



Nurturing care for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities: Opportunities, policy gaps, and recommendations

Authors: Silas Onyango, Kenneth Okelo, Ruth Muendo, and Patricia Wekulo

Institution Affiliation: African Population and Health Research Center

Children with neurodevelopmental challenges face inadequacies in neurological and brain functioning resulting in impairments in cognition, communication, mobility, or social interaction. In addition, they are exposed to unfavourable cultural beliefs, discrimination, and family stigma with higher possibilities of maltreatment or neglect.

The limited resources further complicate their care by their caregivers. Moreover, the prolonged parental grief and stress related to parenting a child with a disability. Furthermore, studies in low and middle-income countries have excluded children with disabilities, and therefore little is known on how interventions such as nurturing care programs can be implemented to support them.

The review draws from the empirical evidence on the opportunities under the nurturing care programs that can support children with disabilities. Additionally, the review identified existing opportunities that caregivers can utilize to effectively support the growth and development of their children. The review revealed that intervention implementers could leverage the total inclusion of children with neuro-development disabilities into mainstream policy nurturing care programs such as stimulation and school readiness. Focus on the improvement of the health system's readiness to care holistically for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities is key. Caregivers should be supported through intervention programs that target their mental health and unconditional cash transfers.

Caregiver support groups and training could be useful in improving their abilities to support children with disabilities. Empirical studies should be conducted to inform monitoring and evaluation indices alongside providing data on the magnitude and nature of neurodevelopmental disabilities

