



SIXTH NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE (2025)

Theme: Promoting Transformative Systemic Change in a Child's Ecosystem

15th - 17th July, 2025
Palm Oasis Resort, Garissa County

CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE AND CALL TO ACTION

#6thECDConf; #6thECD; #6thConference

We the **1165** (435 physically present and 677 via YouTube day one and 53 From Zoom) from **24 counties in Kenya, 6 countries** and over **56 + organizations** comprising Government officials, United Nations agencies, Civil Society, Philanthropists, Donors, and Academia; all convening for the Sixth National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Stakeholders' Conference held from 15th - 17th July, 2025 at Palm Oasis Hotel, Garissa County, Kenya, themed "Promoting Transformative Systemic Change in a Child's Ecosystem."

This conference celebrates and applauds the ECD Network for Kenya on its 10 Year Anniversary for pioneering and galvanizing collective multi-sectoral action on behalf of Kenya's youngest children. The conference celebrates the establishment of a **State Department for Children Services** under the Ministry of Gender, Culture and Children Services by the Executive Order no.1 of 2025. The Conference acknowledges that at the county level, momentum is accelerating with improving investment in integrated ECD services, improved implementation and effectiveness.

The 6th National ECD Stakeholders' Conference acknowledges that challenges persist, notably in childcare for children 0-3 years, the education and learning for young children, children in emergencies, for children with disabilities and those experiencing violence. In addition, regional inequalities and shortcomings persist. In the Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC), their 2025 Baseline Survey Report shows that in the 10 Counties, 1 in 8 children are not achieving developmental milestones; only 9.1% households in the region have adequate dietary diversity, and 78% of households experience food insecurity.

The delegates note that ECD targeted spending focusing on children aged 0-5 years significantly reduces child poverty, from 47% to 30% in 4 years, accompanied by large social benefits. However, based on UNICEF findings, ECD spending in Kenya stands at only \$81 per child, far below the regional average of \$138. They noted the need to ring fence ECD funding within

County and National Budgets, with supporting ECD annexes and performance-linked disbursement models.

The GARISSA CALL FOR ACTION:

Building on this conference's proceedings, we make the following Call to Action.

We urge all state, non-state actors, decision-makers and stakeholders at County and National levels to ensure that **no child is left behind** and adopt a **child-centered approach to policy, governance, practice and accountability**. In doing so, the Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy and the Children Act, 2022 should be the reference points informing activities, services, and provision at all levels of government, with governmental oversight.

We call for the mainstreaming of a **multi-sectoral** whole-of-society approach for inclusive, **community-based** culturally contextualized child development initiatives to enable vulnerable children including children with disabilities, those accompanying their mothers to prisons, those in refugee camps, informal settlements, emergencies, rural communities, and other marginalized settings, to receive equitable childcare services to grow and develop to their full potential.

The following are the substantive policy and action-oriented recommendations made at this conference:

1. Sustaining Early Childhood Development Initiatives

- Uphold the duty of county governments in the delivery of integrated ECD services in the context of guidelines and policies established at the national level, in a **whole-of-government approach**, fulfilling constitutional obligations in upholding the rights of all children in Kenya, ensuring pregnant mothers and children have a good start in life;
- Build political will and **dedicated investment** for children at the county and national level by utilizing existing participatory processes, government systems, political leadership and the First Spouses as **ECD Champions**.
- Focus on community-level, culturally contextualized interventions and invest in the **capacity of families** to provide nurturing care, positive discipline and early interventions.

2. Strengthening Early Childhood Development Systems

- Strengthen food systems by rebalancing nutrition financing to increase allocations to high-impact, nutrition-specific programs such as maternal and child nutrition services, supplementation, treatment of acute malnutrition, and school meals, especially at the county level. **Nutrition-specific investments** comprise just 10.5% of total nutrition-related spending and approximately 1.1% of county budgets, despite their direct impact on malnutrition, (UNICEF, 2025).
- Align child protection with ECD multisectoral approach and counties to develop child protection systems.
- Institutionalize safeguarding at all levels of the community and institutions.

- Strengthen early learning systems and structures through integration of play based learning, curriculum implementation and domestication of policies by counties.
- Empower Early Childhood Development Leadership at the County level.
- Mainstream and harness technology for improved ECD outcomes.
- Strengthen data systems and the use of data to establish unit costs, inform investments, decisions, and monitoring performance.
- Institutionalize **citizen led scorecards, County Nutrition Investment Scorecards and feedback mechanisms** to track delivery gaps, foster transparency and promote citizen engagement.

3. Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity in the Implementation of Nurturing Care

- Avail and facilitate adoption and application of Ministry of Education **models on integration** of competing cultural early learning practices with formal ECDE to eliminate delayed school entry and transition for children in pastoral communities; building on the Science of ECD to maximize child development in the first 1,000 days and the subsequent 3,000 days (ages 0-8), when brain development is most rapid and the foundation of an individual's skills and capabilities is laid.
- Further empower, through **capacity building and training**, the ECD workforce, including parents and caregivers, to address the need for early detection, screening and support of children with disabilities, including children with extraordinary talent.

4. Climate Resilient Models in Early Childhood Development

- Build **resilient systems** to ensure they are adaptable and quickly respond to the needs of children in the context of climate shocks by strengthening behavioral change, early warning systems that put the needs of the child and pregnant mothers at the centre, establishing climate-resilient infrastructure and promoting community-led climate action;
- Train children and facilitate their participation in **climate-smart practices**, including ECD interventions in climate funding and in the financing of locally-led climate action (FLOCA).

5. The seventh biennial National ECD Stakeholders' Conference will be held in Embu County in 2027.

Endorsed on 17th July, 2025 at the Sixth National ECD Stakeholders' Conference, held at Palm Oasis Hotel, Garissa County, Kenya