

# 1<sup>ST</sup> NATIONAL POLICY CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA

---

Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi

**9TH - 10TH MARCH 2022**



**CONFERENCE REPORT**

## **Acknowledgements**

The convening and documentation of this First National Policy Conference on ECCED in Kenya was made possible through the generous financial and technical support from the Government of Kenya (National and Counties), The Policy and Regulatory Reforms - Technical Working Group, development partners, various actors, institutions in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) space and participants who registered to participate virtually and physically for the same. Without your support, the inaugural Conference would not have been possible.

## **Asanteni Sana!**

**The Government of Kenya** through the support of: State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education, Ministry of Education, Division of Neonatal and Child Health (DNCH)-Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Council of Governors, Kenya Prisons Service, National Council on the Administration of Justice Special Taskforce on Children matters, Lake Region Economic Block, Teachers Service Commission, Presidential Policy and Strategy Unit, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Educational Assessment and Resource Centres (EARCs) and the County Governments of Nairobi, Kakamega, Kajiado, Busia, Samburu, Trans Nzoia, Makueni, Garissa, Embu, Kisumu, Lamu, Nakuru, Mombasa, Uasin Gishu, Siaya, Kirinyaga, Machakos, Bungoma, Meru, Vihiga, Kitui, Turkana, Nyandarua, Mandera, Tana River, Tharaka Nithi, Kwale, Wajir, Marsabit, West Pokot, Isiolo and Kiambu.

## **Policy and Regulatory Reforms - Technical Working Group Working committees:**

Scientific, Programs, Logistics and Communications.

Members: Child Fund Kenya, Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development, PATH, Kidogo Innovations, Faraja Foundation, The Action Foundation, APHRC, Catholic Relief Services, Community Initiatives Agenda, ECD Network for Kenya (ECDNeK), Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development, Thriving Child, Division of Neonatal and Child Health (DNCH)-Ministry of Health and Uthabiti Africa.

**Development Partners and ECD Partners in Kenya:** Oxfam, Theirword, SDG Philanthropy, Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), Population Council, Organization of African Youth-Kenya, Youth Alive Kenya, Indigenous Resource Management (IREMO), Girl Concern, Girl Child, Mtoto News, Cradle Kenya, SoS Kenya, University of Nairobi (UoN) Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub, KMET, Dignitas, Sahihi Kenya, KANCO, Madrasa Early Childhood Programme (MECP), Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development, Strong Start, Montessori Plus, Association of Women in Agriculture, Usikimye, Dhobi Women Network, Pastoralists Girls Initiative, Tangaza University, Terres Des Hommes, Interreligious Council of Kenya, Mary's Meal, Nature Lock, Acorn Special Tutorials and Bridge Kenya.

**Session Chairs:** Blandina Bobson - Oxfam, Ruth Muendo - APHRC, Dr Esther Kimani - Nairobi City County, Dr Anil Khamis - Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development, Carolinda Awuor - Uthabiti Africa, Phelesia Catherine Akasa - World Bank, Beatrice Oyugi- PATH, Tobias Opiyo - Catholic Relief Services, Joyce Wesonga - Uthabiti Africa

**Conference Moderator:** Gladys Gachanja

**Rapporteurs:** James Waititi, Stella Ndugire-Mbugua – TA, DNCH-MOH, Adhieu, Chol Chiman, Glory Kathure Thunira, Wendy Ong'are, Damaris Mabeya

**Communique developers and reviewers:** Stella Ndugire Mbugua – TA, DNCH-MOH, Ruth Muendo, Dr Anil Khamis and James Watiti

**Abstract Reviewers:** Dr Anil Khamis, Dr George Owino, Dr Margaret Nampija, Dr Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo, Ruth Muendo, Stella Ndugire Mbugua – TA, DNCH-MOH, Kenneth Okello

**Secretariat:** Uthabiti Africa - Joyce Wesonga, Joyce Njoki, Tracy Koske, Irene Wairimu, Sharon Macharia, Noah Kerich, Sofina Merinyo, Susan Wairimu and Sally Moraa- ECD Network for Kenya.

**Virtual Coordinators:** Glamorous Entertainment

**Ushering Team**

**Social Media:** John Miano and team

**Videographer and Editor:** Glamorous Entertainment

**Sound:** Denice Entertainment

**Photographer:** Glamorous Entertainment

**Venue:** Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi

**Thank you very much!**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	1
Acronyms and Abbreviations	4
Foreword	6
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONFERENCE CALL TO ACTION</b>	<b>8</b>
Nairobi Call to Action on ECCED	9
Introduction	10
<b>DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY, 9TH MARCH 2022</b>	<b>12</b>
Opening Session	12
County Presentations	15
Summaries for Main Plenary and Breakout Sessions	21
The Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development	21
Financing Investment and Budgeting	25
Workforce Development	26
Partnership and Coordination	29
Inclusion	30
<b>DAY 2 – THURSDAY, 10TH MARCH 2022</b>	<b>32</b>
County Regulatory Best Practices: Approaches and Processes	32
Summary of Key Messages by Sub-Theme	35
<b>ECCED Summary Context</b>	<b>35</b>
Theme One: Integrating Nurturing Care Framework in Early Childhood Development (Children 0-8 years with a focus on 0-3's):	35
Theme Two: Financing, Investment and Budgeting	36
Theme 3: Inclusion	37
Theme 4: Workforce Development	38
Theme 5: Multi-sectoral Partnerships and Coordination	38
Appendix A: Conference Call to Action	40
Appendix B: Abstract presentation sessions	41
Appendix C: List of Participating Organizations	44

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AfECN	African Early Childhood Network
AKU-IHD	Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development
APHRC	African Population and Health Research Centre
AWAK	Association of Women in Agriculture
BFCI	Baby-Friendly Community Initiatives
CCD	Care for Child Development
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum
CFLA	County First Lady's Association
CHV	Community Health Volunteers
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
CoG	Council of Governors
CST	Caregiver Skills Training
CTP	Caregiver Training Program
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DCS	Department of Children Services
DNCH	Division of Neonatal and Child Health
ECCE	Early Childhood Care Education
ECCED	Early Childhood Care Education and Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECC	Early Childhood Care
ECDNeK	Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya
ECDE	Early Childhood Development and Education
ESTWG	Education Sector Technical Working Group
FPE	Free Primary Education
FY	Financial Year
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GRADIF	Grassroots Development Initiatives Foundation
HE	Her/ His Excellency
HCI	Human Capital Index
HCP	Health Care Providers
HCW	Health Care Worker
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IMNCI	Integrated Management of New-born and Childhood Illness
KMET	Kisumu Medical Education Trust
KNAP	Kenya Nutrition Action Plan
LULUCF	Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry
MECP	Madrasa Early Childhood Program
MSP-N	Multisectoral Platform for Nutrition
MIYCN	Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition

MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MST	Multi-Sectoral Team
NACONEK	National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya
NCPWD	National Council for Persons with Disabilities
NCAJ	National Council on the Administration of Justice
NCF	Nurturing Care Framework
NCCS	National Council for Children's Services
NCfECD	Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development
NDDs	Neurodevelopmental Disabilities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAY	Organization of African Youth-Kenya
PAWA	Partnership for Africa Women Advancement
PFM	Public Finance Management
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PRR	Policy and Regulatory Reform
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRC	Salaries and Remuneration Commission
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UoN	University of Nairobi
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization

## FOREWORD



The Collaborative Action for Childcare in Kenya initiative was conceived as an ever-expanding network of organizations specifically committed to accelerating quality, affordable Early Childhood Care (ECC) in Kenya.

After further stakeholder consultations, the initiative was expanded to respond to the biggest challenges facing the early childhood care, education and development (ECCED) ecosystem. These challenges include: insufficient investments; insufficient coordination; insufficient data to drive change; a highly untrained childcare workforce and a poor policy and regulatory environment.

In our work, we are driven by the strong belief that local organizations, governments and institutions can drive their agenda, through innovative ways that are locally relevant. Collaborative Action demands generous leadership and a deliberate focus to eliminate the tendency to work in silos. There is need for us to leverage each other's strengths and create synergies to achieve quality and affordable childcare in our motherland, Kenya.

To continue making history together, delegates from across Kenya and beyond congregated on 9th and 10th March, 2022 at Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi. The deliberations in this report are proof of strides that will accelerate the growth of the ECCED ecosystem, creating a world where children and their caregivers can thrive. We are driven by principles that guide collaborative working, such as leveraging on each other's strengths, building trust, accountability, and building synergies as opposed to competing.

We ride on the shoulders of researchers, practitioners and government representatives in the ECCED space. We recognise and appreciate the generous leadership of agencies such as UNICEF and the World Bank as well as the contribution of funders and other partners who appreciate the leadership and momentum Kenya can provide on advancing quality and affordable early childhood care. We know we are modelling solutions that can catalyse action not just in Africa but also in other geographies. That is why we need not just investments, but smart investments now. These investments should be anchored in collaborative action, so that it can become common place for stakeholders to work together to support not only policy and legal reform, but also actions that accelerate the growth of women-led childcare micro-enterprises and the development of the childcare micro-enterprises, among others.

The Policy Conference offered an opportunity for us to interact with each other and form connections across county boundaries and across organizations. We learnt from each other and defined ways to hasten contextual and cultural policy and regulatory reforms on ECCED. We recognise it was the first such event, a first step that will hopefully lead to giant strides on policy and regulatory reform in Kenya over the next five years. I also recognise for early childhood care for children under 5, the conversation is just beginning and there is a lot to be done to advance action across the ecosystem.

We noted that most examples of current action by stakeholders seem to be focused on older children, which further highlights the need for further investments targeting all children from 0-8. Uthabiti recognises the need to focus un-equivocal attention on childcare and this continues to be an integral part of our work. However, we recognise that policy and regulatory reform can not leave other children behind.

I hope that in five years, we can reflect together on how, after the Conference, we worked more effectively together and put in place laws and practical policies, regulations and guidelines guiding the growth of the ECCED ecosystem. More importantly, we need to look back and celebrate how our collective action enabled a marked increase in the investments geared towards accelerating quality and affordable early childhood care for all.

*For the Early Childhood Care, Education and Development Technical Working Group (TWG)*

**Asayya Imaya**

**Chair, Policy and Regulatory Reforms-Technical Working Group**

**Founder and CEO, Uthabiti Africa**



*A section of the Policy Regulatory Reforms – Technical Working Group members (PRR-TWG) who organized the 1st National Policy Conference on Early Childhood Care, Education and Development 2022.*

*The PRR-TWG oversees and coordinates the ECCED policy and regulatory reform initiatives to ensure a systematic approach and national and county level.*

## CONFERENCE CALL TO ACTION

During the closing ceremony of the inaugural National Policy Conference on Early Childhood Care, Education and Development (ECCED), held on the 10th of March, 2022, the following Call to Action was crafted and unanimously endorsed:

### **NATIONAL POLICY CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (ECCED) IN KENYA 2022**

**Theme:** *Advancing Kenya's ECCED Legal Reforms in the Era of Devolution*

#ECCEDPolicyConf2022

Sub-themes: Integrating Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) in policy and law, multi-sectoral partnerships and coordination, inclusion, workforce development, and investment.

### **PREAMBLE**

We the 233 delegates, comprising 218 physically present and 15 virtually attending via Zoom, representing National and County Governments, Council of Governors Secretariat, County First Ladies, implementing and research organizations, private sector, international development partners, and supporters convened for the National Policy Conference to advance Kenya's ECCED Legal reforms in the era of devolution.

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) anchors human rights with the Bill of Rights (2010) that for the first time includes children's rights. Article 6 (1) establishes the 47 Counties heralding a devolved system of government and services, particularly in the health and education sectors. Over the last decade, progress has been made in Kenya to reduce stunting and child mortality, increase pre-primary school enrolment, and transition to school. While this progress points to an upward trend in the outcomes for children, it is not steep and steady enough to ensure no child is left behind. The policy gap for children aged zero to four (0-4) years is particularly glaring and leads to the curtailing of the human development potential of the next generation as the critical window of child development remains a missed opportunity.

The Government of Kenya endorsed the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) as a commitment to the global consensus that all children can reach their full potential with the provision of the five interrelated and indivisible components of nurturing care: good health; adequate nutrition; safety and security; responsive caregiving; and opportunities for early learning. The environment in which children grow requires timely responses. Children's enhancement needs responsive regulations, appropriate attention, and critical investment. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, children continue to bear the greatest brunt of compounded adverse effects ranging from maternal stress, household economic instabilities, changing family social and economic priorities and structures among other deleterious effects.

Governments, communities, and organizations must work together to ensure parents and caregivers get the support and resources they and their children need to not just survive but also thrive. Policy and regulatory instruments need to be held accountable to ensure rights to quality care, education, and development are upheld.

ECCED is the pathway to establishing a skilled workforce and to ensuring a healthy and thriving citizenry.

### **Nairobi Call to Action on ECCED**

Thus, we the delegates and the ECCED Policy and Regulatory Reforms Technical Working Group of the inaugural National ECCED Policy Conference make a Call to Action as follows:

1. Integrate the Nurturing Care Framework into policy, legislation, and national and county programming, and; prioritize at the highest political authority, its implementation.
2. Enact (National) Kenya's Early Childhood Development (ECD) policy to strengthen multi-sectoral partnerships, coordination, and collaboration.
3. Harmonize and strengthen systems for developmental monitoring, to ensure assessment, screening, early detection, management, and referral of developmental delays in County and National level programmes.
4. The National Government to support the 47 counties to set up minimum standards for all categories of childcare facilities as per relevant policies.
5. National Government to scale up the capacity building of frontline workers, caregivers, and teachers to integrate Nurturing Care for ECD into maternal and child health services to enable all children to reach their full development potential.
6. The National Government to dedicate funds to guiding financing frameworks that can be adapted by counties, indicating how funding for early childhood should be prioritized and utilized.
7. The 47 County Governments to prioritize investment in early learning, beyond infrastructural development, for holistic development of children.
8. All ECCED actors collaborate and support government efforts in the aforementioned Call to Action.

*Endorsed on 10th March 2022, at the National Policy Conference on Early Childhood Care, Education and Development (ECCED) in Nairobi, Kenya.*

-Ends-

## INTRODUCTION

The first National Policy Conference on Early Childhood Care, Education and Development (ECCED) in Kenya, took place on 9th and 10th March, 2022 at Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi. Convened by the Collaborative Action for Childcare in Kenya, the conference brought together 233 delegates from across various sectors including National and County Governments, Council of Governors, County First Ladies Association, Implementing and Research organizations, the Private sector, International Development partners and Childcare Entrepreneurs. The conference was officiated by Mutunga Mutungi, the Nairobi City County Chief of Staff, on behalf of H.E. Anne Kananu, the Governor of Nairobi County.

The Conference offered an opportunity to review the status of ECCED policy and regulatory reforms at national and county levels. Participants shared ideas and knowledge, under the overall theme, 'Advancing Kenya's ECCED Legal Reforms in the Era of Devolution'. Five sub-themes formed the basis for the conference deliberations: Integrating Nurturing Care Framework (NCF); Financing Investment and Budgeting; Multi-sectoral Partnership and Coordination; Inclusion and Workforce Development.

Conference delegates acknowledged the great strides made by Kenya on key child development indicators such as reducing stunting and child mortality, increasing pre-primary school enrolment, and transition to school. They also observed that the upward trend was still not steady enough to ensure no child is left behind.

Article 53 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) guarantees a child's best interest as of paramount importance for national development. Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development (NCfECD), (endorsed by the National Government) enhances child survival, thriving and transforming capacities. The Nurturing Care Framework (WHO, 2018) draws on state-of-the-art evidence on ECD and advances the most effective policies and services for parents and caregivers of young children. Serving as a roadmap for action, the framework helps to mobilise a coalition of parents, caregivers, national and county governments, civil society groups, and the whole society, to ensure that the youngest children get the best start in life.

Deliberations highlighted the following:

- \* Full adoption and implementation of the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development is a smart investment decision that should be supported through capacity building of personnel, resource allocation, and political support at the highest level.
- \* Financing of the ECCED sector shows laudable efforts to increase funding but this should expand into government budget prioritization, and the support provided to counties to develop better guidelines for increased efficiency and/or allocation to ECCED initiatives.
- \* Inclusion and equity are critical in ECCED policy and programming; this calls for deliberate initiatives to cater to the needs of Children with Disabilities (CWD) and those in special circumstances through

multi-sectoral collaboration in the early assessment, placement, referral, and training of frontline workers, and adequate resource allocation.

- \* Effective partnership and coordination in ECCED will reduce duplication and increase efficiency for the child development programmes. It requires strong institutional and legal frameworks that promote and reward multi-sectoral collaboration, and align ECCED policies with all child development-focused sectors.
- \* The ECCED workforce requires policy attention: streamlining schemes of service for ECCED teachers to attract and retain not only qualified personnel but also address shortages and the skills gaps in providing nurturing care, among caregivers in the informal childcare settings. Adopting minimum standards that are achievable for all childcare providers, is desired in order to secure the child development trajectories of the youngest and most vulnerable in comparison to their counterparts from more privileged settings.

---

County First ladies present at the conference included H.E. Fardosa Hassan (Garissa County), H.E. Dorothy Nyong'o (Kisumu), H.E. Nazi Kivutha (Makueni), H.E. Emily Nyaribo (Nyamira), H.E. Rocilla Awiti (Homabay), H.E. Margaret Muthomi (Tharaka Nithi), H.E. Rosella Rasanga (Siaya), and H.E. Edna Lenku (Kajiado).

## DAY 1 - WEDNESDAY, 9TH MARCH 2022

### Opening Session

#### **Welcome Address:** *Asayya Imaya, Chair, ECCED Policy & Regulatory Reforms Technical Working Group*

Imaya welcomed delegates to the inaugural conference on ECCED. He noted that the Collaborative Action for Childcare in Kenya Initiative was founded as a response to the most pressing challenges facing the ECCED sector, namely: insufficient investments; insufficient coordination; insufficient data to drive changes in practice; a highly untrained workforce and a poor policy and regulatory environment.

The initiative aims to mobilise stakeholders in Early Childhood and Care to focus on addressing gaps in policy and regulatory reforms that can strengthen the sector. Imaya pointed out that renewed interest in the sector had seen more actors including county governments and local organizations joining efforts to accelerate policy and regulatory reforms in ECCED. Imaya noted that a more deliberate multi-sectoral approach to ECCED was imperative and urged stakeholders to be bolder in sharing lessons learnt, resources and leveraging on partnerships. The event, he said, was the first major event organised by the ECCED Policy and Regulatory Reform Technical Working Group. The TWG is an initiative of the Collaborative Action for Childcare initiative, which has a multi-sectoral membership of over 20 agencies, including the national and county governments.

#### **Workforce Development - Prioritizing Inclusion:** *Amanda Devercelli, Global Lead for Early Childhood Development, World Bank*

Investing in young children is one of the best things countries can do to build human capital. Growth and development in the early years form the foundation for future learning, productivity and lifetime success and are the foundation for human capital formation: skilled, empowered, productive and resilient. Interventions that promote child development can take place from before pregnancy through to a child's entry to primary school.

In her address, Amanda Devercelli affirmed that the combination of nutrition and early stimulation in the first 1,000 days (pre-birth to age two) can be a powerful equalizer for disadvantaged children. Amanda cited results from a Jamaica study where stunted children who were provided with high-quality nutrition and stimulation intervention were able to catch up to children who were not stunted. As adults, now, over 30 years later, these children in question are earning 25% more and are starting to have children with better outcomes. Granted, without intervention, over the next 1,000 days (between ages three to six), huge gaps in vocabulary often emerge with implications for future school and life success. As vocabulary is an important predictor of future success in school, the vulnerable children are likely not ready to meet expectations in Grade 1 (at about age seven to eight). Thus, Amanda noted that investing in Early Childhood Education opportunities must build on earlier investments in health and nutrition to ensure children arrive at school when they are ready to succeed.

She lauded Kenya's indicators on Human Capital Index (HCI) as some of the best in the continent although they still compare poorly with some middle-income countries. Amanda shared some lessons learned from countries that have made progress on ECD, including: Substantial progress possible within

5-10-year timeframes; “Whole-of-government” cross-sectoral approaches; Targeting specific segments of the population with approaches that are tailored to local context; Inclusion, which is critical to reach all those in need; Community mobilization to change behaviour; A “convergence approach” ensuring mothers and children have the simultaneous access to priority services (requires targeting the same households and developing monitoring and accountability tools to track the convergence); Data-driven approach to identify needs and monitor impact; Investing in the workforce; Empowering and engaging parents; Alignment of incentives using performance-based mechanisms for planning and budgeting, especially at the local level in addition to linkages with women’s education and economic empowerment. With this, the Kenyan Early Childhood and Care context needs careful attention to address varying county-level contexts and needs, quality assurance, and inequalities including gender and children with special needs and disabilities.

Amanda revealed that World Bank’s investments in ECD had increased dramatically, doubling in the last three years in response to the growing demand for relevant investments globally. She urged stakeholders to invest in this sector and assured the delegates of the World Bank’s commitment to supporting the necessary investment in Kenya.

### **Why Early Childhood Matters to County First Ladies:** *H.E Maria Mbeneka, Chairperson, County First Lady’s*

*Association (CFLA) and Laikipia County First Lady*

H.E. Maria Mbeneka, the Chair of the County First Lady’s Association (CFLA) expressed the commitment of the County First Ladies to continue advocating for the full adoption of the Nurturing Care Framework and creation of an enabling environment for children to thrive. She noted that the CFLA works in partnership with others, to advocate for social-economic rights within the counties, as enshrined in Article 53 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010). The Association fully recognizes that good health and appropriate nutrition in the early years directly impacts any other inputs in education in later years.

She indicated that the Association supports key initiatives such as Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health, Maternal and Child Health, ECCED facilities development and upgrading. Others include the School Feeding programmes and the Siaya SMART Start Initiative (supported by H.E. the Siaya County First Lady, Rosella Rasanga). Key child development statistics such as a reduction in childhood mortality in each county are central to the ongoing efforts initiated by the Association.

H.E. Mbeneka urged County Governments to ring-fence ECCED funds within county budgets to ensure more targeted investments that specifically identify ECCED priorities and limit the reallocation of necessary funds to other activities. She pointed out the need for more synergies between National and County ECCED functions to adequately finance those devolved to the counties. She called for greater partnership and collaboration among stakeholders to achieve success for all children under four years in Kenya to thrive and transform.

National and County Government partnership for Early Childhood Care, Education and Development - Successes and obstacles: Valerie Akinyi: Program Officer, Council of Governors - presented on behalf of Mary Mwiti, Chief Executive Officer

Intergovernmental collaboration has been a key part of the progress made in the ECCED as it remains a key investment in overall social and economic development for Kenya. Counties have increased investments in the education sector and ECCED in particular with a focus on the construction of additional Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centres to cater for children, with some specifically targeting children with special needs.

Valerie identified the key challenges counties were facing as they undertook these efforts. These include inadequate staffing, limited teaching and learning materials, poor nutrition, and low community engagement. The new Medium-Term Plans for the counties would now focus on ECCED priorities including setting up of a capitation grant for ECDE centres - a matter of justice for children; school feeding programmes; infrastructure development; employment and training of teachers; data management on ECCED; and enhancing the Curriculum-Based Competency (CBC) initiative. She noted that the Council of Governors was engaging with the Senate to support counties to ring-fence relevant funds. Valerie called upon partners, donors and stakeholders to engage in the National and County budgeting process to champion ECCED priorities at all pertinent levels.

**Official opening:** *Mutunga Mutungi, County Chief of Staff, Nairobi City County – presented on behalf of H.E Anne Kananu, Governor*

Mutunga Mutungi pointed out that investment in ECCED was a smart policy decision which would help unlock pathways to shared prosperity and contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. He cited an example of Nairobi County, where policy decisions like the abolition of levies led to a dramatic increase in pre-primary enrolment from 13,000 to 25,000 children within a short period. This had informed bolder ambitions to target enrolment of up to 50,000 children in ECDE centres by the subsequent planning period.

He mentioned that despite the current investments in the sector, challenges remained, including the pupil-teacher ratio, physical facilities, and budgeting constraints. However, some of the specific action points that would support the strengthening of the sector were: lobbying for the provision of capitation to ECCED centres, enhancing school feeding programmes, training teachers in line with the CBC, upgrading infrastructure, prioritizing teacher competency and developing data mechanism for ECCEDs centres across the counties.



## COUNTY PRESENTATIONS

### 1. Makueni County: Veronica Muia, Director ECDE

Over the past three years, Makueni County intentionally increased funds allocation in a bid to improve its social services specifically for children. According to Veronica Muia, these efforts had borne fruit, resulting in increased school enrolment rates, supported by the school feeding programmes across the County. Some of the scopes of county initiatives are sensitization of caregivers on child growth and development, infrastructure development, better remuneration terms for teachers to be permanent and pensionable, increased health accelerated action days, and Malezi Bora campaigns. Despite the efforts put in place by the County Government of Makueni, challenges still remain, including inadequate funding for ECCED programmes, inadequate personnel, poor remuneration and inconsistent capacity building for teachers and caregivers. Muia concluded her remarks by urging for the development of a coherent childcare supporting policy and a delivery system which includes budgetary allocation at all levels of government.

### 2. Busia County: Dr Douglas Barasa, Director ECDE

Dr Barasa highlighted Busia County's close collaboration with the Ministry of Health at National and County levels to support the youngest learners through supplementation of Vitamin A, immunization and deworming programmes conducted on an annual basis. He outlined future priority areas for Busia County to include: employing sufficient ECDE teachers on permanent and pensionable terms, training teachers on CBC, implementing free and compulsory ECDE, supporting school feeding programmes, capacity building of the community, developing regulations to operationalize the Busia ECDE Act (2020), improving infrastructure in ECDE centres, and developing Busia's Childcare Facilities Act. He emphasized the need for a comprehensive policy and regulatory framework that includes integration of Nurturing Care in all service delivery programmes in Busia.

### 3. Kisumu County: Michael Adar, Director ECDE

Michael Adar highlighted the progress made in Kisumu County, specifically implementing multi-sectoral collaboration through integrating nurturing care with reforms covering early learning, safety and protection, and responsive caregiving. He stated that the County has formed a multisectoral Nutrition Committee to address malnutrition in schools and ECDE Centres. Collaboration with the Department of Agriculture was underway, to implement Kitchen Gardening in schools and at household levels, by providing certified seeds and fertilizers to schools and parents, respectively. Key achievements of Kisumu County include: constructing 1,160 classrooms across the County, employing 674 trained teachers on three-year contracts, provision of piped water to 342 ECDE Centres in rural areas, and provision of school-feeding programmes, developing an ECDE Bill and capacity building for 727 teachers on CBC.

#### **4. Nakuru County: Millicent Yugi, Director ECDE**

Nakuru County has adopted a multisectoral approach where parents are encouraged to establish school-feeding programmes in both public and private ECD centres in partnership with NGOs. According to Millicent, other initiatives include regular deworming and Vitamin A supplementation across the County, in addition to awareness creation to caregivers about early child development. Millicent pointed out that Nakuru County was facing challenges, including an increase in adolescent mothers, limited use of school safety manuals, implementation of CBC, inclusivity in offering ECD programming, weak parental involvement, inadequate infrastructure, lack of special needs facilities/materials and low budgetary allocations to ECDE. She concluded by highlighting the main achievements of the County that include: the employment of 372 ECD teachers and 300 posts currently advertised, the training of ECD teachers, as well as development of two (2) centres of excellence in Naivasha and one in Nakuru West, each with all the necessary facilities.

#### **5. Embu County: Jeremiah Ileri, Director ECDE**

Embu County is implementing a multi-sectoral approach to child development. To support the nutrition component of nurturing care, Embu has forged collaborations on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Feeding Nutrition (MIYCN) and Baby-Friendly Community Initiatives (BFICI), WASH, Malezi Bora and optimizing parenting education. Jeremiah Ileri noted that Grassroots Development Initiatives Foundation-Kenya (GRADIF-Kenya), a CSO supporting vulnerable community groups mostly in Central and Eastern Regions in Kenya, was partnering with the Department of Children Services (DCS) to build a rescue centre for children in Embu County. He highlighted that several policies were in place including Embu Child Facility Act; County 2021-26 Kenya Nutrition Action Plan (KNAP); Implementing CBC, and being active in co-curricular activities. He went ahead to explain that implementation of the Childcare Act is on course and scaling up of feeding programmes beyond milk supplementation is ensuing.

#### **6. Kajiado County: John Sipitiet, Director ECD**

Kajiado County adopts a multi-sector approach to child development. Kajiado has partnered with the Department of Water to provide water to schools; it supports the advancement of agriculture by including horticultural training on caring for fruit trees, and; has linkages with health centres for deworming, immunization and nutrition training. John Sipitiet pointed out that development partners had supported legal reforms in Kajiado such as development of policies, regulations and acts and their implementation. An analysis of financial allocations in Kajiado showed some increment in budgetary allocations to Education and Health sectors from the Financial Year (FY) 2020/2021 to FY 2021/2022. He mentioned some of the challenges faced in Kajiado including long distances from home to school that limit children's access to early learning; that most private ECD centres in Kajiado East were not registered with the County Government and did not utilize the appropriate early learning curriculums.

## **7. Nairobi City County: Raphael Kinyungu, Deputy Director, Education**

Nairobi City County strives to adopt a multi-sectoral approach to nurturing care for county ECCED programming which encompasses: good health, nutrition, early learning, safety, and protection. Raphael Kinyungu highlighted Nairobi's achievements that included increased enrolments of children from 14,000 to 30,000 after the Free Primary Education (FPE) was launched; the introduction of a school-feeding programme; a total of 498 ECD teachers were employed permanently and a total of 871 trained; the pupil-teacher ratio of 1:35 was also viewed as an improvement given the high numbers of learners.

Kinyungu pointed out the following challenges as persisting for Nairobi County: lack of space to enrol a majority of pupils in public pre-schools; a gap in the legal framework to guide registration of pre-schools by the county; delays in disbursement of funds; lack of accurate data about pre-school enrolment, from private schools; limited capacity for early detection of developmental delays and disability; weak multi-sectoral coordination, especially between Education, Health, Lands, Water and Sanitation sectors which hampers the planning, implementation and supervision of ECCED programmes.

## **8. Mombasa County: Dr Mwangi Gichuhi, Director of Educational Services**

Dr Mwangi stated that the county had made great strides in the sector. Achievements of the county included: the Mombasa County Child Care Act (2016); improved learning environments, improved health and nutrition status; WASH Programs; strong Public-Private Partnership (PPP) that is supportive of early childhood and care programs including Aga Khan Development Network, EIDU-Tayari program, UNICEF, World Vision and Uthabiti Africa; and the Mombasa Social Protection Strategy (2017) that aims at mitigating social challenges within the County, with a strong cross-sectoral approach to issues affecting children.

However, despite these strides, Dr Mwangi observed that Mombasa County faced several challenges, mainly: implementing regulations that operationalize the Mombasa County Child Care Act (2016), the low absorption rate of the ECCED budget as a result of centralized finances against the Public Finance Management (PFM) Act, and real-time data collection. He noted that there was a shortage of Quality Assurance and Standards Assurance personnel, with their transport and mobility capacity limitations persisting. He added that there was a need for the Mombasa County Government to engage relevant stakeholders and non-state actors in developing policies and regulations for children under four years as well as addressing matters of children with special needs.

## **9. Uasin Gishu County: Dr Shadrack Morogo, Director of Health**

Dr Morogo highlighted Uasin Gishu County's achievements as including successful cross-sectoral engagements, specifically on issues affecting children, that is, health policy guidelines on child health (growth and development), free antenatal and postnatal child health services in the county public health hospitals, deworming of children during school holidays, reaching out to defaulters of child immunization programmes and addressing the missed opportunities; the formation of Management Boards in ECDE centres, partnership with stakeholders to support school feeding programmes, enhancing child-friendly environments by the construction of 1,094 classrooms, 102 ablution blocks, and 11 kitchens; and ongoing

Malezi Bora activities. Uasin Gishu's main challenges included inadequate funding, lack of policy to cover children aged zero to three (0-3) years, inadequate Quality Assurances and Standards personnel and inadequate staff to address the increased enrolment rates of learners. According to Dr Morogo, the priority areas for the county, to be executed over the next two (2) years include the completion of pending infrastructure projects, full implementation of the ECDE teachers' Scheme of Service and the development of policies and regulations for children under the age of four years.

### **10. Samburu County: Jemen Lentoini, Director ECDE**

Jemen Lentoini highlighted that in Samburu County, key activities include: joint deworming initiatives for children - every six months, Vitamin A supplementation and immunization programmes in schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to monitor data on monthly and yearly immunizations.

He added that other activities include the issuing of birth certificates in collaboration with UNICEF, donors and other partners, provision of hand-washing equipment to schools, and the implementation of school-feeding programmes which have greatly improved children's nutritional statuses and wellbeing in schools. The County's achievements were as follows: 530 ECDE teachers employed, 350 ECD classrooms constructed, 150 sanitary blocks constructed, 152 ECDE centres installed with water tanks, 568 ECDE centres provided with cooking appliances, feeding programmes in all ECDE centres implemented, all ECDE centres provided with CBC support materials, construction of 50 ECDE centres' kitchen, office and stores, 240 ECDE centres equipped with furniture and recruitment of 12 Quality Assurance and Standard officers and three sub-county ECDE officers. The Director, Uasin Gishu, added that the department also provides administration record books and writing materials to all ECDE centres.

### **11. Wajir County: Hassan Abdi, Director ECDE**

In Wajir County, multi-sectoral collaboration was strongly underway with partners including the Ministry of Agriculture, World Vision on student enrolment, World Food Program on food supply or donations, Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government on ensuring school-going children are enrolled and going to school and Ministry of Health on the provision of nutrient supplements and deworming tablets. Key achievements over the last three years include: the construction of 75 classes, renovation of 35 classes, construction of 34 two-door pit latrines, training of 800 teachers and the completion of the ECDE policy, now awaiting the official launch. Several challenges were cited, including inadequate funding, inconsistent funding for programmes, inadequate water, poor remuneration of ECDE teachers - which is much below Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC) guidelines, inadequate infrastructure, insecurity and lack of monitoring and supervision of curriculum implementation. Priority areas for the FY 2022/2023 include the construction of more classes and latrines, water tanks, kitchens, and stores, in addition to in-service training of ECDE teachers.

## **12. Marsabit County: Issac Bonaya, Director ECDE**

In Marsabit County, collaborative efforts with partners are underway, including the Marsabit County's Multi-sectoral Platform for Nutrition (MSP-N), Education Sector Technical Working Groups (ESTWG), county steering groups, partnerships with the Governor's Result Unit that oversees county-initiated programmes; the Departments of Agriculture, and Livestock, Gender, Health; Ministry of Interior and National Coordination and; County Assembly Committee for Education. The registration of birth and deaths where majority parents do not recognize the certificates has been prioritized. Key achievements in Marsabit are the construction of 100 ECDE centres, 76 double-door latrines and 14 kitchen stores as well as the rehabilitation of 76 fabricated uni-huts. Challenges include inadequate staffing translating to a high pupil-teacher ratio of 1:58, inadequate funding, inconsistent ECDE funding, programme stagnation due to delays in supplies, inadequate classrooms, untrained teachers, drought and harmful cultural practices.

The priority areas for the county include the recruitment of more teachers, construction of more classes and enhanced partnerships with stakeholders.

## **13. Kwale County: Bilashaka Abdalla, Director ECDE**

Kwale County's multisectoral initiatives on ECDE include high impact nutrition interventions such as deworming and multiple micronutrient supplementation to children, elaborate feeding programmes for all children in the public ECDE, sensitization on breastfeeding, advocacy on Madrasa programmes for Muslim children and Sunday Schools for Christian children, employment and training of teachers and construction of child-friendly ECDE centres. Achievements include the construction of 545 child-friendly ECDE centres, increased enrolment of children totalling 66,615, employment of 909 teachers, formation of 908 ECDE Board of Management, improved partnerships, and collaborations. Challenges include: understaffing, inadequate child-friendly ECDE centres, lack of governance and leadership skills among school leaders, budgeting, poverty, poor parental involvement in education, slow rate of project completion by contractors and political interference. Kwale's priority areas include the construction of 20 classes, employment of 300 teachers, creation of Boards of Management and scaling of Kwale's WASH programme.

## **14. Isiolo County: Galgalo Ali, Director of ECDE**

Isiolo County has registered several achievements including the construction of 92 classes, school feeding programmes, the issuance of 155 pieces of furniture, administrative structure improvement, six (6) motorcycles bought for the vast county, purchase of teaching and learning materials and WASH equipment for ECDE centres. Isiolo collaborates with various partners including Child Fund, World Vision, VSO, Mercy Corps, UNICEF and Nawiri in the development of ECDE policies. Plans for the county include the construction of more classes and kitchens, construction of sanitation facilities in all ECDE centres and scaling up of partnerships.

### **15. West Pokot County: Geoffrey Kisiwai, Director ECDE**

West Pokot County is spearheading collaborative initiatives with UNICEF and MOH annually, to determine the wasting, stunting, and nutrition status of children as well as with World Vision on the “GO BABY GO” programme which aims to build the capacity of caregivers. The County has recorded several achievements that include: improved infrastructures, enhanced child nutrition, improved learning programs, provision of teaching and learning materials, employment of an ECDE workforce, which consists of 1,661 teachers and coordinators. Key challenges include inadequate financing and a lack of proper/clear policies on ECCED. Key priority areas for West Pokot County include construction of classrooms, disability mainstreaming, registration of lands within ECDE spaces and strengthening engagement with partners.

### **16. Kiambu County: Dorcas Muthoni, Director ECDE**

The current status of ECDE in Kiambu County includes 534 schools, 16 ECDE teachers, 677 Assistant ECDE teachers and 38,455 ECDE children. Kiambu County’s key achievements include training of teachers on CBC and payment of pending ECDE bills. Notwithstanding, the main challenges that the county faces include: a lack of votes on co-curricular activities, facilitation and non-payment of the same staff, lack of child-friendly facilities and inadequate financing. Key County priorities for the next FY include: Kiambu’s school feeding programme, implementation of CBC, focus on co-curricular activities and construction, and renovation of classrooms.

## SUMMARIES FOR MAIN PLENARY AND BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### The Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development

#### Nurturing Care for children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (NDDs):

**Opportunities, policy gaps, and recommendations;** *Silas Onyango<sup>1</sup>, Kenneth Okelo<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Muendo<sup>1</sup>, and Patricia Wekulo<sup>1</sup>;*

*African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC)<sup>1</sup>*

Studies in low and middle-income countries have excluded children with disabilities, particularly those with neurodevelopmental challenges, facing inadequacies in neurological and brain functioning. Thus, little is known about how interventions such as nurturing care can be utilised to support them, resulting in their impairments in cognition, communication, mobility, or social interaction capacities. Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities (NDDs) are exposed to unfavourable cultural beliefs, discrimination, and family stigma with higher possibilities of maltreatment or neglect. Limited resources further complicate their caregiving, by caregivers facing prolonged parental grief and stress.



*“In Kenya, one in three children is affected by neurodevelopmental disorders”*

Silas Onyango spoke about a review conducted by APHRC, which draws from the empirical evidence on the opportunities under nurturing care, which can support children with disabilities. The review identified existing opportunities that caregivers can utilize to effectively support child growth and development. In his findings, Silas argued that in Kenya one (1) in three (3) children is affected by neurodevelopmental disorders.

**Silas Onyango, APHRC**



He argued that neurodevelopmental disorders can occur due to genetics (during prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal stages). He concluded by highlighting the need to strengthen inclusion for children with NDDs in ECCED programming as they have equal rights. Caregivers should be supported through intervention programmes that target their mental health and unconditional cash transfers.

Users’ perceptions and factors that inform the choice of childcare service utilization: The Nairobi Early Childcare in Slums (NECS); Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo<sup>1</sup>, Silas Onyango<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Muendo<sup>1</sup>, Nelson Langat<sup>1</sup> & Robert Hughes<sup>2</sup>; APHRC, 1, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine<sup>2</sup>

The lack of affordable childcare among the urban poor prevents women from engaging in paid work. Children face sub-optimal development due to a lack of proper care when parents are working. APHRC’s NECS study was implemented to understand the use of paid childcare and the characteristics associated with these choices; the size of provision of paid childcare; and provider decision-making and behaviour around childcare. The study used a mixed-methods program of research: household survey, childcare provider mapping, and qualitative research with parents or carers and childcare providers. It included both users and non-users of paid childcare. According to Dr Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo of APHRC, 67% of working parents from low-income households utilise paid childcare. In these environments, childcare providers are inadequately capacity built on stimulating holistic child development, thus safety and security of these vulnerable children are of concern. Many of the facilities were small with a large proportion of them charging Kshs. 50 daily. Factors such as caregiving element or caregiver attributes, general day care outlook, and hygiene standards were key. Non-users

expressed reservations on the use of childcare services resulting from perceived, reported, or observed gaps or inadequacies. Policy strategies should focus on the intervention programmes that support the provision of childcare in poor urban areas.

**Capacity building of frontline workers for integrated ECCED interventions:** A case of Siaya County; Odero L1, Oyugi B1, Omedo D1, Miruka R1; PATH1

Training and mentorship are critical for the achievement of intervention outcomes. Integrating Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development (NCfECD) into services targeting caregivers and children enables children to survive and thrive to achieve their full developmental potential. The health system provides an opportunity to improve children's developmental outcomes since it interacts with caregivers and their children during the critical window of opportunity for development – from conception to age three. Beatrice Oyugi in her presentation asserted that building the capacities of frontline workers to integrate Nurturing Care for Early Childhood, and Development into maternal and child health services is essential in improving child development outcomes. In collaboration with Siaya County, PATH has supported in-service training of 80% of the health workforce to integrate NCfECD into maternal and child health services; County and Sub County managers as Trainers have supported the rollout of training to health facility-based health care providers and Community Health Volunteers. An adapted version of the Care for Child Development (CCD) package was used. Health facilities have become child-friendly and waiting time is no longer a burden for caregivers. Anecdotal data shows improved child developmental outcomes. Beatrice urged that minimum standards for childcare be developed for all socioeconomic groups, especially those from low-income households.

**Playful parenting and other innovative programs for children 0-3 years: The Madrasa Early Childhood Programs;** Mas-ad O. Mohamed<sup>1, 2</sup>, Aga Khan Foundation<sup>1</sup> & Madrasa Early Childhood Programme - Kenya (MECP-K)<sup>2</sup>

Mas-Ad Omar Mohamed introduced Madrasa Early Childhood Program Kenya as an Early Childhood programme established in the 1980s. It works in collaboration with the County government, communities and families. MECP-K strengthens families and communities' capacities for playful and responsive caregiving practices by building knowledge, skills and attitudes targeting optimal child growth, development and early learning. This entails facilitating engagement; CCD and WASH programmes through the Community Health Strategy (CHS) via capacity development sessions, WASH initiatives to promote caregiver and child wellbeing, and the establishment of child-friendly play spaces in selected health facilities to influence the recovery trajectory for children admitted in paediatric wards. Further, MECP-K employs a multi-pronged approach to supporting the youngest learners and their parents through simple activities to promote play and positive conversations between parents and their children. MECP-K continues to use experiences gained to inform programming and contribute to National discourse such as the review of the Integrated ECD Policy and content updating for the training manual for CHVs. Key lessons for policy include leveraging multi-sectoral collaboration in ECD, working within existing structures including parental and community engagement at the design stage for interventions for children below age three.

Material stimulation and early child development in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): Evidence from Kenya and Zambia: A study in Kisumu County and Zambia; Silas Onyango<sup>1</sup>, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo<sup>1</sup>, Nelson Langat<sup>1</sup>, Kenneth Okelo<sup>1</sup>, Dawn Murdock<sup>2</sup>, Jürg Utzinger<sup>3</sup> & Günther Fink<sup>3</sup>; APHRC<sup>1</sup>, Episcopal Relief and Development<sup>2</sup>, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute<sup>3</sup>

Although maternal engagement and stimulation critically support optimal child development, little evidence of the same exists in Sub-Saharan Africa. APHRC conducted a descriptive study using data from Kenya and Zambia aimed at identifying the associations between maternal stimulation and child development in Kenya and Zambia as well as predictors of developmental outcomes. Silas Onyango of APHRC outlined the primary exposure variable of interest as maternal stimulation activities, grouped into cognitive, language, motor, and socio-emotional activities. The outcome of interest was child development. The study found a strong positive link between maternal stimulation activities and children's developmental outcomes in poor rural settings. Policies that support caregivers to promote opportunities for stimulation of their young children are imperative.

**Integrated management of new-born and childhood illness (IMNCI) quality of care assessment in Kakamega County, Kenya;** *Rose Muhanda<sup>1</sup>, Dr Ruth Kapanga<sup>1</sup> and Fredrick Makokha<sup>1</sup>; County Government of Kakamega<sup>1</sup>*

The study conducted in Kakamega sought to examine and identify existing strengths and gaps in the management of new-born and childhood illness in health facilities across the County. The study design was an observational cross-sectional one. A structured checklist was used to collect data on the quality of care provided to the children in health facilities. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of health facilities and Health Care Providers (HCP). Data was analysed using the software Epi Info to yield descriptive statistics. A total of 39 health facilities, 49 HCP, and 473 children were assessed in the County. Rose Muhanda (Kakamega County Department of Health), noted that the overall findings showed poor adherence to IMNCI guidelines and inadequate support staff. The quality of counselling was also found suboptimal. Rose concluded by expressing the need for the Ministry of Health to adopt a mechanism of regular on-the-job training, mentorship, and follow-up by assigning mentors to support specific HCP and health facilities through both face-to-face and virtual consultations using a contextualized integrated mentorship and supervision checklist.

**Policy lessons from the implementation of care for child development in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania;** *Joyce Marangu<sup>1</sup>, Amina Abubakar<sup>1</sup>; Aga Khan University, Institute for Human Development (AKU-IHD)<sup>1</sup>*

The Care for Child Development (CCD) model emphasizes support to families through responsive parent-child interaction and creating nurturing environments for children. AKU-IHD conducted a study that sought to investigate the implementation of CCD in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda by non-state actors and governments to learn best practices, and draw policy recommendations. Joyce Marangu of AKU-IHD pointed out that the Madrasa program had identified some challenges including Health Care Workers' (HCWs) lack of capacity, attrition and workload; lack of CHVs' compensation, negative caregivers' attitudes, and problems in scaling Early Childcare. The study broadly identified intervention successes as multisectoral collaboration, and use of innovative delivery methods. She noted the need for an (integrated) ECD policy

and expansion of access to effective and essential programmes with a strong focus on local contexts. Policy recommendations drawn from the case studies were: to ensure annual budgetary allocations for equitable access to quality ECD services for the holistic development of all children from conception to eight years; strengthen multi-sectoral coordination in support of ECD and facilitate wider community and civil society engagement; build the capacity of the workforce to promote ECD through existing health, nutrition, education, social, and child protection services; build on contextually appropriate practices and integrate them into existing service delivery platforms and counselling tools; collect cross-sectoral data on essential ECD indicators and track progress.

## **We eat what we have and not what we want: A household account of drivers of stunting in early childhood in Kenya, Dr Timothy Abuya<sup>1</sup>, Population Council of Kenya<sup>1</sup>**

“

*“Human Capital Index (HCI) deficits in Kenya are due to childhood malnutrition and learning outcomes with stunting used as a critical marker of early child development.”*

**Dr Timothy Abuya,  
Population Council of Kenya** ”

Dr Timothy Abuya, Population Council of Kenya, explained that Human Capital Development (HCI) is central to determining the future productivity of a country’s population. The HCI quantifies the contribution of health and education to the productivity of the next generation of workers. It measures how much economic potential countries forgo due to gaps in the health and education of their people.

HCI is calculated using three indicators: survival, education and health. Dr Timothy noted that the Population Council of Kenya had conducted a study aimed at exploring the qualitative determinants of stunting and constraints at the household level. The study was conducted in six counties of Kenya with diverse geography, livelihoods, and varying stunting levels - West Pokot, Nyandarua, Kisumu, Nakuru, Nairobi and Kwale. A total of 195 in-depth interviews, focus group and case narratives were conducted to gather data. The findings were categorized into six themes: understanding of stunting, socio-cultural practices, household gender dynamics, institutional aspects, livelihood systems, and limited institutional interaction after immunization and before school.

While the overall malnutrition trends in Kenya are reducing, stunting still remains high. According to Dr Abuya, Kenya’s HCI of 0.55 meant that the expected productivity as a future worker of a child born today was wanting, at only 55% of what it could be with complete education and full health. He noted that HCI deficits in Kenya were due to childhood malnutrition and learning outcomes with stunting used as a critical marker of early child development. He added that the study in Kenya had identified three pathways of influencing behaviour change thereby fighting stunting and malnutrition including (i) existing social structures can provide a suitable entry point for early intervention within the first 1,000 days of life; (ii) empowerment of families using ECD centres could be instrumental in addressing information gaps, linkages to health facilities and encouraging behaviour changes that can address stunting; (iii) continue strengthening community health systems to educate caregivers about good nutrition, and engagement of the health sector with other sectors to strengthen institutional gaps, such as social services to ensure that social issues driving malnutrition, are also properly addressed. Policy recommendations included, to: Develop a stronger multi-sectoral government response, increase political commitment towards health and nutrition; create and deliver targeted household support, focusing on women.

## FINANCING INVESTMENT AND BUDGETING

Analysis of the Kenyan Budget 2021/2022. Focus on the care economy spending; Josiah Kiarie<sup>1,2</sup> & Leo Kemboi<sup>1,2</sup>; University of Nairobi - Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub<sup>1</sup>, Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development<sup>2</sup>

To assess Kenya's budgetary allocations to the sectors which promote early child care and development, the study was conducted through a desk review of the 2021/2022 Kenyan budget. It was conceived from a feminist and intersectoral perspective.

“...Lack of guidelines in ECCED financing may have contributed to the under resourcing of the ECDE with possible diversion of funds to bursaries in secondary and tertiary institutions.”  
**University of Nairobi - WEE Hub**”

Giving an analysis of the Kenyan Budget 2021/2022, Josiah Kiarie found that the total budget allocated to sectors promoting quality childcare for the FY 2021-2022, was Ksh. 406 billion or 11% of the total spend. He highlighted that ECDE funding is often lumped together with that of primary education, with no demarcation similar to that done for secondary schools.

The lack of guidelines in ECCED financing may have contributed to the under-resourcing of the ECDE with possible diversion of funds to bursaries in secondary and tertiary institutions. Kiarie recommended that allocations to the State Department for Early Learning and Basic Education should be increased to reduce disparities in school infrastructure, number of teachers, desks, class size, and teaching materials, nationally.

This would also reduce the burden on Kenyan households currently funding 33% of expenses related to early learning. Further, County governments' capitation to ECDE should be reinforced in policy to guarantee steady funding. The health financing deficit in the Ministry of Health should be reduced by matching the resource requirement requested by the Health Sector Working Group to enhance access to health services.

Households with orphans need cushioning from socio-economic shocks through expanding coverage to at least 1.5 million school-going children. The National and County governments through the national and county treasuries respectively should institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting.

The lack of guidelines in ECCED financing may have contributed to the under-resourcing of the ECDE with possible diversion of funds to bursaries in secondary and tertiary institutions. Kiarie recommended that allocations to the State Department for Early Learning and Basic Education should be increased to reduce disparities in school infrastructure, number of teachers, desks, class size, and teaching materials, nationally.

This would also reduce the burden on Kenyan households currently funding 33% of expenses related to early learning. Further, County governments' capitation to ECDE should be reinforced in policy to guarantee steady funding. The health financing deficit in the Ministry of Health should be reduced by matching the resource requirement requested by the Health Sector Working Group to enhance access to health services. Households with orphans need cushioning from socio-economic shocks through expanding coverage to at least 1.5 million school-going children. The National and County governments through the national and county treasuries respectively should institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting.



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### **Effective Classroom and school leadership practices for improved learning outcomes;**

*Nancy Gikandi<sup>1</sup> & Ng'ang'a Kibandi<sup>1</sup>; Dignitas<sup>1</sup>*

The World Development Report 2018, 'Learning to Realize Education's Promise' identifies unskilled and unmotivated teachers, unprepared learners, school inputs and school management as the four factors that hinder learning. In 2021, Dignitas, through its Early Years' Program, equipped 172 School and Teacher Leaders with the skills, competencies and mindsets to deliver a quality of learning and care intended to allow every learner the opportunity to thrive and succeed. Dignitas provided training and coaching support in Classroom Culture, Learner Engagement, and Instructional Leadership. Anecdotal evidence showed a change in the attitude of teachers such as; an appreciation of data and its use in decision-making and a growing appreciation for creating an enabling child-friendly learning environment. Dignitas' program data demonstrates the need for improved equipping of and support for early years educators. There is a need to engage a wide range of policymakers to see the gaps in instructional leadership addressed in policy and practice.

The Dignitas team stated that the Stawisha Early Childhood Development Program aims at improving learning outcomes and well-being of 7,000 children in pre- and lower primary through partnerships with selected schools in Nairobi's urban informal settlements. The model includes; Leadership Academies, Professional Development Workshops and Coaching. The team highlighted the plans to collaborate with government actors to develop a leadership competency framework for early years educators. In addition, there are plans to further test the model in partnership with National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK) to expand to other informal settlements and rural settings. The team expressed the need to consider the competencies educators need to prioritize learner protection and well-being, socio-emotional learning, gender-responsive pedagogy, and learning through play for early years learners.

### **Provision of childcare solutions in Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) to provide young mothers an opportunity to be empowered through skills and competency in the institution;** *Martin Kiyeng<sup>1</sup>; Kidogo Early Years<sup>1</sup>*

Martin Kiyeng, Kidogo Early Years, reported the findings of a baseline and end-line surveys targeting students (specifically young mothers) and principals in three Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), to establish the existing childcare options, the effect of the provision of childcare services on enrolment, performance, and completion of courses at the VTCs, and to identify pre-existing expectations of an ideal childcare centre among young mothers in the VTCs. Kidogo Early Years adapted its innovative social franchising model to partner with VTCs by assisting them to start and improve the quality of their own, centre-based childcare centre. VTC childcare centres were found feasible and can be employed to improve the provision of quality care for children of young student mothers. Survey results indicated that the provision of childcare services for mothers reduced school dropout rates and absenteeism and encouraged course completion at VTCs. Findings supported the notion that the provision of childcare frees up women's time and potential to succeed economically, and also supports national economic prosperity. Strategies for childcare integration into existing VTCs, and countrywide scale-up are recommended.

## **Workforce development for nurturing care;** *Evans Vundi Dickson<sup>1</sup>, Division of Neonatal and Child Health, Ministry of Health<sup>1</sup>*

Evans Munuve pointed out that there was a policy gap for the youngest children: zero to three years, in Kenya. The Nurturing Care Framework that was endorsed nationally by the Ministry of Health in Kenya (WHO, UNICEF, & World Bank Group, 2018), provides a good entry point for multi-sectoral programming for the youngest children. Integrating nurturing care ensures that all children, particularly those in adversity and related diverse circumstances, receive equitable childcare services to survive, grow and develop to their full potential, just like their counterparts from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, the childcare caregivers and families need to be capacity built on nurturing care, nationally and in all counties to enable them support early stimulation/age-appropriate early learning activities, appropriate mother and child nutrition, good health, capacity development for caregivers/family, support to parents (the home), providing quality onsite childcare, and child protection from adversity.

“

*“The draft ECD policy for Kenya (2022) which is aimed at guiding caregiving and enhancing nationally, coordination and collaboration by all actors... will enable the 47 county governments with partners, to scale up cost-effective models reaching ALL children aged zero to eight years.”*

**Evans Vundi Dickson, Division of Neonatal and Child Health, Ministry of Health** ”

Creating an enabling environment for delivering quality new-born and child services was found critical. The draft ECD policy for Kenya (2022) which is aimed at guiding caregiving and enhancing nationally, coordination and collaboration by all actors in ECD will enable the 47 county governments with partners, to scale up cost-effective models reaching all children aged zero to eight years. Evans noted that threats to child development include: maternal mortality, low birth weight, child poverty, violent discipline, young mothers, preterm births, under-five stunting and inadequate supervision. He concluded by stating that more needs to be done to have reliable and up to date data to assist in planning for childcare and all children under eight years.

## **Workforce development for Pre-Primary Education;** *Gladys Toywa<sup>1</sup>, Teachers Service Commission<sup>1</sup>*

Gladys Toywa in her remarks stated that there has been new reforms in the education sector that have made it necessary to train all teachers to keep them abreast with the current trends in teaching, since April 2019. These trainings are conducted during school holiday sessions.

“

*“Most teachers are now confident in the use of learner-centred pedagogies used in CBC, despite ICT challenges.”*

**Gladys Toywa, Teachers Service Commission** ”

The mode of training adopted is a smart cascade model in which the Principal and Master trainers train and later on provide professional support to TOTs during the zonal training of teachers. The Master trainers are identified from various Education agencies. Those trained and the CBC champion teachers are expected to effectively and as required, cascade down the knowledge and skills acquired during the TOT training. Gladys gave an update on consultative meetings that have taken place to provide feedback to Master trainers on how to enhance the effectiveness of the CBC teacher’s training, implementation, and professional support. She lauded the involvement of more stakeholders’ and commitment in the process of implementation

of the CBC curriculum saying it has yielded success and most teachers are now confident in the use of learner-centred pedagogies used in CBC despite ICT challenges nationally and in the counties.

### **Improving the quality of childcare centres in Nairobi informal settlements through supporting assessment and 'communities of practice' using existing government systems;**

*Margaret Nampijja<sup>1</sup>, Linda Oloo<sup>1</sup>, Kenneth Okelo<sup>1</sup>, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Muendo<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth Mwaniki<sup>1</sup>, Nelson Lang'at<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth*

*Kimani-Murage<sup>1</sup>, Mary Abboah-Offei<sup>2</sup>, Anna Ray<sup>2</sup>, Helen Elsey<sup>2</sup>, Martin Kiyeng<sup>3</sup>; APHRC<sup>1</sup>, University of York<sup>2</sup> and Kidogo*

Informal child-care centres have sprung up in urban informal settlements to meet the growing demand for child-care as more women engage in employment. Childcare providers running these centres have inadequate training and childcare facilities, putting children at risk of suboptimal health and development. The APHRC study aimed to co-design and test the feasibility of a community of practice (CoP) model where trained CHVs provide supportive assessment and group sessions to build skills and improve practices in informal child-care centres in Korogocho and Viwandani slums. The CoP model was co-designed with sub-county health teams, centre providers and parents using resources from Kidogo, government nutritionists and ECD experts. The CoP model delivered by CHVs is feasible and has the potential to improve the quality of informal child-care centres. According to Dr Margaret Nampijja, APHRC, the study found that daycare facilities exist in various categories but most suffer from resource constraints with limited external support from the government and partners. Most of them lacked the skills in child development to provide quality care. She highlighted that Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) can be trained to integrate their services with childcare centres. She also clarified that a scale-up of such an approach can have a positive impact on the quality of relevant services at the community level. Strategies for integration into existing health systems and assessment of scale-up in similar contexts were recommended.

### **Barriers to an Enabling Nurturing Care Environment for Children in Daycare Settings;**

*Stephen Ikonya<sup>1</sup>, Allan Ragi<sup>1</sup>, Jack Ndegwa<sup>1</sup>, Charity Wachira<sup>1</sup>; KANCO*

Like in many other Kenyan communities, Kajiado's low-income settings display high poverty levels and yet mothers in these environments still spend as much as 25% of their income monthly, on childcare. Stephen highlighted Kajiado East where 38 childcare centres sampled showed poor quality, limited caregiver capacities to provide holistic child development support, and a lack of age-appropriate play items. He noted that the development of the Kajiado Childcare Policy and the formation of the multi-sectoral forum were underway. Terms of Reference were being developed at the time.

## **PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION**

### **State and non-state partnership and coordination for Early Childhood Development;**

*Lily Oyare, presented on behalf of Dr Teresa Mwoma, Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya*

Lily Oyare, Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya, highlighted the role of the network in bridging the coordination gap of early years stakeholders in Kenya. She pointed out to the audience that the ECD Network for Kenya was advancing multi-sectoral connections in advancing and nurturing

care for ECD in Kenya, in collaboration with the Division of Neonatal and Child Health at the Ministry of Health and like-minded stakeholders. She reiterated that collaboration builds bridges amongst all key actors in ECCED.

**Strengthening Governance and Accountability Mechanisms for better Early Childhood Development Outcomes in Africa;** *Moses Abiero<sup>1</sup>, Rose Kamasara<sup>1</sup>, Alicia Lutomia<sup>1</sup> and George Evans Owino<sup>1</sup>; African Early Childhood Network (AfECN)<sup>1</sup>*

**Panel:** Moses Abiero<sup>1</sup>, AfECN, Joyce Wesonga<sup>2</sup>, Uthabiti Africa<sup>2</sup> & Rachael Makena<sup>3</sup>, Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya<sup>3</sup>

The link between research, policy, and practice in ECCED can be strengthened through advocacy. Moses Abiero explained that an environment that enables stakeholders to engage, learn, and share information was central to effective advocacy efforts. Effective multi-sectoral approaches to ECD need to fully acknowledge the connectiveness of ECCED with diverse sectors including; the ministries of Health and of Education, and other key line ministries relevant to child development. However, he added that the ministries responsible for Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs and Special Programmes (i.e., NCCS); Finance, Agriculture, Water, and Urban planning were equally important sectors. He called for not just multi-sectoral approaches but an integrated approach that would contribute to the reduction in duplication of efforts.

Racheal Makena noted that networks, especially national ones, played an important role in supporting sector coordination by bringing together state and non-state actors to strengthen the alignment of dialogue with national policies on ECCED for the benefit of the Kenyan child. Networks also ensured coordination from the development of policies to their implementation and their impact. She highlighted that ECCED financing in Kenya, like in most African countries, was heavily reliant on government support and goodwill. More private sector funding to the sector is needed as well as advocating for increased budget allocations for ECD, using innovative tools like conditional grants attached to child outcomes. Racheal stressed the importance of enhancing scrutiny of ECD funds allocation for efficiency.

Joyce Wesonga explained the need for public participation in law and policy formulation to ensure an analysis with the community on what works, and what should be amended. She called for an environment that allowed stakeholders to engage and interact to gain an understanding of the diversity of the issues regarding ECCED across the different counties. Joyce noted that the learning networks formed a continuous process that allowed information sharing, new learnings and innovation. She urged that learning networks be contextualized to ensure the diversity and uniqueness of the issues in a given locality or region were captured and highlighted.

## INCLUSION

### **Strengthening legal and rights framework on early childhood education, care, safety and through care management for children accompanying their mothers to prison;** *Christine Odero*<sup>1</sup>, *Faraja Foundation*<sup>1</sup>

Faraja Foundation is a non-profit organization that was established in 1999. It works in partnership with the Kenya Prisons Services and facilities covering various themes such as human rights and advocacy, and addressing matters children. In her remarks, Christine Odero explained that children accompanying their incarcerated mothers in prison faced myriad challenges, both physiological and psychological. In most cases, these adverse situations affected the development trajectories of children who mostly were 'punished' together with their mothers. Christine added that stakeholders had identified gaps in policy about children accompanying their mothers to prisons. The children were denied rights including play, adequate care and protection from physical danger including from mothers with mental health difficulties. She called for policy interventions including the establishment of child wellness committees in prisons to facilitate the holistic reintegration of children. The review of the National Child Policy (2010) should also be as inclusive as much as is possible.

### **Incorporating ECCDE/Daycare Centres within TVETs in Informal Settlements to Allow Safety and Better Child Development as Young Mothers Access Education and Skills;** *Jane Wesonga*<sup>1</sup>, *Sheila Chepkirui*<sup>1</sup>; *Organization of African Youth-Kenya (OAY)*<sup>1</sup>

Kenya has committed to ensuring universal access to education and supporting quality ECDE. Major commitments are made in the Constitution that devolved ECDE, SDGs, Vision 2030, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)+25, CBC, 2017 National Pre-Primary Education Policy, and various ECDE policies and programmes. Further, the national policy on education and training promotes TVETs as key education and skills development strategies, especially for the most vulnerable young people.

Jane Wesonga of OAY said that the main aim of the initiative is to propose policy reforms to enhance childhood development and safety for vulnerable children in informal settlements whose mothers are furthering their education in TVETs. The initiative sought to address several questions covering key areas such as the inclusion of children in special circumstances, funding for ECDE in TVETs, required partnerships, and coordination within a devolved framework. Jane urged stakeholders to consider revising policy frameworks to set up or incorporate ECDE/daycares in TVETs and strengthen partnerships by working with the Ministry of Health and other partners.

### **Training and Development Needs of the Legal Workforce: A Lever for Promoting Child Rights and Services for At-risk Children;** *Anil Khamis*<sup>1</sup>, *Amina Abubakar*<sup>1</sup>, *Joyce Marangu*<sup>1</sup>, *Margaret Kabue*<sup>1</sup>, *Vibian Angwenyi*<sup>1</sup>; *Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development*<sup>1</sup>

According to Dr Anil Khamis of Aga Khan University - Institute for Human Development, the COVID-19 context shows a 40% loss of jobs in the formal economy, many of which may never return due to the process of automation. Women who comprise more than 80% of the informal economy have been disproportionately affected. Dr Anil noted that the focus on the criminal justice system was informed by evidence including from the 2017 Criminal Justice System Audit, which shows that the criminal justice system was skewed against the poor and that children were disproportionately affected ranging from those under five years in remand or prison with parents, to children under 18 for various offences.

He stressed the need to reassert principles of restorative justice and put in place measures to give the Kenyan child a second chance and a safe, nurturing environment.

**Supporting Families of Young Children with Developmental Disabilities in Kenya: Addressing the Gap through a Caregiver Skills Training Intervention;** *Prof. Amina Abubakar<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Prof Charles Newton<sup>2,3</sup>, Dr Vibian Angwenyi<sup>1</sup>, Eva Mwangome<sup>2</sup> and SPARK collaborators; Institute for Human Development, Aga Khan University<sup>1</sup>, Neurosciences Department, KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme, Kilifi<sup>2</sup>, Department of Psychiatry, University of Oxford<sup>3</sup>*

Globally, 53 million young children have disabilities, and 95% of them live in low- and middle-income countries. In Kenya, most children with developmental disabilities including autism and intellectual disability remain undiagnosed and receive little or no formal help. These children and their families experience multiple challenges, which include stigma, care burden, social isolation, limited access to essential services, and are often left out of programmes and government services. Dr Vibian Angwenyi, AKU-IHD found out that over 11% of children in Kenya had disabilities but of the large proportions remain undocumented. Developmental disabilities include autism, ADHD, cerebral palsy, epilepsy and intellectual disabilities. She mentioned that currently, interventions for this group of children were mainly based on developed countries' models that require time and specialist skills that may not link with cultural differences, cultural beliefs, and caregiver literacy levels in developing country contexts. Vibian said that WHO had developed a Caregiver Skills Training (CST) that is designed to be delivered by non-specialists.

The program is based on Open source and consists of nine (9) sessions and three (3) home visits with 6/8 diverse learning techniques and topics broadly covering components of the Nurturing Care Framework. She mentioned that in 2017 the WHO-CST piloted adaptation to the Kenya context, and initial feasibility was done showing the CST training was acceptable, had impacted the child and the caregiver with an observable transformation: enhanced quality of life for caregivers and improved socio-behavioural outcomes in children. Caregivers reported that CST positively transformed their attitudes and beliefs towards their child's capabilities and finding better ways to engage them in daily tasks and care.



## DAY 2 – THURSDAY, 10TH MARCH 2022

### County Regulatory Best Practices: Approaches and Processes

**How far do Kenyan national policies and county plans go in promoting nurturing care during the early years?** Margaret Nampijja<sup>1</sup>, Kenneth Okelo<sup>1</sup>, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo<sup>1</sup>, Ivy Chumo<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Muendo<sup>1</sup>, Linda Oloo<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth Mwaniki<sup>1</sup>, Maurice Mutisya<sup>1</sup>, Emma Haycraft<sup>2</sup>, Paula Griffiths<sup>2</sup>, Robert Hughes<sup>3</sup>, Mary Abboah-Offei<sup>3</sup>, Helen Elsey<sup>3</sup>, George Evans Owino<sup>4</sup>, Maryann Wanjau<sup>5</sup>: African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC)<sup>1</sup>, Loughborough University<sup>2</sup>, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine<sup>3</sup>, University of York<sup>3</sup>, AfECN<sup>4</sup>, Kidogo Innovations<sup>5</sup>

As the demand for childcare grows due to the changing lives of urban Kenyans, ensuring that policies are aligned with the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) and that plans are in place to operationalize them is key to driving improvements to promote optimal child development.

A detailed review conducted by the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC) in collaboration with partners including the University of York aimed at identifying the extent to which the Nurturing Care Framework is addressed in Kenyan national and county policies and plans as well as identifying the extent and characteristics of childcare centre provision in Kenya as specified in county-level plans.

“Children with disabilities – were well covered in national policies but not backed up with plans and budgets in County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs).”

**Dr Helen Elsey, University of York**

Government websites and various networks were researched, and about 19 national policies (from 2010 onwards) and County Integrated Development Plans or CIDPs (2018-2022) from the 47 counties were retrieved. The CIDPs and policies were coded according to the NCF domains and sub-domains. Coded data was synthesized to identify coverage and gaps in policies and plans.

Study findings indicated that the health and nutrition domains of the NCF, particularly Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH), were well covered in national policies. There was provision for 33,919 public and private ECDE centres across CIDPs. However, the main focus was on children aged four to five (4-5) years in transition to school, with limited mention of ECD for children under three (3) years. Dr Helen Elsey, University of York, explained that an analysis of the CIDPs revealed that there was limited coverage of Responsive Care-giving and Opportunities for Early learning domains, particularly in the budgets. The involvement of fathers within early years care was a notable omission at both national and county levels.

Some areas such as support for children with disabilities were well covered in national policies but not backed up with plans and budgets in CIDPs. She highlighted that where Acts and Policies existed for all children in the early years (e.g., Nairobi Childcare Facilities Act 2017),

translating these into achievable plans, with budget allocations, was patchy yet vital within CIDPs. Dr Helen recommended that policy and planning for children three years and below needs to be prioritized, particularly in urban areas with high demand for centre-based care.

**Effects of Climate Change and Environmental Degradation on Young Children: Implications for Policy - African Early Childhood Network (AfECN) 1:** *Alicia Lutomia<sup>1</sup>, Moses Abiero<sup>1</sup>, Rose Kamasara<sup>1</sup> & George Evans Owino<sup>1</sup>*

The effects of the climate crisis and environmental degradation on the youngest children cannot be underestimated. It threatens their survival and ability to grow and thrive, despite them being the least responsible contributors. According to Alicia Lutomia, AfECN, Kenya ranks 156 out of 188 countries in per capita Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and contributes 0.13% of global emissions of which 75% are from Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), and the agriculture sectors.

A desk review conducted to document the effects of climate change on young children in the African region found cumulative impacts of climate-induced shocks to children at the family level (that is, material deprivation, parental health and stress) and the community level (schools and neighbourhoods); during the early years that could have negative and long-lasting effect into adulthood.

“

*“Interventions to reduce climate risks, particularly for the youngest children, include: developing multi-sectoral, child-sensitive policies that prioritize mitigation, adaptation and building climate resilience.”*

**Alicia Lutomia, AfECN**

”

Recommended interventions to reduce climate risks, particularly for the youngest children, include: developing multi-sectoral, child-sensitive policies that prioritize mitigation, adaptation and building climate resilience.

In her remarks, Alicia called for collective action involving all stakeholders- including the international community, regional bodies, government ministries and agencies, policymakers, environment activists, CSOs, community activists as well as families and children. There is a need to aggressively integrate a child-sensitive approach in climate and environment policies and plans, at regional, national and sub-national levels to put young children at the centre of climate action. Alicia urged stakeholders in ECD to consider developing child-sensitive indicators within environmental and sustainable development-related policies.

**The Public-Private Partnership model in improving access to Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development (NCfECD):** *A case of KMET Changamsha Watoto Project in Siaya County - Owuor, A1, Oguttu M,1 Oketch T1, Odindo, G1: Kisumu Medical Education Trust (KMET)1*

Abela Owuor, KMET noted that Siaya County had implemented the ‘Changamsha Watoto Initiative’ focusing on involving the private health sector in implementing childcare services; by engaging caregivers to integrate Sexual Reproductive Health in their programmes targeting teen mothers and supporting them to seek and get available friendly services from the private health sector.

“

*“Siaya County government leadership model for championing children’s matters proved sustainable owing to the Governor’s personal engagement and also through the County’s First Lady who was Patron for Nurturing Care for ECD”*

**Abela Owuor, KMET**

”

A key lesson learned through KMET initiatives was that utilizing champions for ECD at different levels can sustain policy-advocacy models. Abela noted that the Siaya County government leadership model for championing children’s matters had proved sustainable owing to the Governor’s engagement and also through the County’s First Lady who

was Patron NCfECD. The Government of Siaya facilitated high-level formal coordination - an oversight committee comprising four County Executive Committee members and a Multi-Sectoral Team (MST). The MST comprised technical officers from National, County line ministries, and non-governmental partners, led by an appointed Focal person coordinating the process through existing systems. KMET recommended that to ensure success of policy-advocacy initiatives on ECD, interventions should build on achievements and lessons learnt, making appropriate contextual changes to ensure sustainability

## SUMMARY OF KEY MESSAGES BY SUB-THEME

### ECCE Summary Context

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) anchors human rights with the Bill of Rights (2010) that for the first time includes children's rights. Article 6 (1) establishes the 47 counties heralding a devolved system of government and services, particularly in the health and education sectors. Over the last decade, progress has been made in Kenya to reduce stunting and child mortality, increase pre-primary school enrolment, and transition to school. While this progress points to an upward trend in the outcomes for children, it is not steep and steady enough to ensure no child is left behind. The policy gap for children aged zero to four (0-4) years, a critical window of child development, is particularly glaring and leads to the curtailing of the human development potential of the next generation.

The lack of affordable childcare among the urban poor prevents women from engaging in paid work, resulting in the youngest children facing sub-optimal development due to a lack of proper care when parents are working. Empowerment of childcare caregivers to support child development while parents pursue livelihoods would safeguard the at-risk children from related early adversity.

This summary of thematic key messages is anchored on strategic childhood development and care priorities/aspirations for consideration by the 47 county and one national governments in Kenya; nurturing care through a whole government, whole society approach for all children aged zero to eight years; inclusivity; and engendering childcare as a women's livelihoods issue. The summary forms a technical summary of all conference proceedings and is to be tailored for dissemination to diverse target audiences, such as policymakers and policy implementers. It recommends strategic actions for the 48 governments and their partners (state and non-state actors).

### **Theme One: Integrating Nurturing Care Framework in Early Childhood Development (Children 0-8 years with a focus on 0-3's):**

Full adoption and implementation of the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development is a smart investment decision that should be supported through capacity building of personnel, resource allocation, and political support at the highest level.

Policy, frameworks and policy implementation strategies

- Gap for under 4's: Kenya adopted the Nurturing Care Framework nationally, providing a good entry point for multi-sectoral programming for the youngest children.
- The National government through the Ministry of Health in partnership with the Ministry of Education and other partners has drafted an ECD policy for Kenya (2022) that provides a basis for developing clear policies and implementation frameworks guiding county governments on childcare regulation.
- Enabling environment: The draft ECD Policy for Kenya (2022) is aimed at guiding caregiving and enhancing national coordination and collaboration by all actors in early childhood; enabling the

47 county governments, with partners, to scale up cost-effective models reaching all children aged zero to eight (0-8) years.

- Integrating nurturing care ensures that all children particularly those in adversity and related diverse circumstances receive equitable childcare services.
- The 47 county governments should have in place clear integrated and multi-sectoral policies, plans and infrastructure for holistic child development programmes.
- Though counties are striving to adopt a multi-sectoral approach to nurturing care into their programming, low prioritization persists. Adopt the Nurturing Care Framework as a government programme, with expenditure lines ensuring the longevity of ECCED interventions, beyond political office terms.
- Resource allocation for the 47 counties: Ensure annual budgetary allocations for equitable access to quality childcare services for the holistic development of the youngest.
- Malnutrition (stunting) is a critical marker of early child development. Stunting impacts learning outcomes and curtails the human development potential of the next generation.
- To reduce childhood malnutrition, develop a stronger multi-sectoral government response, increase political commitment towards health and nutrition; and create and deliver targeted household support, focusing on women and other primary caregivers.
- Building the capacities of frontline workers, such as CHVs, to integrate NCfECD into maternal and child health services offers a ready avenue for linkages to ECCED interventions at the community level (households and childcare facilities).
- Implement interventions to reduce climate change risks for the youngest, include developing multi-sectoral, child-sensitive policies that prioritize mitigation, adaptation and building climate-change resilience.

## **Theme Two: Financing, Investment and Budgeting**

*Financing of the ECCED sector shows the laudable efforts to increase funding but this should expand into government budget prioritization, and the support provided to counties to develop better guidelines for increased efficiency and or allocation to ECCED initiatives.*

Policy and implementation strategies

- Investing in the early years contributes to ensuring that young children access the right services, that is, nurturing care.
- Ring-fence and protect funding related to policy-making, including implementing capitation grants. Pre-primary aged children, who are at a critical stage of child development do not benefit from per-capita grant allocations from the national government, like those undertaking Primary and Secondary education.

- County governments' capitation to ECDE should be reinforced in policy to guarantee steady funding.
- Develop and implement adequate guidelines centred on ECCED financing. Implementation guidelines on how counties should budget for childcare would ensure effective monitoring.
- Advocate for increased budget allocations for the youngest, in the 47 counties, using incentives such as conditional grants tied to specific indicators for relevant outcomes achieved by County Government.
- The national and county governments, through the national and county treasuries, should institutionalise gender-responsive budgeting.
- Attracting more private sector funding is needed,
- Enhance scrutiny of ECD funds allocation for efficiency.

### **Theme Three: Inclusion**

Inclusion and equity are critical in ECCED policy and programming, and this calls for deliberate initiatives to cater to the needs of Children with Disabilities (CWD), special needs and those in special circumstances through multi-sectoral collaboration in the early assessment, placement, referral, and training of frontline workers, and adequate resource allocation.

### **Policy, frameworks and policy implementation strategies**

- Implement fully and contextualise in all 47 counties, the National Guidelines for Identification and Referral of Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Policy (2010).
- Conduct an inclusive review of the National Child Policy (2010).
- Include rights of children in special circumstances and those most vulnerable such as those accompanying their incarcerated mothers in prison, and existing in urban informal settlements.
- Establish child wellness committees in prisons to facilitate a holistic reintegration of children
- Ensure multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary programming, planning and collaboration.
- Develop capacities of childcare workforce (caregivers, teachers and other frontline workers) in early identification of children with or are at risk of neurological and developmental delays; ensure appropriate intervention and referrals, as well as; empower parents/caregivers, linking them for relevant support through the Community Health Strategy.
- Conduct empirical studies to inform monitoring and evaluation indices alongside providing data on the magnitude and nature of children with disability (CWD) and special needs.
- Prioritise inclusive budgeting and allocation of adequate financial resources.

## Theme Four: Workforce Development

The ECCED workforce requires policy attention: streamlining schemes of service for frontline workers (CHVs, caregivers and teachers), to attract and retain not only qualified personnel but also address shortages and the skills gaps in providing nurturing care, among caregivers in the informal childcare settings. Adopting minimum standards that are achievable for all childcare providers is desired in order to secure the child development trajectories of the youngest, and most vulnerable in comparison to their counterparts from more privileged settings.

### Policy, frameworks and policy implementation strategies

- Address through policies and guidelines, pre-and in-service workforce development/staffing for the ECCED sector in all counties, for example, streamline schemes of service for ECDE teachers to attract and retain qualified personnel.
- Policy and guidelines on minimum standards for ECCED personnel and facilities need to be streamlined and implemented at the County level to allow for quality control and comparability of services between counties.
- A contextualised multisectoral/interdisciplinary model for workforce development on ECD, in addition to CCD (for health-focussed workforce), is required.
- Prioritize competency in CBC and capacity building in nurturing care, for ECCED workforce/service providers to enable them to support early stimulation/age-appropriate early learning activities for young children, in partnership with parents/caregivers.
- Support career development for ECCED workforce.
- Use contextual and cultural realities to enhance childhood development and safety for the vulnerable in informal settlements and whose mothers are furthering their education in TVETS
- Frontline workers in maternal and child health settings, such as CHVs offer a ready avenue for linking and integrating ECCED interventions at the community level, helping to bridge the zero to threes intervention gap.
- Reliable and up to date data is required for evidence-based planning and advocacy for children under four years (to ensure prioritisation of all children under eight years) in the 47 counties.

## Theme Five: Multi-sectoral Partnerships and Coordination

Effective partnership and coordination in ECCED will reduce duplication and increase efficiency for the youngest. It requires strong institutional and legal frameworks that promote and reward multi-sectoral collaboration, and align ECCED policies with all child development-focused sectors.

### Policy, frameworks and policy implementation strategies

- Strong institutional and legal frameworks coupled with high-level political support are necessary for effective coordination and partnership.
- Effective multi-sectoral approaches need to embrace the connectedness of ECCED with diverse sectors including; the ministries of Health and of Education, and other key line ministries relevant to child development.
- Situate partnerships and coordination in existing processes including County Integrated Development Plans, and Annual Development Plans (which include budgets).
- Leverage an internal/external lens to multi-sectoral partnerships, such as County -to-County governments and County government to National, etc.
- Include civil society actors in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and/or advocate to be represented in the pertinent discussions.
- Develop, share and disseminate to all stakeholders, a calendar of events so that all ECD focussed players (non-state actors primarily) can co-plan to synergise efforts.
- Contextualise in-country learning networks to ensure the diversity and uniqueness of the issues in a given locality or region.

## Appendix A: Abstract presentation sessions

### DAY 1: PANEL BREAKOUT SESSIONS

#### *Breakout 1.1: Nurturing care framework*

*Session Chair: Tobias Opiyo*

*Rapporteur: Stella Ndugire Mbugua*

- 1. Nurturing care for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities: Opportunities, policy gaps, and recommendations** *Silas Onyango, Kenneth Okelo, Ruth Muendo, and Patricia Wekulo, African Population and Health Research Centre*
- 2. Users' perceptions and factors that inform the choice of childcare service utilization: The Nairobi Early Childcare in Slums (NECS)** *Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo<sup>1</sup>, Silas Onyango<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Muendo<sup>1</sup>, Nelson Langat<sup>1</sup> & Robert Hughes<sup>2</sup> African Population and Health Research Centre<sup>1</sup>, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine<sup>2</sup>*
- 3. Capacity building of frontline workers for Integrated Early Childhood Development interventions: A case of Siaya County Odero L, Oyugi B, Omedo D, Miruka R, PATH**

#### *Breakout 1.2. Financing, investment and budgeting*

*Session Chair: Blandina Bobson*

*Rapporteur: Damaris Mabeya*

- 4. Analysis of the Kenyan budget 2021/2022: Focus on the care economy spending** *Mr Josiah Kiarie and Leo Kemboi, AWSC, UON WEE Hub, Collaborative Centre on Gender*
- 5. Unlocking Big Change on Pre-Primary Education in Kenya: a plan of action for civil society advocates:** *Gilbert Ngaira, Theirworld*

#### *1.3. Workforce development: Implementing organizations*

*Session Chair: Dr Anil Khamis*

*Rapporteur: Wendy Ongare*

- 6. Effective classroom and school leadership practices for improved learning outcomes** *Nancy Gikandi & Ng'ang'a Kibandi, Dignitas*
- 7. Provision of Childcare solutions in Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) to provide young mothers with an opportunity to be empowered through skills and competency in the institution.** *Martin Kiyeng, Kidogo Early Years*

#### 1.4. Nurturing Care Framework

*Session Chair: Ruth Muendo*

*Rapporteur: Gloria Kathure*

8. Playful parenting and other innovative programmes for children 0-3years: The Madrasa Early Childhood Programme Mas-ad O. Mohamed, Aga Khan Foundation & Madrasa Early Childhood Programme – Kenya
9. Maternal stimulation and early child development in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): Evidence from Kenya and Zambia Silas Onyango<sup>1</sup>, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo<sup>1</sup>, Nelson Langat<sup>1</sup>, Kenneth Okelo<sup>1</sup>, Dawn Murdock<sup>2</sup>, Jürg Utzinger<sup>3</sup> & Günther Fink<sup>3</sup>. African Population and Health Research Centre, Episcopal Relief & Development, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute
10. Integrated management of newborn and childhood illness (IMNCI) *quality of care assessment in Kakamega County, Kenya* Rose Muhanda, Dr Ruth Kapanga and Fredrick Makokha
11. Policy lessons from the implementation of care for child development in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania Joyce Marangu, Amina Abubakar, Aga Khan University, Institute for Human Development

#### 1.5 Inclusion

*Session Chair: Eva Nyoike*

*Rapporteur: Adhieu Chol Chimani*

12. Strengthening legal and rights framework on early childhood education, care, safety and through care management for children accompanying their mothers to prison Christine Odero, Faraja Foundation
13. Incorporating ECCDE/ Daycare centres within TVETs in informal settlements to allow safety and better child development as young mothers access education and skills Jane Wesonga<sup>1</sup>, Sheila Chepkirui<sup>1</sup>, Organization of African Youth-Kenya (OAY)<sup>1</sup>
14. Training and development needs of the legal workforce – A Lever for promoting child rights and services for at-risk children Anil Khamis, Amina Abubakar, Joyce Maragu, Margaret Kabue, Vibian Angwenyi, The Aga Khan University Institute for Human Development

#### 1.6. Workforce development challenges for caregivers and childcare entrepreneurs

*Session Chair: Carolinda Awuor*

*Rapporteur: Stella Ndugire Mbugua*

15. Improving the quality of childcare centres in Nairobi's informal settlements through supportive assessment and 'communities of practice' using existing government systems Margaret Nampijja<sup>1</sup>, Linda Oloo<sup>1</sup>, Kenneth Okelo<sup>1</sup>, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Muendo<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth Mwaniki<sup>1</sup>, Nelson Lang'at<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth Kimani-Murage<sup>1</sup>, Mary Abboah-Offei<sup>1</sup>, Anna Ray<sup>2</sup>, Helen Elsey<sup>2</sup>, Martin Kiyeng<sup>3</sup>, APHRC<sup>1</sup>, University of York<sup>2</sup>, Kidogo<sup>3</sup>

16. Barriers to an enabling nurturing care environment for children under day-care settings.  
*Stephen Ikonya, Allan Ragi, Jack Ndegwa, Charity Wachira, Kenya Aids NGOs Consortium (KANCO)*

17. Experience sharing by caregivers: *Tiny Totos and Yaya plus*

## **DAY 2: PANEL BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

### **1.7. County regulatory best practices: Approaches and processes**

*Session Chair: Joyce Wesonga*

*Rapporteur: Adhieu Chol Chimani*

18. How far do Kenyan national policies and county plans go in promoting nurturing care during the early years? *Margaret Nampijja<sup>1</sup>, Kenneth Okelo<sup>1</sup>, Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo<sup>1</sup>, Ivy Chumo<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Muendo<sup>1</sup>, Linda Oloo<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth Mwaniki<sup>1</sup>, Maurice Mutisya<sup>1</sup>, Emma Haycraft<sup>2</sup>, Paula Griffiths<sup>2</sup>, Robert Hughes<sup>3</sup>, Mary Abboah-Offei<sup>3</sup>, Helen Elsey<sup>3</sup>, George Evans Owino<sup>4</sup>, Maryann Wanjau<sup>5</sup>, African Population and Health Research Centre<sup>1</sup>, Loughborough University<sup>2</sup>, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine<sup>3</sup>, University of York<sup>3</sup>, AfECN<sup>4</sup>, Kidogo Innovations<sup>5</sup>*

### **1.8. County regulatory best practices: Approaches and processes**

*Session Chair: Dr Esther Kimani*

*Rapporteur: Wendy Ongare*

19. Effects of climate change and environmental degradation on young children: Implications for Policy  
*Alicia Lutomia, Moses Abiero, Rose Kamasara, Dr George Evans Owino, African Early Childhood Network (AfECN)*

*Various county presentations*

### **1.9 County regulatory best practices: Approaches and processes**

*Session Chair: Phelesia Catherine Akasa*

*Rapporteur: Gloria Kathure*

20. The Public–Private Partnership model in improving access to Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development (NCfECD): A Case of KMET Changamsha Watoto Project in Siaya County. *Owuor, A, Oguttu M, Oketch T, Odindo, G, Kisumu Medical Education Trust (KMET )<sup>1</sup>*

*Various county presentations*

## Appendix B: List of Participating Organizations

The Policy Conference was well attended by delegates from all over the country including:

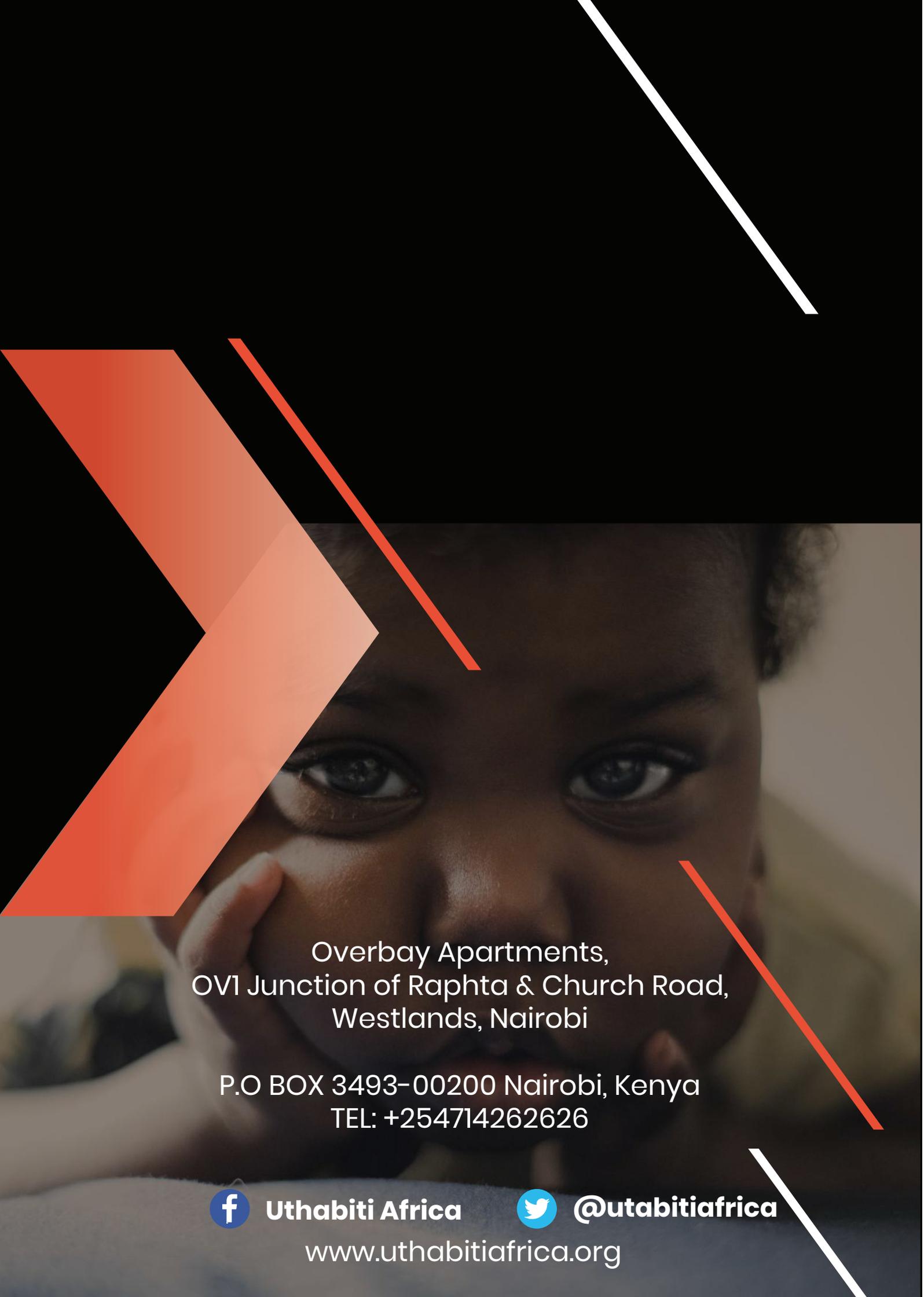
- a. National Government/Actors in the ECD:** Council of Governors (CoG), Division of Neonatal and Child Health (DNCH) - Ministry of Health (MOH), Inter-Religious Council, Kenya Prisons Service (KPS), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Finance, National Council for Children's Services (NCCS), National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) Special Taskforce on Children matters, State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education, Tangaza University and Teachers Service Commission (TSC).
- b. County Governments represented (34):** Bungoma, Busia, Embu, Garissa, Homabay, Kajiado, Kakamega, Kiambu, Kirinyaga, Kisumu, Kitui, Kwale, Isiolo, Laikipia, Lamu, Machakos, Makueni, Mandera, Marsabit, Meru, Mombasa, Nairobi, Nakuru, Nyamira, Nyandarua, Samburu, Siaya, Tana River, Tharaka Nithi, Turkana, Uasin Gishu, Vihiga, Wajir, and West Pokot
- c. Development Partners:** Oxfam and World Bank
- d. Civil Society Organizations:** Acorn Special Tutorials, African Early Childhood Network (AfECN), African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), Aga Khan University-Institute for Human Development, Action Foundation, Association of Women in Agriculture (AWAK), Child Fund, Catholic Relief Services, Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development, Community Initiatives Agenda, Dhobi Women Network, Dignitas, Early Childhood Development Network for Kenya (ECDNeK), Faraja Foundation, Girl Concern, Initiative and Youth Alive, Kidogo, Kisumu Medical Education Trust (KMET), Madrasa Early Childhood Program (MECP), Organization of African Youth, Partnership for Africa Women Advancement (PAWA), Pastoralist Girls Initiative, PATH, Plan International, Terre Des Hommes, The Cradle, Theirworld, Usikimye, and Uthabiti Africa.
- e. The Private Sector:** Acorn Special Tutorials, Bridge Kenya, Kidogo, Mary's Meal, and Nature Lock.

## POLICY REGULATORY REFORM - TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEMBERS



## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS





Overbay Apartments,  
OVI Junction of Raphta & Church Road,  
Westlands, Nairobi

P.O BOX 3493-00200 Nairobi, Kenya  
TEL: +254714262626



**Uthabiti Africa**



**@utabiti africa**

[www.uthabitiafrica.org](http://www.uthabitiafrica.org)



The 1st National Policy Conference on Early  
Childhood Care, Education and Development  
Report June 2022.