



## PRESS RELEASE

# **CEREBRATING THE DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD 2024 AND LAUNCH OF THE CHILDCARE CAMPAIGN DIALOGUES**

## **Introduction**

The Day of the African Child is marked every year on June 16<sup>th</sup>. It is an important milestone and a reminder of the struggles and liberation of children in Africa. The Day provides African governments with the opportunity to review progress made in protecting and promoting the welfare of children and setting new goals and strategies to enhance them. The theme for this year is: *Education for All Children in Africa: The time is Now.*

In Kenya, the Day was launched on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2024 in Kitui and will be celebrated at Mwatate Primary School in Taita Taveta at a function that will be presided over by top government officials. The event will bring together key stakeholders such as the national and county governments, civil society, caregivers, religious organizations, private sector, among others, who are involved in childcare work. As a pre-celebration, the ECD Network for Kenya and actors in the childcare space have organized a childcare press conference that is held today 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at Tamarind Hotel Nairobi Kenya to reflect on the status of childcare in Kenya.

## **Childcare**

The World Bank (2020) defines childcare as a service with the primary objective of caring for children while parents are away/working. The service seeks to ensure children are safe and have opportunities to learn and develop positive relationships with caregivers and peers. UNICEF point out that childcare is a continuous process of monitoring a child's development and provision of interventions and therapies that respond to each child's unique situation. Childcare therefore requires solid knowledge, skills and trusting and nurturing relationships by the families and

caregivers. It creates an enriching and stimulating environment for the development of children during early childhood.

### **Role of families in childcare**

Families are the primary caregivers, offering early intervention, creating a safe environment and providing opportunities for early learning. For families to provide proper childcare, they need guidance and support. Further, the health and wellbeing of caregivers is critical for the development of the children and preparing them for adulthood.

### **Context of the campaign**

A child's earliest years (0-3) are the most critical period for their development requiring them to be in a safe, and stimulating environment. The absence of a safe and growth-enabling environment deprives children's ability to achieve their developmental milestones. Childcare is often regarded as a woman's role in most family setups, which burdens, and limits women's labor participation. This calls for the need to create awareness at national, subnational and local levels on proper childcare, and enhance women's labour force participation.

The World Bank estimates that about 350 million children below primary school age, representing more than 40 per cent of that population, do not have access to proper childcare. Additionally, it is estimated that about 40 per cent of pre-school children are not enrolled. The childcare burden is widely felt among children under the age of three years, because the costs of keeping them is generally higher and few countries have policies or provision that cater for their needs.

The gaps in access to childcare are acute in low-income economies where resources and policies are not available to support the children. In Africa, about 35 million children live without parental care, according to a report by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Poor quality of childcare impacts a child's development outcomes and future potential in life.

Against this backdrop, countries have an obligation to expand access to quality, affordable childcare. According to the World Bank, national governments should implement a wide range of policies, including those that correct the market failures to boost economies and build a strong enabling environment to expand access to quality, affordable childcare.

## **Childcare Care Campaign Dialogues**

The Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya (ECDNek) and key stakeholders are launching a Childcare Campaign Dialogues across Kenya to create awareness and mobilize support for initiatives that address the needs of children. The Dialogues will take place across the 8 economic blocs and address issues such as promoting nurturing care, child protection, child-friendly policies, gender policies and community participation in childcare. Likewise, the dialogues seek to address community and cultural concerns that impact childcare negatively and the remedies to mitigate against the negative outcomes.

The Childcare Campaign Dialogues commence today the 14<sup>th</sup> day of June 2024 celebrating the day of the African child through a press conference and will continue for six months until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. In this regard, there is need for media coverage to create public awareness on the importance of providing quality childcare services for children ages 0-5 years. The ECD Network for Kenya is thus leading a six months nationwide childcare dialogue campaigns to enhance public participation and inspire debates on affordable and accessible quality childcare services.

*For inquiries, Contact Dr. Teresa Mwoma, National Coordinator ECD Network for Kenya [tbitengo@yahoo.com](mailto:tbitengo@yahoo.com) or [earlychildhoodnetwork2016@gmail.com](mailto:earlychildhoodnetwork2016@gmail.com)*