



4th NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE
25th – 28th, October, 2021
Siaya County, Kenya

***THEME: RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING FOR CHILDREN IN DIVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES:
INNOVATIONS AND INCLUSIVITY***

Background

The early years (0-8 years) form the foundation of human development, serving as the most critical period for survival, growth, lifelong learning and development. The period is marked with rapid brain development 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 higher risk of not reaching their full developmental potential because conditions threaten their nurturing care (Lancet, 2016). In Kenya, exposure to child poverty and inadequate care characterized by malnutrition, toxic stress and lack of stimulation increases risks of the children not reaching their development potential. Kenya's constitution, under Article 53, guarantees the right of the child to free and compulsory basic education, nutrition, shelter, health care and protection. In order to realize this constitutional provision, the National Government in collaboration with the County Governments and other stakeholders have made great strides in the development of policy frameworks targeting Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health, Early Learning and Stimulation, Food Security and Child Protection. However, gaps in the coordination, ECD Workforce development and adequate financing continue to affect access to quality, affordable, equitable and relevant ECD services to children and their families across the country.

About The Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya (ECD Network for Kenya)

ECD Network for Kenya exists to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the Government (at National and County Levels) and non-state actors and support development and implementation of relevant ECD policies and programmes in Kenya through capacity development, research and advocacy. The Network works closely with National and County governments, organizations, parents and community members to ensure that children are able to access and participate in high-quality, holistic Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs. Specifically, the Network seeks to:

1. Promote equitable access to quality ECD services in Kenya for all children
2. Develop and work for an enabling environment that encourages local research in ECD
3. Strengthen ECD stakeholders' collaboration and coordination
4. Influence financial resource allocation and utilization towards ECD programs in Kenya

The 4th National Early Childhood Stakeholders' Conference

The County Government of Siaya in collaboration with the Early Childhood Network for Kenya (ECDNeK) are pleased to announce its 4th Blended National ECD Stakeholders Conference. The conference anticipates bringing together ECD practitioners, researchers, policy makers and leaders from various national and county governments as well as research institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, donors, and the media. The conference will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss and share insights on the status of ECD programs in Kenya, innovations and challenges, creating resolutions to establish a holistic/multi-sectoral approach towards ECD in Kenya that will enhance implementation of the Nurturing Care Framework¹ through policy and practice.

Proposed Theme and Objectives of the 4th ECD Stakeholders' Conference

Theme: *Responsive Caregiving for Children in Diverse Circumstances: Innovations and Inclusivity*
(Considerations: All children in emergencies and other circumstances; Covid-19 crisis/Response; early

¹Nurturing care framework refers to road map/call to action that seeks to achieve a stable environment created by parents and other caregivers in ensuring good health and nutrition, protection against threats, and provision of opportunities for early learning for children, through interactions that are emotionally supportive and responsive https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/child/nurturing-care-framework-rationale/en/

learning, health system/workers; home; child-cares and related facilities such as prisons, refugee settings and places of worship).

The **objectives** of the conference include:

- i. Create awareness on the need for integration of nurturing care practices in ECD service delivery;
- ii. advocate for systemic change through policy, at National and County levels;
- iii. Push for increased sustainable nurturing care investments in Kenya
(Considerations: demand for government to be intentional about budget allocations; for example, NHIF; young women accessing credit for their children; Linda mama; Women's economic empowerment)
- iv. Interrogate the social fabric and its impact on holistic child development
(Considerations: positive cultural values; intergenerational discourse on passing down morality; case studies; caregiver experiences, COVID 19 response)

Proposed conference **sub-themes**

- Childcare in Humanitarian situations
- Policies, Guidelines, Regulations and financing in Childcare settings
- Childcare in urban informal Settings
- Childcare in diverse religious and cultural settings
- Childcare at the workplace/marketplace
- Childcare for the vulnerable groups (e.g. disability, orphans, institutionalized, children in incarceration, street children)
- Childcare and Women's Economic Empowerment
- Rethinking childcare workforce
- Male involvement in childcare work
- Protection and Safety in Childcare
- SDGS and Emerging Issues in Childcare settings
- Teen motherhood and the plight of children of teen mothers
- COVID-19 and Childcare
- The Nurturing Care Framework

Conference Expected Outcome

By the end of the conference it is expected that participants will commit to raising the profile of the ECD agenda in Kenya through strategic financial investment, multi-sectoral collaboration and engagement in related public policy processes both at the National and County level. Similar to the second conference, participants will lobby the political leadership to prioritize ECD as a critical sector and showcase best practices from counties currently scaling up ECD initiatives. A conference report and communique will be developed post conference and media communication activities. Documented conference proceedings will therefore be shared through a written report and documentary.

Participants and Program

This conference seeks to catalyze a multi-sectoral discourse that would lead to strengthened ECD service delivery systems for enhancing access to quality services for all children. The conference targets participants with diverse expertise and backgrounds from:

- Government (National and County)
- Donor agencies
- CBOs, CSOs and religious orgs
- Academia/Research
- Private Sector
- Philanthropies

We look forward to welcoming you to the 4th National ECD Stakeholders' Conference 2021. The event shall run from 25th to 28th of October 2021. We shall showcase an array of work streams designed to engage all participants through plenary presentations, symposia, group discussions and interactive panel sessions. The conference will also offer a multitude of formal and informal networking opportunities, an exhibition of the latest ECD programming innovations in ECD best practices, as well as tools and services.

The full conference program will be available on the ECD Network for Kenya website (<http://www.ecdnetworkforkenya.org>) once it is finalized.