by all relevant departments, in half-day workshops.

4.4.9 Kisumu County

Mr Charles Igwala, Child Health focal person for Kisumu, revealed that a Nurturing Care training had been conducted by UNICEF, at the onset of 2018. As a result, the County was confident to roll out the NCF, as they had taken over the running of the nurturing care trainings since June 2018. The same would be conducted shortly for MCAs and Health, Education, Agriculture sectors. Specifically, Health and Finance department heads, would be trained on the Science of ECD in a two and a half-day workshop.

4.4.10 Homa Bay County

Awuor Wycliffe, Education Officer for Homa Bay shared that the county had over 879 county run ECD centres and 1,073 ECD teachers. In partnerships with the donor community, 24 classrooms had been constructed with 40 in the process of completion. 107 preprimary teachers had been hired. Homa Bay boasted of working on inclusive approaches to ECD for children with disabilities.

4.4.11 Machakos County

Dr Jackson Ayiema reported that 946 teachers were scheduled to be hired on permanent and pensionable basis by August, 2019. The County government of Machakos had constructed 120 ECD classrooms and enacted an Early Childhood policy, which was under implementation.

4.4.12 Nairobi County

Kenya's capital boasts of excellence in co-curriculum activities. Nairobi has been leading in Drama Festival competitions for a long time and currently hold the 2019 trophy for ECD centres. The county has installed flowing water and electricity for all county-run ECD centres. Thirty stand-alone ECD centres have been erected, and 411 teachers were on permanent and pensionable contracts. The feeding program in place included fortified porridge daily and milk twice a week for every child of ECD age. Additionally, the county provide hot lunches to all ECD-going children who eat *chapatti*, a local rare delicacy, every Thursday of the school calendar.

4.4.13 Kirinyaga County

Mr Kimani, Director ECD Kirinyaga County reported that the county had partnered with the Ministry of Health for deworming and supplementation drives. They have also commissioned a KEMRI pilot study which was underway. The project is conducting a study on a special kind of *uji* made from pawpaw seeds,

to tackle stomach worms. KEMRI and the County government are piloting the initiative in three schools, with roll-out planned in 133 ECD centres spread across the county. Additionally, the government is providing employment for marginalized groups: a uniform-making program for children in ECD's which is managed by youth and women was underway.

4.4.14 Tharaka Nithi

Ms Gladys of Tharaka revealed that the county government had initiated partnership with MOH for deworming and supplementation. Classrooms - five per ward - had been constructed. The county had also introduced Teacher-training to enhance their capacities to deliver the new CBC curriculum. The government had approved the employment of Quality Assurance and Standards officers in every ward. Child protection units were also established in partnership with Save the Children. As a result, the county was collaborating with Area Advisory Committees (AAC) on child protection and ECD.

4.4.15 Busia

The Director ECD Mr. Douglas pointed out that there was need for stakeholders in the county to tackle challenges revolving around ECD programing and service delivery. Nurturing care capacity building was needed to enhance implementation process and multisectoral coordination of the relevant sectors.

4.4.16 Samburu

The county has constructed 300 ECDs. Quality Assurance officers had been employed by the government to support ECDE delivery. Further, the county has completed the equipping of 30 ECD's with age-appropriate furniture. Much had been accomplished on the health front for Samburu: the county had installed 110 sanitary blocks; growth monitoring and vitamin supplementation drives; feeding programs where hot lunches are provided to children in all public ECDs; birth registration drives with support from UNICEF; to improve nutrition outcomes, kitchen gardens installed in ECDs - where kales and spinach were grown and CHVs had been capacity built on CCD. The county was also training Boards of Management (BOMs) on Child protection.

4.4.17 Tana River County

Mr Abdi Banda of Tana River County shared that the government had focused on construction of ECDs, employing of ECD teachers on contract basis and CBC implementation. The county was seeking funding to begin feeding programs.

4.4.18 Turkana County

Mr Samuel Eregai gave an account that 871 ECD centres had been established; 225 teachers employed and 300 more would be employed in the 2018-19 financial year. The feeding program provided fortified porridge as well as maize and beans for lunch, targeting children of ECD age. Instructional resources and materials had been provided to county-run ECDs and 1,200 tablets resourced for them. Through a partnership with MOH, immunization and deworming was conducted in the centres. Partnership had also been formed with the registrar of persons to enable over 400 children secure birth certificates. An ECD Technical Working Group had been operationalized.

4.4.19 Mombasa County

Schools weighing scales and height meters had been purchased under the Universal Health Care program in Mombasa County. Related ECD teacher capacity building would be conducted to enable them monitor growth of children right at their centres. Vitamin A supplementation was regularly conducted and the county boasted of supporting the Melezi Bora initiatives in partnership with MOH.

4.4.20 Refugees Camps (inclusion)

In lieu of the need to embrace inclusion, Ahmed, representing Kakuma and Kalobeyei refugee camps reiterated that the camp hosted over one Million refugees in Garissa and Turkana. He reiterated that Kakuma had 13 stand-alone ECD centres, reaching over 11,504 children. Kalobeyei hosted six (6) ECD centres, reaching 4,124 children. Through partnership with UNICEF, inclusion of children in the refugee settlements had been enhanced.



BREAKOUT SESSIONS (Day 2, 31st July)

4.5 INTEGRATION AND ECD

4.5.1 **Integrating universal healthcare in early childhood education for sustainable community development**

Dr Benson Charles Odongo, Ph.D¹, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology¹

Although the early years support establishment of a sound foundation for holistic - cognitive, social, emotional and physical - development, many children in Siaya County seem to lack holistic child care. In this regard, the presenter reiterated that interventions in the county were focused on treatment rather than prevention services. The latter would be more cost-effective.

The study sought to investigate how to integrate Universal Health Care (UHC) services in ECD. Beneficiaries of the project included pre-school teachers, health professionals in target hospitals and preschoolers. Findings on the level of integration of UHC in ECD were that there was a general lack of health and safety procedures in the preschools in Siaya; policy on health and safety procedures were generally lacking; teachers lacked adequate training on health, safety and evacuation procedures; health and safety procedures lacked NCF considerations. The study recommended integration of health and safety policies in ECD programming, in Siaya. Delegates reiterated that all stakeholders needed to “Package the NCF” such that its constituent components were well understood by all involved in providing services to young children.

4.5.2 **Integrating early childhood development into health services: using the health facilities and community structures to deliver nurturing care in Siaya County.**

By Dickens Omedo¹, Chris Obong’o¹, Beatrice Oyugi¹, Rachel Kavitha¹, Oscar Kadenge¹, Abella Owuor², PATH¹, KMET²

Focus on ECD is supported by a large body of literature that demonstrates positive health and development outcomes. The health system offers easy reach to young children and their caregivers as they routinely visit health facilities for pre-and post-natal care. PATH’s S-ECD project focused on building capacity of health care providers and the health care system to facilitate integration of nurturing care into routine service

delivery. The study was done to inform scale up activities. It assessed (1) facility *preparedness* to integrate nurturing care content into routine consultation with caregivers of children under three years, (2) *exposure* to nurturing care content among a convenient sample of caregivers accessing routine health services at health facilities, (3) *nurturing care practices* among a convenience sample of caregivers attending routine health care services at health facilities, and (4) perceived *barriers, facilitators and opportunities* for strengthening nurturing care integration among health service providers and Community Health Volunteers in Siaya County.

Results of the study showed that private facilities were more likely to have integrated nurturing care services than public facilities. Less than a third of caregivers interviewed at health facilities were exposed to content related to early learning. Similarly, about three quarters of caregivers reported that they do not read to their children. 75% had been aggressive towards their children and 25% left their children unsupervised. Health facilities continue to face barriers - shortage of staff, lack of registers and bias towards clinical services. The learnings are expected to provide critical information on scale up of nurturing care for ECD in Kenya and the region.

4.5.3 **Assessing outcomes of ‘Hi 5’ or Shika Tano: A community resilience Social Behavior Change Campaign for Early Childhood in Health, and Nutrition, learnings From Kwale, Kilifi and Kitui Counties, Kenya**

Nancy Njoki¹, Angela Ng’etich¹, Evangeline Nginya¹, Population Services Kenya¹

The Shika Tano project was implemented in Kitui, Kwale and Kilifi counties in collaboration with County governments, targeting a child’s first 1000 days. Primary caregivers and pregnant women were targeted. The project aimed at promoting use of low-cost interventions with high impact on improving nutritional status so that children can attain full potential of young children.

Findings were positive for example, after the campaign, breastfeeding rates increased from 97% to 100%; respondents reported an increase in Ante Natal Care (ANC) attendance from 57% to 82%; and the proportion of households who reported experiencing food shortage in the preceding 12 months before the study was conducted, decreased from 78% to 67%. Communities can embrace strategies for the general wellness of children that link services addressing food security, livelihoods and general wellbeing of children. Adopting local and sustainable measures that strengthen environments in which young children grow and thrive, creates community resilience. A key recommendation was the importance of using available community systems in effecting positive behavior change of caregivers.

4.5.4 **An evaluation of the effectiveness of a community-led parenting empowerment program to improve nurturing care of young children in Kenya**

Kenneth Okelo¹, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo¹, Silas Onyango¹, Milka Wanjohi¹, Hermann Pythagore Pierre Donfouet¹, Dawn Murdock², George Nyamor³ and Elizabeth Kimani-Murage¹, African Population and Health Research Center¹, Episcopal Relief and Development², Anglican Development Service - Nyanza³

Investing in parents and children during the critical period between birth and five years of life, can have life-long benefits. Lancet Series recommends integrated interventions which combine nutrition, responsive child-feeding and child stimulation, as well as the expansion of high quality and cost-effective ECD programs as they result in significant gains. This baseline assessment was for a community empowerment project (Moment That Matters) being implemented by Anglican Development Service, Nyanza, in Kenya. The overall goal of the outcome evaluation was to establish whether the model strengthens the capacity of families and increases adoption of high-impact behaviors to improve primary caregiver-child interactions as well as nurturing care and stimulation, so that young children reach their developmental potentials. Outcomes were measured after 12 (midterm) and 24 months (endline) of participation in project activities.

Whereas the villages or clusters were purposively selected, 246 caregivers-child dyad and those in their third trimester of pregnancy were recruited between June and July 2018. The baseline findings indicated that caregivers and stakeholders were positive about the uptake of the intervention. There was positive perception about ECD and nurturing care messages and key faith leaders have a good reputation with the community and therefore nurturing care messages delivered by such leaders were likely acceptable by the communities. The study is hoped to contribute to a deeper understanding of what is needed for children to thrive, because the ECD lacks established benchmarks for parental/caregiver behavior in the domains of nurturing care.

4.5.5 **Building Brains to Promote Early Development of Children**

Jane Mbagi Mutua¹, Sarah Mukisa¹, Irene Wali¹, Save the Children- Kenya Office¹

Research shows that investing in early interventions that take advantage of crucial brain development phases can improve the lives of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and their societies. Building brains is a common approach developed by Save the Children to promote children's development from birth to age three; supporting caregivers to provide early stimulation and responsive care.

Mutua et al, maintained that children's holistic development can be strengthened through integrating early stimulation and responsive care into existing service delivery platforms like health and nutrition, child protection, community, social protection and livelihoods programs. A systematic review of 1,750 articles, by save the children, found that empowering parents to better support children's brain development had a medium effect size on children's language and cognitive development, yet nutrition programs had small impact. In Jamaica, integrating stimulation and nutrition supplementation for disadvantaged children increased benefits in child development for children who received both supplementation and stimulation than those who received supplementation only.

Building Brains program is driven by the proven causal relationship between stimulating caregivers practice and improved child development outcomes; it employs characteristics of programming that have shown to produce stronger effects on caregiver behavior change and subsequently children’s development. Save the Children, through an integrated project, is generating evidence that will be used to influence relevant policies.

4.6 INVESTMENT, CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ECD

4.6.1 Inclusive Education Systems in Early years (3-6): The Madrasa Early Childhood Program (MECP) experience

Samira Mbarak¹, Barke Ramadhan¹, Madrasa Early Childhood Program - Kenya¹

UNESCO defines inclusive education as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education. While creating an inclusive education system has proved to be challenging for many countries, Madrasa Early Childhood Program (MECP) developed a model that has been successful in achieving inclusion. An evaluation of RTI-Tayari (2018), showed that MECP supported schools had a greater impact on children’s school readiness.

MECP, a project of the Aga Khan Foundation for East Africa, since inception has worked with marginalized communities to establish and manage high quality, gender responsive, culturally relevant and sustainable preschools. The MECP model focuses on the following areas: ECD teachers’ professional development to ensure that they have the right skills to support inclusive learning in the 21st century and beyond, gender responsive and culturally relevant learning environments, application of child-centred approaches and the involvement of all the stakeholders in ensuring that the child’s needs are met holistically. As a result, the model has benefited over 300,000 children and has the potential of benefiting more when replicated.

The study emphasized the need to expose children to inclusive environment early in life. They singled out the experience of the MECP working with marginalised communities to establish and manage high quality preschools with great emphasis given to teacher capacity building through professional development opportunities that retool with the right skills to support inclusive education for young children. Recommendation discussed was that exposing children to inclusive environments enables them to grow, thrive and attain their full potential for success in life.

4.6.2 **Levers of change in inclusion future education systems cognizant of different provision mechanisms: A conceptual Paradigm Shift**

Dr Mary Otieno¹, Department of Educational Management, Policy & Curriculum Studies, Kenyatta University¹

Dr. Otieno captivated the audience with her advocacy for inclusive education - a paradigm shift from institutionalization of children with special needs. Discussions called for strengthening the capacity of local mainstream schools to support more children. She maintained that the importance of inclusive education is set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), with emphasis on quality and learning. Despite global progress in achieving access to universal education, more than half of 65 million children with disabilities in low and middle income countries are not in school. Focus should be on increasing the capacity of local community mainstream schools to support development of schools, rather than simply involving attempts to integrate vulnerable groups of students into existing arrangements. Levers of change framework focuses on the way things work as opposed to the way they look. The study proposed a Theory of Change, based on levers of change, which uses systems thinking and diplomatic communication, cooperation, collaboration - mapping the issues and then developing inclusive practices to achieve quality learning, transition and sustainability.

4.6.3 **Caregiver involvement in early language stimulation through play for preschoolers in contexts of poverty**

Andima George M¹, Aga Khan University¹, Kenya (Institute for Human Development¹)

Mr. Andima observed that research shows that early language development for children thrives when they are interacting actively with adults. In particular, symbolic play enhances children's early language growth because they begin to use symbols to represent objects absent from immediate physical context, construct imagined social realities and regulate communicative events typically happening in certain contexts outside their immediate environment. This is particularly more significant for children living in contexts of poverty.

The study, conducted in Kibera informal settlement, focused on the nature of caregiver engagement in preschooler's play activities and the challenges caregivers face in using play stimulation. The study sampled 72 caregivers. Key findings clearly showed that caregivers mostly use rule-based play activities when playing with preschoolers. Majority of the caregivers had not grasped the concept of free spontaneous play but mostly used rule-based play activities during their interaction with children. The children play in very insecure play spaces with diversity.

The study provided insights for caregiver education programs to raise their capacity in engaging and supporting children's early development in resource poor settings. The researcher called for enhanced programs that target caregivers' capacity to support children learning through natural play opportunities.

4.6.4 **Barriers to Parents' Involvement in Preschool Education in Mombasa County, Kenya** *Nyamori Peninah Yvonne¹, Dr Teresa Mwoma¹, Kenyatta University¹*

Nyamori in her presentation pointed out that findings from extensive studies on parents' involvement and higher academic outcomes have shown positive effects on children, families and school. But parents have also been found to selectively participate in preschool activities. The study sought to establish barriers hindering parents' involvement in preschool education in Nyali constituency, Mombasa County. 14 preschools, representing both private and public, were selected. A sample size of 90 parents and 28 teachers based on their direct interaction and acquaintance with the parents and their children was selected from the 14 preschools.

Findings revealed that parents' participation in preschools was influenced by parents' level of education. Parents with high school education were found not to participate in the education of their children. Having children at home, different priorities and wanting children to be independent were found to be barriers hindering parents' participation in preschools. Teachers were found not to give parents opportunities to volunteer and participate in preschool activities. Parents are therefore excluded from decision-making processes on preschool matters. Preschools have also failed to partner with communities through a collaborative partnership. The study recommended a need for school managers and administrators to find strategies to motivate and encourage parents to participate in the education of their children.

4.6.5 **Effects of Institutionalization on Early Childhood Development, a Case of Kenya** *Grace Wachera Mwangi¹, Lumos Kenya¹*

An estimated 854 registered Charitable Children's Institutions (CCIs) in the country house approximately 45,000 children. Over 80 years of research demonstrates that growing up in institutions has adverse effect on early childhood development: children's physical growth, cognitive development, attachment security and social development. Practice and systems change initiative - Lumos' Mission in Kenya – works with partners to end the institutionalization of children in Kenya; for Kenya to be a model within Sub-Saharan Africa that provides safe and sustainable care reform for all children. Government of Kenya, dedicated to protecting children's rights, supports the transitioning away from institutions back into family and community-based care. More importantly, Kenyan cultures with strong histories of kinship care, supports this transition. Lumos partners closely with the Department of Children's Services to train stakeholders and practitioners⁸. Lumos' pathway to change comprises four strands: (1) demonstrating systems change; (2) building evidence; (3) field building and (4) influencing government policy.

Grace of Lumos cited a study observing the negative effects of institutionalization on children's holistic development. A practical case study of Kenya, where a care-leaver shared their lived experiences, was especially enlightening. A female Care leaver (who went through institutionalization), shared her experiences of being raised in a charitable organization, under poor conditions and lacking the opportunity to grow in a natural environment. Once she was out of the institution, it took her time to adjust to the

⁸ Lumos Kenya. Retrieved from <https://www.wearelumos.org/where-we-work/kenya/>

realities of life outside the care system. Visit [Lumos Kenya here](#) for more stories from children in or out of care institutions.

4.7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND NURTURING CARE

4.7.1 What is quality ECD? Narratives from parents: A Study of Kidogo

Ruth Muendo^{1,2,3}, Aga Khan University Institute for Human Development(AKU-IHD)¹, AfECN Fellow², African Population and Health Research Center(APHRC)³

Although high quality early caregiving environments are highlighted as critically important in ending a cycle of poverty and improving outcomes for the most vulnerable populations, there was a lack of in-depth documentation of parental perceptions on the quality of early caregiving environments in the developing world. In particular, the views of parents for interventions that are increasingly being recognized for their impact, are scarce. Their opinions, perceptions and belief systems were seldom reflected in defining quality.

The study documented parental perceptions on the quality of early caregiving environments in four broad areas: drivers on childcare choice, the quality of the physical caregiving environment, caregiver skills and perceptions on the play curriculum implemented. Insights of parents of 0-3-year-olds who are brought to the babycare sections - in three urban informal settlements Kibra, Kagemi and Githurai where Kidogo's⁹ operates, were sought. Measures previously developed on the quality of caregiving environments, had been informed by researchers rather than parents. Asked why she selected Kidogo, Ms Muendo, a researcher at APHRC, reiterated that the project was unique, and that parents were willing to participate in the study. The researcher noted that priorities of parents were critical in terms of meeting the needs of children. The study found out that no minimum guidelines in Kenya exist to cater for children aged zero to three. As a result, most daycare centers were run like businesses. Also, the study reiterated that quality ECD means adequate play, as children learn through play. Further reading on [Kidogo, here](#).

4.7.2 Child-Friendly Environment for Enhanced Resilience among Children in Early Learning Settings

Dr Roseline Shimuli Olumbe¹, Daystar University¹

Children thrive and excel in secure environments that enhance their resilience and holistic development. Negative environments lead to poor language development, behavior problems, deficits in school readiness, regression, anxiety, depression, and impaired cognitive development. Skilled caregivers can nurture and support children towards resilience. A study that targeted 180 sampled children in 11 children homes within Lower Kabete and Dagoretti Sub-counties, Dr Olumbe found out that resilience of children was enhanced by individual, caregiver and contextual factors. Individual factors contributed the least (50.40%) resilience, implying that children had problems due to their negative early years' experiences. Caregivers contributed the most (63.06%) resilience in children through both physical and psychological

⁹ Kidogo early years seeks to address the gap on quality of early caregiving environments in urban slum settings, through their hub and spoke model of intervention.

caregiving. Contextual factors explained (54.15%) resilience. There was a possibility that early abuse reduced self-confidence and ability to cope. However, education and spiritual had a significant impact on children as opposed to cultural factors. The study recommended establishing safe environments: loving and nurturing homes, experienced and responsive caregivers; and appropriate contexts for enhanced learning. It emerged that key informants were children that had experienced early adversity including abuse and neglect, poverty, criminal offense and abandonment. One of the homes was a rehabilitation centre. Further, although the children were generally resilient, they required psychosocial support.

4.7.3 Integrating child protection into Childcare services: A case study of Kidogo in Nairobi's Informal settlements

Janet Mwitiki¹, Metis fellow¹

Ms Janet started by giving a story of Brian, a child who was often heard saying “Kata shingo...” which he could have acquired during the post-election in 2018 at Kiambio slums in Kenya. She reiterated that integrating Child Protection into ECD was important. Kidogo was integrating child protection as part of the childcare intervention through (I) caregiver capacity building: Mandatory child protection training is provided for all mamapreneurs¹⁰ and caregivers; (II) empowering local community leaders: advocating for local community leaders as the crucial base units of child protection and (III) Promoting local referral systems: acts as the link of identifying local referral systems both in the health facilities and local Administration. Since 2017, 50 mamapreneurs had been capacity built, local community child protection leaders and caregivers drawn from the informal settlements of Kangemi and Kibera empowered. Lessons learnt were that Child Protection cannot be a stand-alone, but rather should be incorporated in domains of child development. Further, that there was need for clear systems and structures for the Child protection process to be effective.

4.7.4 Leaving the Youngest Behind: The challenge of increasing investment and support for early childhood education in Kenya

Michael Simpson¹, Gilbert Ngaria¹, Theirworld

Michael and Gilbert in their presentation maintained that evidence was clear that many children from disadvantaged backgrounds were already well behind their more advantaged peers, even before they had started primary school. He remarked that that ECE was the cornerstone of equity, and a critical step for ensuring that all children succeeded at school. The pair argued that investment in ECE remained critically low in Kenya and across the world. During the session, delegates discoursed on the role that CSOs can play in influencing budget planning, as follows: Partners can promoting multisectoral coordination; get clarity in needs' specification in ECDE investment in Kenya, such as capitation and other needs; support counties to budget better. On the latter counties could be supported to budget better through: inviting members of county assembly responsible for budgeting, to ECD conferences, tasking them to prioritize ECD investment, because data on child protection had not changed from previous years; network members should think

¹⁰ Child care facilities owner or proprietor. The term is coined from the swahili word mama (mother) and entrepreneur.

about mental health for teachers, children and caregivers; and inviting more Early childhood teachers to ECD conferences.



CONCLUSION

The closing ceremony was completed by sharing of the conference communique, read out by Stella Ndugire - Mbugua on behalf of the ECD Networks' secretariat. The 2019 Communique and Mombasa Call to Action was drafted under six themes, including: Investments, childcare, parent empowerment, coordination, research and documentation.

Key actions for Kenya encourages each actor in the ECD space to work towards mentoring young scholars and professionals pursuing careers in early childhood development; advocating for research agenda focused on equitable childcare services for ALL children under five years especially the hard-to-reach; multisectoral and coordinated programming in the early years and scalable including cost-effective ECD models. It was resolved that the National ECD Stakeholders' Conference shall be held biennially, and on a rotational basis, in all the 47 Counties. The 4th Biennial National ECD Stakeholders' Conference would be held in Siaya County in 2021.

ANNEXES

Documented Practices by Actors in ECD

From the presentations at the Mombasa conference, five cases or stories which emanated from members implementing ECD projects, were sieved by an independent team of rapporteurs. However, Lumos and Kidogo also shared case studies that can be found earlier in the report. The cases are for stakeholders in ECD to learn from, research about, support or replicate. They include:

- ANNEX 1 - Field Visit: Mombasa County's Model ECD Centre
- ANNEX 2 - The Case of County First Ladies Association (CFLA)
- ANNEX 3 - The Case of Smart Start Siaya
- ANNEX 4 - MECP-K, a program of Aga Khan Foundation, East Africa
- ANNEX 5 - Clean Start



Figure 1: Pre Conference field visit – ECDNeK and stakeholders visit Utange ECD Centre, attached to Hassan Joho Primary School, in Mombasa County on 29 July, 2019.

Annex 1 - Field Visit: Mombasa County's Model ECD Centre

As a pre-conference activity, a field visit to Elimu School, Utange Model ECD centre, was termed enlightening by members and stakeholders. On 29th July 2019, delegates to the conference visited Utange ECD centre which is hosted at Hassan Joho Primary School in Mombasa County. However, the Centre is clearly de-linked from the primary school, markedly giving young children a friendly environment to play, learn and thrive without getting interruption from the primary.

The public, community owned ECD centre has spacious indoor learning spaces for under fours as well as classrooms for preschoolers. Delegates observed that the children were confident, naturally at ease as they interacted with them. Teachers were observed to be motherly and exhibited very good rapport and interaction with children. The centre was deemed to be "homey," as was reported an Early Childhood Student from Kenyatta University.

Play spaces were filled with an array of locally available materials. Learning and play things were improvised from colorfully painted sticks or shells among other safe, clean, low cost materials; all displayed within diverse learning areas and corners. "Utange ECD was found to be an extremely material-rich centre. Classes were well done: very spacious, clean with all corners full and rich for learning.

The under four year olds were observed seated on the floor in circular formation, in child-friendly spaces. However, the learning and material development lessons are teacher-directed. This can be improved in line with the new Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) that is learner-centered. Further, of the 90 children attending, the ECD centre has more boys than girls enrolled. ECD Network found out that many girls in the community have parenting responsibility too early: they take care of their younger siblings. The pupil to teacher ratio was reported as age appropriate. "Caregivers and teachers at the school have capacity to adequately provide holistic development for young children in a natural environment," reported a Member from Kajiado County. Although attached to a public school, members reported that the parents and community are supportive of the initiative, and regularly participate in providing holistic support to the young learners.

Members also participated in an early learning lesson. They observed a pre Primary 1 (PP1) class filled with vibrant assorted shapes for children to identify, and name. It culminated in children beading, tracing and modelling the shapes. Although the learning environment is rich for the young learners, the team that visited reported that 99% of materials are from teachers and parents. "We recommend for children's work to be displayed in more spaces, at Utange ECD," suggested an ECD proprietor from Nairobi County.

Network members termed Utange ECD as a model public centre. It was reiterated that teachers had capacity to support learning and socialization of the children, and the local community very involved in running of the initiative. Holistic development of the children at the centre, was evident. It was suggested that the school be a model for replication in other counties, and towns at the Pwani (coastal) region. Members thanked colleagues from Mombasa County, ECDNeK Secretariat, and especially Najma Rashid

and her team, whose support and pre-planning behind the scenes was critical towards the success of the field visit.

Annex 2 - The Case of County First Ladies Association (CFLA)

The County First Ladies Association (CFLA) is a forum of female spouses of seating elected Governors from Counties. Incepted in 2014 after the 2013 general elections and commencement of the County Government system, CFLA is non-political and non-religious. The objective of the Association is to advocate for and promote economic, social, health and cultural rights and programs in the County Governments. The office of the County First Lady (Mama County) influences and advocates for specific causes within their mandate. The First Ladies are role models to many women and girls. They therefore act as a unifying factor in community initiatives at their counties. Some of the girls are teen mothers to children of ECD age.

According to H.E. Mrs Nazi Kivutha, CFLA had initiated joint implementation programs for all First Ladies: Initiatives on Adolescent Health which focused on Menstrual Hygiene management, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Education, Nutrition Education, Mentorship and Life Skills Development in addition to Policy influencing, in the counties.

CFLA needs financing to advance its development causes. However, CFLA is vigorously fundraising, reviewing their strategic plan and collaborating with development partners in Education and ECD. Nevertheless, they have been able to implement diverse projects in the past. H.E. Nazi, during the 2019 stakeholders' conference acknowledged the support of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Alliance Kenya WHO had enabled CFLA implement school milk supply programs in two ECD centres in each of three counties (Garissa, West Pokot and Makueni). She also reiterated that ECD corresponded well with CFLA's Adolescence program as many teenage girls targeted were mothers to children of ECD age.

County First Ladies have also sensitized parents in the counties on nutrition matters. As a result of the nutrition advocacy efforts, parents had begun contributing and enhancing the pupils' diet through a complementary feeding program and establishing kitchen gardens in local schools. This had also resulted in tremendous improvement in students' health and school attendance. Through this initiative, Makueni County Government, for example, committed to support the two ECDs with water tanks for sustainability of the kitchen gardens. These efforts had been achieved through the convening power of the CFLA in partnership with the private sector and the county government. *For further reading, visit cfla.or.ke*

Annex 3 - The Case of Smart Start Siaya

Siaya County is implementing an integrated approach to ECD. Incepted in 2013 after the commencement of the County Government System, Siaya's ECD program targets all children under five and their families. The intervention is aimed at scaling up nurturing care in the county. Being multi-sectoral, the approach to

holistic child development draws active involvement of players from sectors of *Health, Education, Agriculture, Social services (Children's department) as well as the Offices of the First Lady and the Governor.*

Despite having previously investing heavily in ECD, Siaya County suddenly realized that they had not adequately targeted children under three years. An evaluation report of their ECD project also unearthed: knowledge gaps on brain science and nurturing care, maternal mental health difficulties which incapacitate them from providing adequate care, high rates of early pregnancies, inadequate male involvement, high number of unregistered children and interventions in the early years were in silos.

The First Lady of Siaya County H.E Rosella Rasanga, at the Mombasa conference, revealed that in 2017, Siaya County had convened with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation representatives¹¹. Within the confines of the meeting, her office requested for further support to scale up ECD initiatives which had been initiated in 2013. The request was graciously granted. Subsequently, in 2018, through support from Hilton Foundation, H.E. Governor Cornel Rasanga and the ECD Focal Officer of Siaya undertook a course on Scaling Early Childhood Initiatives at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University (HKS). Thereafter, the Siaya team developed a work plan for scaling ECD. The model adopted was a government-led multisectoral approach to ECD, with the First Lady of Siaya as Patron.

During her address at the conference in Mombasa, H.E. Mrs Rasanga reiterated that ECD ought to start early - in the womb. She cited evidence from science proving that brain development starts at conception and therefore the first 1,000 days were pivotal, as about 85% of the brain was formed by the age of three. Therefore, this meant that about 20% of brain development occurred after the age of three, within the environment and through schooling. Families, communities and governments were urged to join Siaya in ensuring a Smart Start for all children under the age of five, especially by supporting parents and caregivers. *For more information visit siaya.go.ke*

Annex 4 - MECP-K, a program of Aga Khan Foundation, East Africa

The Aga Khan Foundation's Madrasa Early Childhood Program (MECP) was established in the mid 80's to foster child-centered, contextually relevant early learning environments in community preschools. With over three and a half decades of operation, MECP operates in the three East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. As a result, the model has benefited more than 300,000 children, with potential of benefiting more when replicated.

MECP began as a pilot project at the request of the Muslim community in Mombasa, Kenya. Target beneficiaries included children of ECD age, through their caregivers and teachers. The MECP's teacher-training curriculum is founded on contextual pedagogy, enabling the teachers to nurture children's learning as they develop and transition to school. Use of age-appropriate low-cost teaching and learning materials is at the centre stage of learning. Young children are encouraged to manipulate the learning materials, and facilitated to explore their creativity which promotes practical learning.

¹¹ Siaya County (2018). *Nurturing Care*. Siaya, Kenya. Retrieved from: <http://siaya.go.ke/nurturing-care/>

Teachers guide free choice for learners thus, contributing to expanding their creativity. Further, the teachers use appropriate language through rich vocabulary and child-friendly tone to stimulate children's curiosity in a sensitive and supportive manner. Teachers equally play a facilitative role in guiding and



expanding learning through large and small groups. For MECP, developing child-friendly spaces means ensuring availability of age-appropriate, attractive, safe, durable variety of adequate teaching and learning materials that are applied in a skilful manner to elicit positive human interactions.

Teacher training using the MECP curriculum that is faith-founded; development of a variety of rich materials improvised from the environment, and use of materials in lesson delivery are practices that are replicable, especially in low-cost contexts. The MECP approach has been proved to

enhance manipulation and language development in early learners. The community is also included to support developing and replenishing of play and learning materials. Children are also encouraged to bring available local resources, and videos of children playing are aired from the Science of ECD media developed by UNICEF and Aga Khan Development Network. MECP partners with government and stakeholders to showcase the teaching and learning materials. The strong community approaches employed have influenced scaling up in the coastal region and Kisumu, in Kenya. More importantly, children are encouraged and facilitated into utilizing the low-cost materials.

Nevertheless, implementing the MECP model in marginalised communities where resources are meagre, has been challenging. Children in the contexts are vulnerable and susceptible to stunting and suboptimal development. MECP has however succeeded by establishing and managing high-quality preschools with great emphasis given to teacher capacity building that enables young children access holistic learning and opportunities to develop holistically. Exposing the vulnerable children to inclusive environments enables them to survive, thrive and attain their full potential. MECP also recognizes that county governments still experience diverse challenges in efforts to provide quality ECDE. The MECP experience proves that implementers can work closely with County Governments within their areas of operation, to influence improved ECD funding. (*Further reading on MECP [here](#)*).

Annex 5 - Clean Start

Clean Start is a social enterprise that seeks to help women in detention have a clean start – a second chance. Clean Start builds bridges for them. Founded by Teresa Njoroge and Joss Carruthers in 2015, Clean Start goes into the Prisons, to train the women, build their skills, tools and support to enable them change their mind-sets, their behaviours and attitudes. Clean Start also builds bridges into the Prisons - from corporates, individuals and organisations that would enable the social enterprise create employment,

places to call home, jobs, vocational training for these women, girls, boys and men, upon transition back into society. Children of the inmates, of ECD age, are also supported to develop holistically.

In 2016, the number of female prisoners in Kenya was estimated at 3,762.^{12,13} Because women are often the primary caregivers for minors, their imprisonment cannot be considered in isolation. On average, about 600 children accompanying their mothers to prison, in the 35 female prisons countrywide. An incarcerated mother has the choice to stay with her child in prison until they attain the age of five (5). Noteworthy is the fact that the earliest relationships in a child's life are the foundation for later development, allowing for secure attachments later in life. Studies have shown that children who do not sufficiently bond with their mothers are prone to developmental problems. Attachment disorders cause such children to suffer from behavioural issues and may engage in criminal activity. It is imperative therefore, to enhance the suitability of the conditions under which they live, to their developmental needs.



Although, the legal framework protecting these children is vast, including the Prison Act and the Persons Deprived of Liberty Act which provide that incarcerated mothers are *entitled* to diet, clothing, healthcare, education, play and facilities necessary for all needs of the child; there is very little budget allocation for such children; and therefore no specific guidelines and structures to ensure implementation of these policies and laws.

Among the children accompanying their mothers to prison, are some born within the prison walls. In this regard, maternal health¹⁴ can be a concern. International laws dictate that for women in detention, there shall be special accommodation for all necessary prenatal and postnatal care and treatment. In prisons, this care is not equivalent to that available outside prison. Prevalence of malnutrition among young children is high, (Makau, Ochola & Mbithe, 2016) as established in a study of the prisons in Kenya. Wasting was found to be 8.9%, underweight 14.1% while stunting was 18.8%¹⁵. Also, inadequate care and opportunities to play. The children do not have playing areas or recreational facilities, and during the day, are left under the care of an inmate. The right to free compulsory basic education is a challenge in Kenyan prisons too, because the government has not actively provided facilities for learning.

¹² World Prison Brief. *World Prison Brief Data: Kenya*. Retrieved from: <https://prisonstudies.org/country/kenya>

¹³ Khan, O.P. (2018). *Introducing a gender-sensitive approach to pre-trial assessment and probation: Evaluation of an innovation in Kenya*. *Probation Journal*, 65 (2), pp. 184-200. GB: United Kingdom. Retrieved from: westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/

¹⁴ Maternal Health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period.

¹⁵ Makau, M. N., Ochola, S., & Mbithe, D. (2016). *Feeding Practices of Children Aged 0-59 Months Accompanying Incarcerated Mothers in Selected Women's Prisons in Kenya*. Kenyatta University, Kenya. Retrieved from <https://benthamopen.com/FULLTEXT/TONUTRJ-11-1>

Clean Start, endeavouring to reform and transform the criminal justice system, calls for inclusivity of ECD into the prisons, where children are facing discrimination contrary to the Constitution, as they do not enjoy the same rights as children living out of prisons. With the gaps in implementation of the law, there is need for specific structures to cater for these who are excluded from the children's agenda in Kenya. Recommendations for Civil society: increase partnership and coordination; increase scope of work as there are millions in prisons yearning for freedom; reach out to children in the prisons. For the **State**: Implement current laws and policies; fast-track the county ECE Bill (2018); and lastly, ensure clarity of roles between National and County governments. (*Watch Clean Start's story on [Ted Talk](#) or read further [here](#)*)