

Kenya Childcare Funder & Partner Conversation

June 7, 2024
8am - 11am
Mövenpick Hotel

Agenda

Objective: Discuss the opportunities and gaps in the childcare space in Kenya and how funders can help advance this work constructively and collaboratively.

8:00 - 8:15am	Introductions, overview of agenda and purpose
8:15 - 9:00m	State of Childcare in Kenya: <i>Key findings from research that should guide our understanding of opportunities to advance access to high quality childcare in Kenya</i> • Data conversation starters from research by Patricia Wekulo and Anthony Mwangangi Mbithi (20 mins) • Responses, additional points of data from wider group (25 mins)
9:00 - 9:30am	In table groups (~4 groups of 5 people): What are the most ripe opportunities for advancing access to childcare in Kenya? What are the biggest barriers?
9:30 - 9:45am	Break
9:45 - 10:15am	Sharing table conversations, consolidating key opportunities
10:15 - 11:00am	Reflections on how donors could contribute to these key opportunities, collaborate and engage more constructively
11:00 am	Tea

Participants

Funders	Grantee Partners
1. Echidna Giving 2. ELMA Philanthropies 3. Gates Foundation 4. Hilton Foundation 5. Imaginable Futures 6. LEGO Foundation	1. AfECN 2. APHRC 3. Global Schools Forum 4. Kenyatta University 5. Kidogo 6. NurtureFirst 7. Tiny Totos 8. University of Nairobi

Purpose

- Group of funders building bridges across funders who care about childcare from different sectors — education/child development, women’s economic empowerment, nutrition. Wrote an [op-ed](#) together, arguing that:

*“If women’s empowerment leaders can link up with child development leaders and those who promote access to health, nutrition, education, and other critical services that can be delivered through childcare centers, they create a **formidable alliance**.”*

- Kenya is the country in which there is the most overlap among active funders. Given many funders were in Nairobi at the same time, wanted to get ourselves and grantee partners together to:

Discuss the opportunities and gaps in the childcare space in Kenya and how funders can help advance this work constructively and collaboratively.

- Sometimes funders breed competition rather than collaboration. But competition stands in the way of the “formidable alliance” that we hope to form. So how we can *constructively* engage to help advance these opportunities?

Situational Analysis

- **Consensus on the problem**: high demand for childcare; current facilities are low quality
- **Consensus on the opportunity**:
 - For economic growth (\$1 investment in childcare can support \$7 increase in economic output)
 - For child outcomes
 - For women's labor force participation
- **A shared analysis of key recommendations to advance childcare in Kenya**:
 - Develop the workforce
 - Some gave special emphasis to coaching support and leveraging adult learning principles
 - Establish quality assurance systems
 - Stakeholder engagement can create guidance on what effective childcare looks like
 - Streamline regulation and licensing of childcare facilities...in a way that supports improvement of quality without shutting down childcare opportunities that families need
 - Unlock financing — particularly from government
 - Come together to advocate — pulling in others who are not in the room (e.g. folks who work on youth unemployment)
 - Provide nutrition support
 - Work to shift gender norms on caregiving

How to Come Together

Given our alignment on the opportunities — how do we come together, advocate jointly, be politically savvy about potential detractors, and get government money to scale access to high quality, affordable childcare in Kenya?

- Align on key asks, frames, and terminology.
 - Align around messaging including terminology and overall framing on this issue.
 - Create a diverse group of champions for this agenda and support them in their advocacy.
 - Prioritise access to funding among the key asks and consider how public and private sources of funding can both be used to improve access and quality.
- Get politically savvy
 - Identify supporters, opposers, and by-standers and strategies for engagement.
 - Understand government and county level process and opportunities to influence e.g. election timetables and planning and budget processes and timelines.
 - Figure out how to create a voting block and make childcare an election issue
- Work to coordinate the above efforts
 - Agree on a process as a community of actors and supports on this agenda. Funders are on standby to support as necessary.

How to Come Together (continued)

- Work together to advance technical priorities:
 - Support strengthening of the policy environment by:
 - Mapping out who is supporting which counties on policy. From the room we heard (Tharaka-Nithi, Muranga, Mombasa, Kilifi, Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu, Busia and Kajiadoo)
 - Ensuring there is good representation across the Regional Economic Blocs. From the list above we note there is no representation from NOREB and FCDC so would be good to explore further and make sure there is representation from these oft neglected regions).
 - Co-ordinating on outreach to the Council of Governors – having activities to speak of collectively across regional blocs and within several of the 47 counties strengthens the case.
 - Provide support to setting reasonable regulations and standards.
 - Focus on the must-haves like safety and security for children, caregivers meeting minimum standards to deliver quality care, nutrition and early learning. But do not let perfection be the enemy of the good.
 - Don't reinvent the wheel and build on the existing standards of current operators like Kidogo and Tiny Totos.

Key Next Steps

- ❑ Funders agreed to brief others who were not able to attend, and to see how we can best support coordinated efforts
- ❑ Kenya ECD Network, AfECN flagged near-term opportunities to shape their childcare campaign initiatives
- ❑ NurtureFirst flagged near-term opportunities to influence the ECD policy that is underway, particularly how home-based childcare is framed
- ❑ Feel free to share additional findings and materials with the group

