



COMMUNIQUE ON THE NATIONAL POLICY CONFERENCE ON ECCED

#ECCEDPOLICYCONF2022

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 of 218 physically present and 15 virtually via Zoom representing National and County Governments, Council of Governors Secretariat, County First Ladies, implementing and research organisations, 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. 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 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 organisations must work together to ensure parents and caregivers get the support and resources they and their children need to not just survive but to 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 establish a skilled workforce and to ensuring a healthy, thriving citizenry.

Call to Action

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

- ➔ Integrate the Nurturing Care Framework into policy, legislation and national and county programming; prioritise at the highest political authority, the implementation of the Nurturing Care Framework.
- ➔ Enact National Kenya's ECD policy to strengthen multi-sectoral partnerships, coordination and collaboration.
- ➔ Harmonise and strengthen systems for developmental monitoring, to ensure assessment, screening, early detection, management and referral of developmental delays in County and National level programmes.
- ➔ The National Government to support the 47 Counties to set up minimum standards for all categories of childcare facilities as per relevant policies.
- ➔ National Government to scale up the capacity building of frontline workers, all 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.
- ➔ The National Government to dedicate funds with guiding financing frameworks that can be adapted by counties, indicating how funding for early childhood should be prioritised and utilised.
- ➔ The 47 County Governments to prioritise investments in early learning, beyond infrastructural development, for holistic development of children.
- ➔ All ECCED actors to collaborate and support governmental 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 County, Kenya.
