



**Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen, all protocols observed, Good Day.**

**THE KENYA NATIONAL CHILDCARE DIALOGUE,  
HELD AT SAFARI PARK HOTEL, IN NAIROBI COUNTY ON 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2024,  
THEMED: *UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILDCARE AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES FOR  
CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS IN KENYA***

**NATIONAL CHILDCARE DIALOGUE COMMUNIQUE AND CALL TO ACTION**

**Preamble:** Developing a country's human capital begins with giving children the best start to life. This requires servant leadership and holistic investments, starting with those left furthest behind or marginalised. Providing nurturing care during early childhood and across the life course is reflected in the **SDG 4: Target 4.2**, which states that by 2030 ALL girls and boys have access to quality childhood development, care and pre-primary education.

The evidence is clear that genes provide the blueprint for the brain, and that the child's care environment shapes brain development and their future potential. Though the brain undergoes significant changes across the lifespan, foundations are built from conception to 5 years, continuing to age 18, and up to age 25. Early Childhood Development (ECD) covers holistic development for ALL children aged 0-8 years, but a policy gap for 0-3s persists.

Young children in Eastern and Southern Africa face multiple deprivations. Globally, 40% of 350 million children (or 8 out of 10) lack access to quality childcare. Also, 66% of children under five are at risk of poor developmental outcomes. Parents or fathers and mothers together, need support to preserve positive indigenous knowledge, in peacebuilding, and creating safe and secure play based-learning environments for their children. Deliberations of various delegates of the national childcare dialogue were collated as follows:

**National Call to Action for Kenya**

This Communique calls on all Early Childhood Development care and Education State and non-state actors to support sustainable, inclusive child development actions. We urge all stakeholders to engage in coordinated efforts and interventions. Substantive action-oriented recommendations made in the childcare dialogue are as follows:

**Multi-Stakeholder Coordination**

Cognizant of the important role different stakeholders' play in the child's development, there is need to:

- Provide affordable and accessible childcare for the working class, and the informal labour force who are marginalized.
- Integrate Nurturing Care for ECD services, across the social sectors, for healthy growth and development of children.
- Reduce child mortality by updating KDHS data to reverse health, education and livelihoods affecting the family.
- Introduce family-friendly policies to improve workforce satisfaction; capacity build families and their communities on holistic care, ensuring that all children are safe, including those who have faced trauma and the gifted.

- Support a holistic (all development domains) legal and policy environment; Institutionalise Integrated ECD policy implementation as not-for-profit; and organise stakeholders to understand licensing of quality childcare facilities.
- Implement Nurturing Care for ECD Advocacy Strategy, National Social and Behaviour Change Communication strategy.
- Innovate solutions to address complex problems facing rural and urban communities; and access domestic and external financing to support youth participation in childcare.
- Leverage multisectoral partnership (break silos) for quality care in institutions of incarcerated mothers (prisons); and develop strategy for reintegrating children into families and communities, train all caregivers to ensuring that children accompanying their mothers to prison receive holistic and inclusive care.

### **Child Health**

Acknowledging the critical role quality childcare services play in promoting child health, there is need for:

- Robust knowledge generation and dissemination, and integrated Monitoring and Evaluation systems.
- Use of data and innovate; Regular assessment, adequate nutrition and access to essential vaccines in all settings; while adapting and contextualising data collection tools and instruments.
- Establishing and maintaining databases of childcare services for all children 0-10 years, capturing different forms, noting the policy gap for 0-3-year-olds and ensuring parental consent.
- Recognising, training, motivating childminders, parents/caregivers, particularly those in the informal sector.
- Reducing the burden of unpaid childcare work on women and girls by promoting the 5Rs: recognize, reduce, redistribute, reward, resilience.

### **Early Childhood Education**

Aware of the importance of providing quality early learning opportunities for a firm foundation in education for all children, there is need to:

- Strengthen partnership between state and non-state actors, including faith action, and build leadership capacity in ECD, to enhance quality for greater impact.
- Leverage multisectoral partnerships to empower parents and support them to embrace Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition.
- Support parents and caregivers to form strong and secure early attachment for under 5s; implement the National Positive Parenting Manual in all settings; aligning relevant policies with other sectors for holistic care; whilst monitoring Social Development progress through similar National childcare dialogues.
- Invest in infrastructure on Water and Health Sanitation (WASH) to enhance children's safety/security and improve quality and standards, and air quality in Early Childhood Care and Education environments.
- Recognise the work of children as play-based learning; enhance reading and storytelling, to stimulate or build lifelong foundations for learning for all children in all households, neighbourhoods, and communities.
- Enrich early learning curriculums to include early financial literacy; Capacity build ECD workforce to enhance quality early childhood Education, while ensuring that all informal ECD workforce is trained and certified.
- Promote inclusive classroom infrastructure to accommodate all learners, including mobile classrooms and invest more in tools of work for children, including low-cost, safe play

equipment and learning materials in households, neighbourhoods, childcare and early learning facilities.

- Enhance ECD knowledge dissemination while benchmarking models of ECD to bridge the gaps.

### **Engaging male parents/caregivers in childcare**

Cognizant of the critical role male parents/caregivers play in a child's development, there is need to:

- Institutionalise Integrated ECD policy implementation across sectors and encourage male engagement on childcare.
- Universalize, in all settings, responsive care, holistic child development and positive fatherhood in Early Childhood Development and basic education.
- Enhance youth employment by encouraging youth skills development and entrepreneurship in childcare, to bridge the gap between education and industry (unique) needs.

*Endorsed on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024, during the National Childcare Dialogue 2024 held at Safaripark Hotel in Nairobi County, Kenya, themed, "Universal access to quality childcare and child protection services for children 0-5 years in Kenya." **We the 149 delegates congregated at the National Childcare Dialogue, from 8 County Governments in Kenya** comprising Government; National Council for children Services (NCCS), Department of Children Services (DCS), Directorate of Social Development (DSD), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education (MOE), Kenya Prisons Service (KPS), Council of Governors (COG), Deputy Governor, Nairobi County, County representatives from; Nairobi County, Embu County, Siaya County, Kericho County, Kajiado County, Nakuru County, Makueni and Vihiga County; United Nations Agencies, Civil Society Organizations, Faith-Based Organizations, Donors, ECD professionals, practitioners, caregivers and academia.*

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