



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT HUB &
COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF THARAKA NITHI**



**REPORT OF THE RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL (RCT) BASELINE DATA
DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP HELD ON 26TH MARCH, 2025 IN KATHAWANA,
THARAKA NITHI COUNTY.**

26th March 2026

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Introduction

The Kenyatta University-WEE Hub in collaboration with Yale University (USA), Tharaka Nithi County government and other stakeholders, are implementing a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) intervention in Tharaka Nithi County Kenya, with the goal of enhancing women's economic empowerment (WEE) and their psychosocial well-being through a structured childcare intervention program. This intervention is formally titled "*A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of a Preschool Intervention on Child Learning and Women's Economic Empowerment in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya*". It investigates how access to quality childcare can serve as a catalyst for women's participation in economic and income-generating activities. It also investigates early preschool enrollment of children's effect on holistic development and school readiness of the 3-year-old.

The intervention is being carried out in 60 treatment schools across the county, targeting specifically three-year-old children. Within each PP1 classroom, five three-year-old children were randomly enrolled to participate in the intervention, while another five four-year-old children were selected for experimental measurement. To ensure robust evaluation, the study also included three control groups:

- Five three-year-olds in control schools,
- Five four-year-olds in control schools, and
- Five three-year-olds who remained at home in the treatment areas.

To facilitate effective implementation, teaching materials for the experiment were designed and distributed to the treatment schools. These materials support lesson delivery in local languages, fostering a familiar yet rich and engaging learning environment for young children. The RCT introduced specifically adopted curriculum, methodologies and learning resources that benefited the entire PP1 class. The intervention also emphasized capacity building, with 12 project mentors each supporting two teachers per school one designated RCT caregiver and one regular PP1 teacher across five schools, ensuring continuous training and mentorship.

To share preliminary baseline findings, KU-WEE Hub in collaboration with Tharaka Nithi County, convened a dissemination workshop on March 26, 2025, at the Governor's residence in Ruguri Hill, Kathwana. This event brought together stakeholders from various sectors, including representatives from the Tharaka Nithi County Government, State Department for Basic Education, State Department for Higher Education, State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Members of the County Assembly, Kenyatta University management, and researchers from both KU-WEE Hub and Yale Universities. The workshop served as a collaborative platform to reflect on the study's insights and to strengthen partnerships in advancing early childhood education and women's economic empowerment agenda in the region.

Workshop Proceedings

The workshop began with early arrivals and a smooth registration process coordinated by the ECDE Director of Education, Mr. Joseph Iguna Mutegi, in collaboration with the Tharaka Nithi County ECD Department and representatives from the KU-WEE Hub. Participants started arriving before 8:00 AM, and registration continued steadily as they checked in for the day's event (**Appendix 1** shows the full day programme).

While awaiting the arrival of His Excellency Muthomi Njuki, Governor of Tharaka Nithi County, participants were engaged through a compelling video presentation . The clip focused on the Chuka town market crèche, offering a glimpse into children’s daily play activities and highlighting testimonials from women traders https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29qWq-x6uTw&list=PLkdNeWWJXUoDixqBPi_zZGLR-9I330W_p&index=27&t=190s .

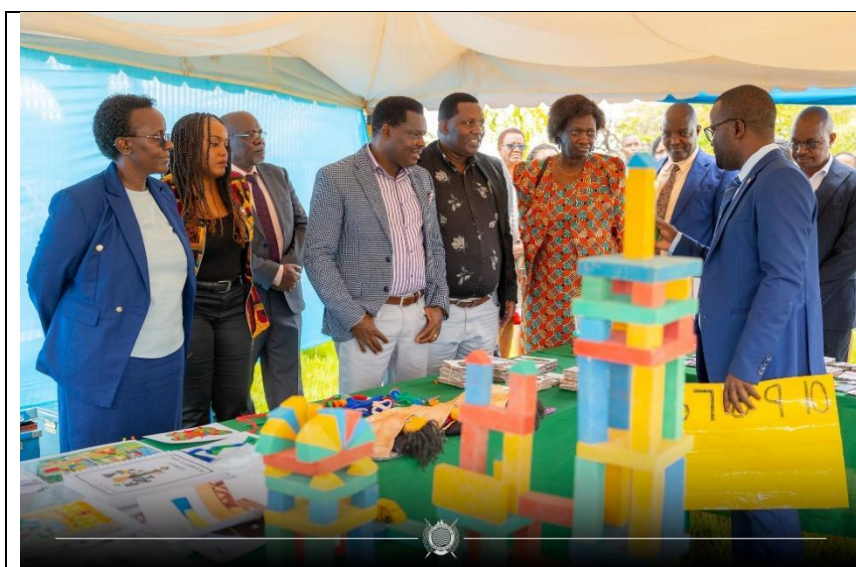
The women spoke candidly about the difficulties they faced before the crèche was established, such as the need to carry their children on their backs while working, challenges that were particularly acute during the rainy seasons. They emphasized the transformation brought about by the crèche, noting how it allowed them to concentrate more on their businesses, while their children thrived in a safe and stimulating environment that promoted early development in social interaction and language skills.

The video also included reflections from key stakeholders involved in the project. The County Executive Committee (CEC) Member for Education provided an overview of the RCT project, setting the context for its implementation.

Prof. Judith Waudu, Leader of the KU-WEE Hub, in her opening remarks briefly outlined the objectives and structure of the RCT initiative. The principal investigator(PI)Prof. Simon Onywere, Kenyatta University, on the other hand , traced the roots of the RCT back to the success of the Chuka market crèche programme, which had been launched under Governor Njuki’s leadership https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkL26p-GjDs&list=PLkdNeWWJXUoDixqBPi_zZGLR-9I330W_p&index=28 .

He underscored the critical role of caregivers in enabling women to fully engage in income-generating activities, reinforcing the rationale behind the childcare-focused intervention.

An exhibition booth was mounted to showcase the interactive teaching pedagogy and the learning materials used in the RCT intervention. This display was led by Prof. Teresa Mwoma, a Co-Principal Investigator for the Curriculum Intervention, alongside Brian Murithi, the RCT Intervention Officer, and with the support of the RCT mentors and teachers. When Governor Muthomi Njuki arrived, he was taken on a guided tour of the exhibition by the RCT Intervention Officer Mr Brian Murithi, who provided insights into the educational tools and resources developed for the project.



H.E, Governor Muthomi Njuki being taken through the materials that are used in the PPI Classroom to implement the RCT Intervention

Opening and Welcome Remarks

The official opening of the workshop commenced with a word of prayer from Mr. Linus Gitaari, the Head Teacher of Kamutiria Primary School. This solemn moment was followed both the Kenyan National Anthem and the East African Community Anthem, both led by the Master of Ceremony, Mr. Naftary Kinyua, setting a respectful and unified tone for the event.

Adding a lively touch to the morning, RCT mentors and teachers roleplayed an interesting creative skit which highlighted on various learning activities incorporated in the RCT intervention curriculum, offering participants a firsthand glimpse into the kind of experiences children in the experimental group engage in during their preschool sessions.

The introductions and stakeholder recognition segment was led by Mr. Jonathan Mwiti, Chief Officer for Education and Vocational Training in Tharaka Nithi County. In his welcoming address, Mr. Mwiti acknowledged the presence of distinguished guests and participants, including His Excellency Muthomi Njuki, Governor of Tharaka Nithi County; Deputy Governor Mr. Muisaeli. Nyaga; representatives from Kenyatta University and Yale University and other key stakeholders. He gave a special mention to Ms. Emma Lambert-Porter from Yale University, recognizing her as a pivotal partner in the RCT project.



Mr. Mwiti concluded his remarks by emphasizing on the significance of the workshop, noting that its central purpose was to share and discuss the baseline findings of the RCT intervention. He underlined the value of this knowledge in shaping future decisions and collaborations aimed at improving early childhood education and advancing women's economic empowerment in the county.

Welcome Remarks

Ms. Dorothy Naivasha, Executive Committee Member for Education and Vocational Training



Ms. Dorothy Naivasha, the Executive Committee Member (ECM) for Education and Vocational Training in Tharaka Nithi County, officially welcomed participants to the RCT Dissemination Forum. In her opening remarks, she acknowledged the presence of distinguished guests from Kenyatta University and Yale University, as well as representatives from the State Departments of Higher and Basic Education, the State Department for Gender, the County Public Service Board, and the County Assembly Committee for Education, Science and Technology, and members of the media.

Ms Naivasha continued by emphasizing that the purpose of the forum was to present the findings from the baseline study of the Randomized Controlled Trial, conducted across three clusters in Tharaka Nithi County: Tharaka, Maara, and Chuka/Igambang'ombe. According to Ms. Naivasha, the results of this study offer critical insights into the state of early childhood education in the county and demonstrate the potential of targeted interventions to enhance children's learning and development.

Ms. Naivasha reaffirmed the County Government's commitment to scaling up investments in education and vocational training. She highlighted that these efforts align with Governor Muthomi Njuki's vision of raising well-rounded children who are adequately equipped to become productive members of society. The Governor, she noted, places strong emphasis on ensuring that children acquire the necessary skills to support themselves and their families, thereby contributing meaningfully to community development.

She further underscored the vital role of women in driving economic growth, innovation, and long-term sustainability. Acknowledging their contributions in both formal and informal sectors, she described women as the "engine of development," commending their resilience in navigating systemic challenges and adapting to shifting economic landscapes. Ms. Naivasha highlighted the importance of their continued involvement in shaping a more equitable and prosperous society.

Recognizing the value of diverse perspectives, she encouraged all participants to actively engage in dialogue, share knowledge, and explore potential areas for future collaboration. She concluded her remarks by expressing sincere gratitude to all attendees for their commitment to education and research and called upon them to use the forum as an opportunity to foster evidence-based decision-making and strengthen partnerships that advance early childhood education.

Prof. Judith Waudo, KU-WEE Hub Leader and Director Centre for Gender Equity & Empowerment, Kenyatta University

Prof. Judith Waudo, Leader of the KU-WEE Hub at Kenyatta University, began her address by acknowledging the intervention and assessment teams that played a central role in the project's implementation. She recognized the contributions of ECD teachers, RCT supervisors, Ms. Jackline Kanana (Assessment Lead), and Mr. Brian Muriithi (Intervention Supervisor), who were all instrumental in bringing the initiative to life.

She gave an overview of the KU-WEE Hub, a national initiative aimed at improving women's economic empowerment in Kenya. Launched in 2020, the five-year project is funded by the Gates Foundation and encompasses 14 individual projects grouped under three main themes: women's roles in public and private sectors, skilling and mentoring, and issues surrounding violence, crisis, and women's work under which the RCT project falls.

The Hub's overall approach is grounded in evaluative research, the generation of gender-disaggregated data, the development of policy briefs, and close collaboration with policymakers to ensure impactful and sustainable outcomes.

Prof. Waudo elaborated on the specific objectives of the RCT project in Tharaka Nithi County, which seeks to enhance women's economic empowerment while supporting early childhood development. Initially, the plan was to establish community crèches throughout the county.

However, due to feasibility challenges, the team opted to anchor the program within existing schools, allowing mothers of three-year-olds to benefit from childcare while their children participated in structured learning. This shift required formal approval from the Ministry of Education to enroll three-year-old children into PP1 classrooms.

She expressed deep appreciation for the support provided by Governor Muthomi Njuki, who played a crucial role in enabling the intervention. She also recognized Hon. Dorothy Naivasha and her team for their support in the project's design and implementation, and the County Government for developing supportive policies to accommodate three-year-old learners. Special thanks were also extended to the County Service Board for facilitating the recruitment of RCT teachers.



From left, the Hub leader Prof. Judith Waudo, DVC RION Prof Caroline Thoruwa, Deputy Governor H.E. Hon. Muisraeli Nyaga, The Governor H.E. Hon. Muthomi Njuki, and CECM education and Vocational training Ms. Dorothy Naivasha following the proceedings during the Dissemination workshop.

Touching on the project's timeline, Prof. Waudo noted that while the intervention was originally scheduled to begin in 2023, COVID-19 disruptions led to a delayed start in 2024. The first cohort of three-year-olds was enrolled in 2024, with a second group joining in 2025. She commended Governor Njuki for ensuring continuity by providing learning materials for PP2 students, thereby supporting their educational journey beyond the initial intervention.

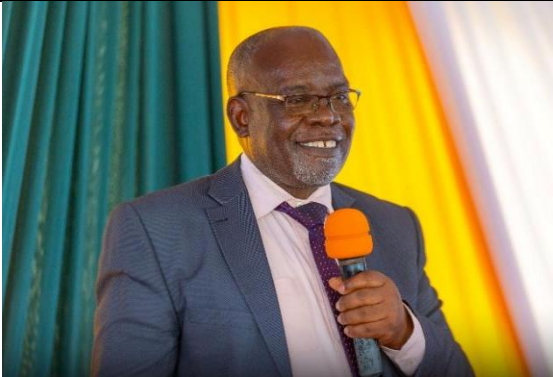
She outlined the core objectives of the RCT: to determine whether enrolling three-year-old children in early childhood programs allows their mothers to engage more fully in income-generating activities, and to assess the impact of an enriched curriculum on children's development and school readiness, particularly in preparation for Grade 1.

The RCT is being implemented in three phases: the baseline, which captured women’s economic status and children’s developmental indicators at the project’s start; the midline, conducted toward the end of 2024 to assess emerging outcomes; and the endline, scheduled for late 2025 to evaluate the project’s overall impact.

Prof. Waudo emphasized that the dissemination forum was organized not only to share baseline data but also to provide a platform for firsthand experiences from the field—particularly from ECD teachers and headteachers of schools hosting the intervention. She concluded her address by inviting all stakeholders to engage actively, share lessons, and continue building momentum around early childhood education and women’s economic empowerment.

Presentation of Main Baseline Survey Findings

Prof. Simon Onywere, Principal Investigator and KU-WEE Hub KU-WEE Research Associate (Fieldwork Coordination), KU

	Prof. Simon Onywere, Principal Investigator of the RCT Playgroup Intervention, presented key findings from the baseline study, shedding light on the early impacts of the intervention on children’s learning and women’s empowerment. He began by clarifying that the RCT initiative comprises two distinct but interconnected components: the childcare curriculum intervention and a comprehensive assessment involving children and their mothers. The project is implemented through two teams one responsible for assessment and the other for implementing the intervention curriculum.
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The intervention team includes early childhood experts, supervisors, mentors, teachers, and headteachers, all of whom play a pivotal role in overseeing and supporting the activities in the participating schools. Prof. Onywere emphasized that the content of the intervention spans multiple domains, including teacher-child interactions and social-emotional development, which are critical indicators of quality in early learning environments. He stressed the importance of monitoring the process to determine whether meaningful changes are occurring, underscoring the need for evidence-based tracking throughout the project’s lifecycle.

Women’s Data

Prof. Onywere then presented preliminary insights from the women’s baseline survey (The full presentation is in **Appendix 2**:

- **Education and Employment Disparities:** A significant proportion 66.6% of the 1,373 women sampled had either only primary education or none at all. Employment opportunities remained limited, with 33.5% of the women engaged in casual labor. Alarming, only 22 participants reported holding university degrees, revealing deep educational and economic disparities.

- **Time Use:** The data showed a stark gender gap in childcare responsibilities. On average, women spent 2 hours and 49 minutes daily caring for children, while men contributed only 30 minutes, indicating an uneven distribution of unpaid care work.
- **Decision-Making Dynamics:** While women primarily made decisions concerning food, clothing, and family planning, men retained control over household finances and major asset transactions, reflecting entrenched gender roles in economic decision-making.
- **Gender Attitudes:** Encouragingly, 75% of respondents supported equal work opportunities for women, suggesting a conducive environment for women's economic empowerment initiatives.

Child Development Metrics by Dr. Samson Oteyo Co-PI Assessment

Dr. Samson Oteyo, a child psychologist involved in the study, shared findings related to child development, focusing on nutrition, school readiness, and socio-emotional skills:

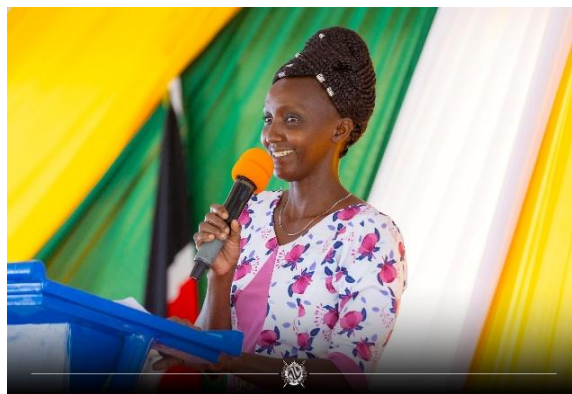
- **Nutrition:** The nutritional assessment revealed that 55.5% of children were within the normal nutritional range, while 16.7% were malnourished. Malnutrition was significantly correlated with lower scores in school readiness, reinforcing the critical connection between health and learning.
- **School Readiness:** Among three-year-olds, 61% demonstrated the ability to follow instructions, a foundational skill for formal learning. This figure rose to 91% among four-year-olds, showing expected developmental progress. Interestingly, boys outperformed girls in spatial reasoning tasks, pointing to potential gender-based learning differences that may require targeted interventions.
- **Socio-Emotional Skills:** The children exhibited strong impulse control, with 70% scoring well in this area challenging common stereotypes about erratic behavior in early childhood. Interactive play and storytelling activities emerged as key tools for enhancing language acquisition and social engagement among the children.

Field Implementation: Teachers and Mentors Testimonials

During the dissemination forum, a series of heartfelt and insightful testimonials from RCT teachers and mentors offered a clear picture of how the intervention is playing out on the ground. These narratives highlighted not only the project's transformative impact on early childhood education but also its empowering effects on caregivers, schools, and entire communities.

Mrs. Mary Wanja Kanyaru – RCT caregiver Teacher, Ntoroni Primary School, Tharaka Cluster

Mrs. Kanyaru began by outlining the core objectives of the RCT intervention. She noted that the project had significantly improved access to pre-primary education, with her school's PP1 class now enrolling close to sixty children a substantial increase made possible by the provision of quality teaching and learning materials. The intervention also supports school retention and reduces the childcare burden on mothers, thereby enabling them to engage in economic activities such as farming or small-scale trading.



She explained how the dual teaching structure adopted under the intervention works. *Whole group learning* is conducted in a semi-circle arrangement, enabling effective teacher observation and interaction. Activities integrate movement, critical thinking, and communication for instance, during math lessons, children identify and physically engage with number cards before verbalizing their answers. *Small group learning* is then used to deepen understanding through two key approaches: teacher-directed sessions, where a group of five children receives targeted instruction, and child-centered activities, where children explore materials independently under teacher supervision. These interactions foster cognitive growth, cooperation, and social-emotional skills.

Mrs. Kanyaru emphasized that this structured yet flexible learning model not only builds foundational competencies for learners but also contributes directly to economic empowerment by relieving mothers of daily childcare constraints.

Ms. Regina Kagwiria King'ori – RCT Caregiver Teacher, Kagira, Maara Cluster

Ms. King'ori shared insights on the enablers that have facilitated the success of the RCT intervention. She identified two primary factors: comprehensive training and access to appropriate materials.

The training framework includes booster training conducted during school holidays, bi-weekly continuous coaching visits from mentors, and regular cluster training sessions where new ideas are shared, and challenges addressed collaboratively. The intervention materials are equally pivotal, including standardized activity guides that function as lesson plans, co-teaching support in intervention classes, and consistent backing from school leadership.

She also acknowledged strong logistical support from various stakeholders. Frequent follow-up visits by the intervention supervisor, Mr. Brian Murithi; County Director of Education, Mr. Joseph Mutegi; Chief Officer, Mr. Jonathan Mwiti; ECM Ms. Dorothy Naivasha; and the KU-WEE Hub team led by Prof. Simon Onywere, were key to ensuring accountability, motivation, and implementation fidelity.

Ms. Beth Mwendu Njoka – RCT Teacher, ACK Mwanani, Chuka / Igambang’ombe Cluster

Ms. Njoka focused on the broad benefits the intervention has delivered to schools, learners, teachers, and the community at large.

For schools, the project has led to increased enrolment, additional teaching staff, and the provision of learning materials. Moreover, intervention schools have gained a reputation for excellence due to innovative teaching practices.

At the learner level, children have developed oral language, leadership, and problem-solving skills, and they demonstrate a higher level of engagement compared to peers in neighboring schools. Teaching has also become more rewarding and enjoyable, with teachers acquiring new skills and reporting improved livelihoods thanks to project employment.

Parents, too, have experienced significant relief. The burden of childcare has been eased, allowing them to focus on economic activities. They have also expressed pride in their children’s developmental progress and noted smoother transitions from home to school. Ms. Njoka concluded her presentation with a heartfelt appeal for the permanent employment of RCT teachers beyond the project period.

Mentor Testimonies

Ms. Priscilla Makena Peter – PP1 Mentor, Tharaka Cluster

Ms. Makena detailed the roles of the intervention field team, consisting of teachers, mentors, and the intervention supervisor. She explained the collaborative nature of classroom delivery, where one teacher leads the session while another observes and supports learners who require extra attention. Small group activities provide opportunities for reinforced learning and personalized coaching.

She emphasized the use of four core teaching strategies: open-ended questions to promote critical thinking, contingent responses to foster mutual respect in conversations, coaching in small group contexts, and labeled praise to affirm and motivate children.

Mentors play a critical role in ensuring fidelity to the intervention. Initially, 15 mentors were engaged, but by early 2025, the number had reduced to six, each covering 10 schools. Their responsibilities include co-planning with teachers, reinforcing key concepts, modeling difficult activities, and providing daily feedback. Mentors also submit regular progress reports to the KU-WEE Hub.

The intervention supervisor provides overarching guidance by offering coaching manuals, training mentors during booster sessions, and conducting school visits to support on-site mentorship.

During her presentation, Ms. Makena and fellow mentors also engaged participants with a lively demonstration of a classroom activity “Freeze Dance” which illustrated the interactive and joyful nature of the intervention’s learning approach.

Ms. Mary Karimi Joseph – PP2 Mentor



Ms. Karimi spoke about the importance of ensuring a smooth transition from PP1 to PP2, a phase that initially posed several challenges, including untrained PP2 teachers, low motivation levels, and lack of learning materials. However, with the support of Tharaka Nithi Governor, His Excellency Muthomi Njuki, these barriers were progressively addressed.

She thanked the Governor for funding teacher training and approving the purchase of essential learning materials, which greatly facilitated the transition. The KU-WEE Hub is also supporting this process by assigning two mentors—Ms. Karimi in Maara and Chuka (covering 29 schools), and Boniface in Tharaka (covering 27 schools)—to offer mentorship to PP2 teachers.

Ms. Karimi outlined several positive outcomes observed among PP2 learners, including enhanced cognitive switching, improved oral language skills, and stronger manipulation abilities through hands-on learning. She concluded by presenting four key requests to the Governor:

1. Fast-track provision of PP2 learning materials;
2. More training opportunities for PP2 teachers;
3. Employment of a second teacher in each PP2 class;
4. Absorption of the 15 trained RCT mentors into the county's education quality assurance system to sustain and enhance gains made under the intervention.

These teacher and mentor testimonials painted a compelling picture of a transformative initiative that is not only reshaping early learning but also uplifting entire communities. Their voices reflected the dedication, innovation, and collaboration that define the RCT intervention's success in Tharaka Nithi County.

Head Teachers' Observations

During the dissemination forum, several head teachers shared compelling reflections on the implementation of the RCT intervention in their respective schools. A common theme across their remarks was the significant increase in enrollment in ECDE classrooms, with some, like Ntoroni Primary School, registering more than 60 children. They also reported improvements in hygiene practices, learner attendance, and overall parent satisfaction with the program. All speakers strongly recommended the decentralization and expansion of the RCT intervention to all 454 public ECDE centers across Tharaka Nithi County.

Mr. Julius Chabari – Head Teacher Irereni, Tharaka Cluster

Mr. Chabari opened his remarks by expressing deep gratitude to the Tharaka Nithi County Government and the KU-WEE Hub for initiating and implementing the RCT project in 60 schools. He shared a range of positive outcomes observed since the program's introduction,

noting that the intervention has created a child-centered learning environment that is conducive to both academic and social development.

Among the specific improvements he listed were enhanced learner behavior, improved literacy levels, and reduced absenteeism. He praised the use of teaching and learning materials, which made learning more tangible and engaging for children. Outdoor activities were particularly effective in promoting physical development, while consistent praise motivated learners and strengthened their communication and critical thinking skills.

Mr. Chabari also noted that learners were better able to follow instructions and that teachers demonstrated increased commitment, often going the extra mile. Significantly, he observed a ripple effect within schools, where non-RCT teachers were inspired by the new approaches and became more engaged in their teaching. In light of these positive changes, he strongly recommended that the RCT intervention be rolled out to all schools in the county.

Mrs. Katherine Gacheri Mutembei – Head Teacher, Kiairurigu, Maara Cluster

Mrs. Mutembei echoed similar sentiments, highlighting how the availability of teaching and learning materials had transformed classroom experiences. She noted that the intervention allowed parents—particularly mothers—to engage in income-generating activities, confident that their children were in a safe and stimulating environment.

She reported that learners had developed fluency in letter names and sounds, and were becoming more independent, adjusting quickly to the school setting. The child-centered nature of the intervention was particularly evident, with teachers now better able to identify individual learners' talents and support their growth across various learning areas. According to her, the program was not only strengthening early learning but also creating a foundation for holistic development.

Mr. Dishon Murithi – Head Teacher, KK Mwendwa, Chuka / Igambang'ombe Cluster

Mr. Murithi shared his experience of welcoming three-year-olds into the school environment. He expressed surprise and delight at how quickly the young learners adapted, grasped concepts, and navigated school spaces—including identifying areas such as the head teacher's office and interacting confidently with older pupils.



He also emphasized the important role of parents, especially mothers, in the transition process. Many were now more involved in escorting their children to school and showed greater engagement in child-rearing practices. The introduction of stimulating learning materials had significantly eased the adjustment period for the young learners—fewer children cried during drop-off, and while more exhibited excitement and actively participated in classroom activities.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Murithi supported the call for scaling up the intervention to reach more schools and recommended the recruitment of additional teachers and mentors to sustain the momentum of the project.

Ms. Emma Porter (on behalf of Prof. Costas Meghir RCT Intervention PI – Yale University, USA) Baseline Analysis



Prof. Costas Meghir provided a detailed synthesis of the baseline survey findings, underscoring the primary motivation behind the study—advancing women’s economic empowerment by addressing the childcare barrier while simultaneously promoting early childhood development. The intervention, he explained, sought to establish a supportive preschool framework to enhance school readiness among children and improve outcomes related to maternal labor supply, mental health, and overall well-being.

Prof. Meghir highlighted that the research found no statistically significant differences in household demographics or parental time use between treatment and control groups for both three- and four-year-olds, indicating a reliable foundation for evaluating the intervention’s impact. He further noted that both mothers and fathers valued child education, with mothers often playing a more active role in educational decision-making. Importantly, nutrition emerged as a central factor affecting cognitive development—children suffering from malnutrition consistently recorded lower school readiness scores, pointing to the need for integrated health and education solutions.

Ms. Emma Porter from Yale University provided a complementary perspective, offering analysis to validate and expand on the findings:

- **Group Comparability:** She confirmed that there were no significant demographic differences between the treatment and control groups, ensuring the validity of any measured impacts attributed to the intervention.
- **Nutrition and Cognitive Development:** Ms. Porter highlighted that malnourished children scored 20% lower on cognitive assessments, underscoring the urgent need to integrate nutritional support into early childhood education programs.

Women’s Economic Empowerment: Importantly, mothers with access to early childhood education (ECE) services reported greater income diversification, further reinforcing the economic value of providing structured childcare support (see **Appendix 3** for the presentation).

WHAT THEY SAID – RCT TEACHER

RCT Caregiver Teacher Ntoroni, Mary Wanja Kanyaaru

Your Excellency, Governor Muthomi Njuki, All Protocols Observed

I am Kanyaaru Wanja Mary, a teacher at Ntoroni Primary School in Tharaka Constituency. My presentation is going to be about the Intervention, and will attempt to answer three questions:

1. What is an intervention?
2. Aims of the intervention
3. How we do the intervention

1. WHAT IS AN INTERVENTION.

Intervention is a Pre-School Enhancement Project in Tharaka Nithi.

AIMS OF INTERVENTION.

1. **To increase the access.** Through this project the numbers of children in pre-school has highly increased. For example at Ntoroni primary school the number of children in PP1 are around sixty. This is due to the availability of teaching learning materials.
2. **To promote retention of children in pre-school** so that to retrieve their mothers to engage themselves in economic activities. Through this project teachers have been able to stay with children at school leaving their mothers to engage themselves in more productive economic activities such as serial businesses. Some also have started businesses like selling potatoes and cabbages and this has helped them to earn their living.

HOW WE DO THE INTERVENTION.

In the intervention, we have:

- a) Whole group
- b) Small group

a) Whole Group

In whole group children sit in a semi circle so that the teacher can assess them easily. During class activities we incorporate all components of intervention. That is more think, touch and talk. For example if you are teaching numbers during mathematics activity, and you want a child show others number four using card; you have to call a child in front to pick a card of number four where a child move then a child has to think which is number four also the child has to pick the card of number four that is “(touch)” and lastly, the child has to talk where he/she tells the others this is number four.

b) Small Group

In small group, we group children according to their ability. We divide small group into two: Teacher directed and child centred

- **Teacher directed activities.** In teacher directed the teacher sit on the table with group of five children to reinforce the learnt concept or to reinforce what was learnt in whole group. This is where the learning take place.
- **Child centred activities.** In child centred children are allowed to interact with materials as the other teacher coaches. This is where children learn social skills such as sharing and respect. This is where children learn social skills such as sharing and respect. They also learn concept during these activities. For example, if one child

constructs a tall tower you hear other children saying look ‘Kawiras’ tower is very tall therefore they learn a concept “tall”.

We conclude the day with an interactive reading where we read a story book where children see and listen as they answer open ended questions relating to the story promoting oral language development and also relating the story to their day life.

RCT Caregiver Teacher Kagira, Regina Kagwiria King'ori

Your Excellency, Governor Muthomi Njuki, All Protocols Observed

Thank you for this opportunity. I am going to talk about the Enablers of RCT Curriculum Intervention

ENABLERS OF THE INTERVENTION, we have two main enablers of intervention the Training and the Intervention Materials:

The training is classified into 3 categories

- (a) booster training – which is carried out over the holidays by our mentors
- (b) 2cluster training - continuous training is done by the mentors by visiting our schools after a fortnight to bring new ideas and assist us on areas that might be having difficulties 3
- (c) continuous training - we have cluster training which is carried out every month in every cluster i.e. Chuka/Igambang’ombe, Tharaka and Maara clusters where we exchange knowledge and thoughts towards the success of intervention

The intervention materials whereby under it we have classroom enablers and logistical enablers. Under classroom enablers we have:

- A standard activity guide which acts as the lesson plan
- A second teacher co-working together in the intervention class for better results
- A great support from our headteachers

The logistical enablers involve frequent follow up visits by the following officers intervention supervisor, Mr Brian Murithi; County Director of Education Mr Joseph Mutegi; Chief Officer Mr Jonathan Mwit, CECM Ms Dorothy Naivasha, the KU team led by Prof Simon Onywere

Thank You Your Excellency

RCT Caregiver Teacher Beth Mwende

Your Excellency, Governor Muthomi Njuki, All Protocols Observed

Thank you for this opportunity and I am going to talk about the BENEFITS OF the Childcare intervention

The benefits of the project to the:

- I. The school
- II. The child
- III. To the teacher
- IV. To the parent/community

TO THE SCHOOL

- Increase the population to our schools
- The schools has also benefited in materials and activity guides that act as lesson plans.
- Staff increment: i.e. the project teacher.

- The intervention the school has gained fame in terms of children's learning methods. Our kids are very far much ahead.

TO THE CHILD

- The child has developed oral language.
- Children are enjoying the school so much due to variety of materials.
- They have acquired leadership skills i.e. leading in small group.
- Children have acquired problem solving skills such as sharing and through teamwork.

TO THE TEACHER

- Employment. In the last one year the project has greatly changed the lives of teachers who have started many projects on their own.
- The teacher has acquired new knowledge and skills on how to handle children and we can attest this is a better method than what we had before.
- Teaching has been made very enjoyable.

TO THE PARENT/COMMUNITY

- The project has released the parent to engage in community activities.
- The parent are happy that their children has developed speech skills/ interactions and the social behaviors they have acquired.
- Transition from home to school has been made very easy .There has been smooth transitions.

WHAT THEY SAID – RCT INTERVENTION MENTORS

PP1 Mentor Ms Priscilla Makena Peter

Your Excellency, Governor Muthomi Njuki, All Protocols Observed

Roles played by intervention field team in achieving the learning and child development benefits. These are in in three categories: Teacher's roles, Mentor's roles and the Intervention supervisor.

Teacher's roles

1. Through team teaching they divide the activities; one teacher teaches as the other support. Our classroom activities are subdivided into two whole group activities and small group activities. In whole group children are made to sit in a semicircle together with one of the teachers as the other teacher takes the lead in teaching. The work of the second teacher is to identify children who needs extra support so that she can offer more individualized attention. For small group activities, one teacher has a group of 5 children around the table as she reinforces what was learnt in whole group as the other teacher coaches children in the other small group activities, this is where the interactive learning takes place.
2. Fidelity in use of the intervention strategies are in 4 broad areas
 - a. Use of open-ended questions it promotes critical thinking in children, build language and help children express themselves among other skills

- b. Contingent responding children feel valued in the conversation as partners, they learn to listen and express themselves
 - c. Coaching the teacher's do this in small group activities, its through this that teacher's are able to learn new concept and social skills among other skills
 - d. Labelled praise through these children feel that their work is appreciated and they are motivated to keep trying in different activities. The teacher mentions the exact reason why they are praising the children these are among the other many strategies
3. Dedication by teacher's, they arrive to school early they set materials at the different corner of the classroom to ensure as they receive children to school they start interacting with the materials. They also have a high level of planning whereby they use teacher's guide, intervention timetable, schedule of activities and all these are prepared by the intervention supervisor.
 4. Creativity in making the lessons enjoyable children learn through what they see, touch and manipulate teachers have been innovative in improvising materials to use and come up with creative activities to use the already provided materials to ensure the lessons are lively.

Mentor's role

At the beginning of the intervention in the school calendar year 2024, we had 15 mentors with 12 assigned 5 schools to mentor once a week. But since Term 3 of 2024 the mentors were scaled down to 8 then this year to 6 with each mentoring 10 schools. We visit the 10 schools once in a fortnight.

1. We visit the schools to support in implementation of intervention and problem solve challenges that come up. When we visit the schools:
 - a. We plan the day activities together with the teachers
 - b. We discuss the various concept that are to be coached as we remind teacher's to incorporate already learnt skills,
 - c. We allow the teachers to teach as we prompt them to use intervention skills.
 - d. We model activities that we find are difficult for teachers to help them keep practicing the right skills
 - e. We offer in class support to teachers throughout the day.
 - f. After the day's activities we sit together with teacher's discuss what has gone well and what has not gone well then, we problem solve together
2. Write report on the progress of the intervention project implementation and submit to KU WEE HUB through the project Principal Investigator.

Intervention supervisor roles

- Intervention supervisor provides coaching manual to all the mentors to ensure the Fidelity of project implementation.
- He trained the mentors during the initial training where they were equipped with knowledge and skills to use the intervention strategies and the materials.
- He also trains mentors during the mentors' booster training and supports the mentors as they train the teachers.
- He visits the mentors in schools for in class support as they support the teachers, in case there are new areas to work on or we need help he organizes for cluster meetings.

PP2 Mentor Ms Mary Karimi Joseph

Your Excellency, Governor Muthomi Njuki, All Protocols Observed, Good morning.

I am honoured and grateful for this chance to first appreciate your visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to the success and future of our children. Thank you, sir.

Your Excellency, when you dreamt and established the crèche in Chuka Town did you know you had planted a seed that gave birth to the Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) Intervention program, a project that is shaping early childhood education in our county in ways we never imagined? Because of your ambition and dedication to education, you allowed Kenyatta University's WEE Hub in collaboration with her partners to implement this program in our county. Our heartfelt gratitude to Kenyatta University WEE Hub for their continuous support and guidance as we implement the RCT intervention

Sir, for me I was a mentor in PP1 intervention classes last year. This year I am with PP2 classes mentoring PP2 teachers to manage the transition of children from PP1 to PP2. Initially we were scared and worried what will happen to the transiting children as:

- The PP2 teachers were not trained
- The PP2 teachers were least motivated.
- The classrooms had no learning materials
- The children were ready to transit

Sir when we least expected it and as good as being God sent you came in and:

- You called for and funded the training of the PP2 teachers
- You have approved the purchase of teaching and learning materials
- KU-WEE Hub is supporting two of us (myself and Boniface Mukathe NKARI to provide some level of mentorship to the PP2 teachers.

Your Excellency, your support for PP2 has yielded great results and ensured a smooth transition from PP1 to PP2. This has allowed our learners to continue enjoying the same rich educational environment.

I, Mary Joseph, support 29 schools in Maara and Chuka, while my colleague, Boniface, supports 27 schools in Tharaka. Your Excellency, with your permission, kindly allow Boniface to wave.

Through your support and that of Kenyatta University WEE Hub, we have successfully achieved the key aims of the intervention at PP2 level which include:

1. Brain Stimulation – Cognitive Switching
2. Oral Skills – Enhancing Interactive Reading
3. Manipulation Skills – Hands-on Activities

Your Excellency, allow me to humbly present four key requests:

1. Fast track provision of Learning Materials for PP2 schools under the RCT program.
2. More Training for PP2 Teachers to ensure mastery of intervention skills and teaching strategies.
3. Employment of a Second Teacher to support PP2– Kindly note that we already have 120 trained teachers implementing what we have come to call RCT Intervention skills and strategies.

4. Employment of the fifteen trained Mentors as Quality Assurance Officers to add more value to the education sector in Tharaka Nithi County.

Your Excellency, if only you say a word... "*Ona nguku itimiria mbemba*" (it would be done within a very short period). As the saying goes, "*Like father, like son*" Your Excellency, do not blame us if your DNA runs in some of us—ambitious, innovative, go-getters, and hardworking individuals. The list is endless.

With gratitude and admiration, we assure you that we will continue walking on the path you have paved, upholding the values of hard work and resilience.

Thank You and God bless you. God bless Tharaka Nithi County.

WHAT THEY SAID – INTERVENTION SCHOOLS HEAD TEACHERS

Head Teacher Irereni Primary School, Mr. Julius Chabari

**A PRESENTATION ON PRE-SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME ON WED
26TH MARCH AT KATHIWANA-GOVERNER'S OFFICE**

APPRECIATION

- Appreciating Kenyatta University through Professor Simon Onywere and Tharaka Nithi county through His Excellency the Governor for introducing the ECDE-intervention programme for the first time to the 60 schools within Tharaka Nithi county
- Appreciating the county Education Office to positively embrace the programme for the benefit of our children in the county.
- Appreciating the headteachers, supervisors of the programme, mentors and the ECDE teachers for implementing the programme.

PROGRAMME BENEFITS SO FAR REALIZED

Since the inception of this ECDE intervention programme, the following benefits have been realized;

1. Due to adequate provision of learning aids, the programme is learner centered.
2. Working together in groups has inculcated that sense of social responsibility among the learners e.g. sharing homework.
3. The organization of the lesson and the learning materials has created a conducive enabling environment for the learners.
4. Games and materials are well designed according to the level and ability of the child as they draw the child's attention to the learning situation.
5. The learner attendance has increased greatly than any other previous years.
6. The pupil's behavior is much improved for example sitting upright, participation in the classwork, raising the hands among others.
7. The child's academic skills of the learner are greatly improving e.g. on counting numbers, writing, coloring, drawing, modelling etc.
8. The lesson is made real and enjoyable. Children work and play with the materials well.
9. The outdoor activities promote the development of both fine and gross muscles e.g. throwing, catching, running, balancing, jumping among others.
10. The programme has curbed the rate of absenteeism of learners from school. No child can afford to lose even a single lesson since it is enjoyable throughout the day.
11. Children are well-motivated to participate in the lesson throughout since they are praised across all learning areas.
12. It is difficult for the learners to forget what is learnt since the lesson is made real all through.
13. Communication skills of the child are much improved especially in games where individual child is given a chance to lead the game.
14. It improves children's critical thinking as these children are engaged to answer open headed questions.
15. Teachers work an extra mile in their teaching situations- early preparations, materials arrangement for the real teaching/learning situation.
16. Lastly and not least, other teachers have reacted positively to this programme, alongside having teacher confidence and contentment during the programme implementation.

CONCLUSION

For the programme sustainability, there is a dire need for it to be decentralized to others schools within the county. It shouldn't be limited to only sixty schools.

ECDE teachers who were the ground implementers of the programme, their mentors and supervisors also need to be considered. We can't afford to lose them. They have done a commendable job that should guarantee them employment on permanent and pensionable terms. Losing them is disastrous and devastating. It can cause permanent frustrations and some other insurmountable dangers in their lives within the County. Allow me to quote from the Holy Bible:

2 Timothy 2:5-6: An athlete who competes in a race is never rewarded until he follows the laid rules and regulations of the race. A farmer who works hard is the first to eat the fruits.

2 Tim 4:7: I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.

Your Excellency, our teachers, their mentors and their superiors have done all these and need to be employed permanently. **THANK YOU, YOUR EXCELLENCY.**

Head Teacher KK Mwendwa Primary School, Mr. Dishon Murithi

Your Excellency the Governor Tharaka Nithi County, all invited guests. Today is a unique day when we look back and evaluate yet another milestone in our great county.

The Radomized Controlled Trial (RCT) is a project that has literally changed the lifestyle of the parents participating in it and their young children. To this end I thank the county government of Tharaka-Nithi under his Excellency the Governor for allowing this experiment to take place in our county. Further, I thank the coordinators for the thorough monitoring and supervision since inception.

During the first week when these children arrived in our schools, some used to cry a lot. They felt detached from their parents. But after interacting with the materials provided, the children settled down very quickly. The idea of these three-year-old receiving instructions and following them is quite exciting! When they entered school toileting was a very difficult task to them but within two weeks these children could use toilets facilities on their own, leave alone embracing other school orderlies like obeying school bells, observing hygiene discipline, observing break time periods and free interaction with other pupils of the entire school.

I think the parents have equally benefited such that time has become quite enough for them to engage in income generating projects and activities. When we interact with them, they express their satisfaction and attest that they are now freer even to cater for their other children at different stages of life. For example they confess that, there before, they could ask their other children not to go to school so as to take care of their younger brothers and sisters as mothers go for menial jobs commonly called “*vibarua*”. This made them miss lessons a lot. But for now they say that they no longer need anybody to take care of their children because RCT is perfectly doing that.

Generally speaking RCT has also benefited the PP2 greatly. The training that was given to teachers in that level is really reflecting in the results of the children the PP2 teachers handle.

As we look at this programme with a smile, one question comes; how about its sustainability? It is my humble submission that, if the future of this project is not carefully thought out and actualized then the project will have died even before arrival! It is my humble opinion that His Excellency the Governor considers this issue as he rolls out the under three years curriculum to the rest of the schools. To do this the current RCT teachers and mentors can be reshuffled such that every sub location has one. In future these teachers can act as mentors to the non-RCT teachers and continue mentoring them in their many meetings that they hold mostly after lessons.

The coordinators like Prof Onywere and others will remain to be consultants and with the humility I have seen in them I believe this programme can remain active and relevant in this county.

To summarize my remarks, I once again thank everybody who is directly or indirectly involved in the launch and continuity of this project.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY, Thank you your Excellency.

Guest Speakers and Presentations/Reflections from Key Stakeholders

Hon. Kennedy Kamunyu – Chairman, County Education Committee



In his remarks, Hon. Kamunyu emphasized the importance of gender equity, urging stakeholders to observe the two-thirds gender rule across all sectors. He praised the project's focus on early childhood education, framing it as a strategic move in tandem with efforts to reform higher education. Expressing his appreciation to Kenyatta University for selecting Tharaka Nithi County as a project site, he noted that this initiative aligns perfectly with the county's guiding motto: *"Leaving No One Behind."*

Hon. Kamunyu reaffirmed the county's readiness to support and sustain the initiative through policy instruments, referencing a bill already in place to provide a legislative framework for childcare services. He concluded by appealing for continued partnership and consideration in future development projects.

Deputy Director County TSC Representing Director TSC Mr. Joseph Musyoka

Mr. Musyoka acknowledged the capacity, competence and confidence of the children's caregivers/teachers involved the RCT project. He also lauded the support from the headteachers and assured of more involvement in the field activities by his office.

Dr. David Watene, Director, State Department for Higher Education and Ministry of Education Representative to KU WEE Board

Dr. Watene spoke to the critical importance of equipping early childhood caregivers and teachers with the right skills and competencies. Drawing on a powerful metaphor, *"If the roots are good, the fruits are even sweeter"* and *"The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet"* emphasizing that the quality of foundational education deeply influences long-term outcomes.

He lauded the project's approach and potential, affirming the Ministry's commitment to supporting initiatives that build capacity in early learning and laying a strong educational foundation for future generations.

Dr. Samuel Ngaruiya, Director, State Department for Basic Education (Representing the Principal Secretary State Department for Basic Education Prof. Kibet Bitok)

Representing the Ministry of Education, State Department for basic Education, Dr. Ngaruiya spoke passionately about the intersection between women's empowerment and child development. He stressed that empowering women is not just a moral imperative but an economic and social necessity. Drawing connections to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, he cited Goals No. 4 (Quality Education), No. 5 (Gender Equality), and Goal 17 (Partnerships) as particularly relevant to the project.



Dr. Ngaruiya reiterated the government's commitment to supporting initiatives that enhance the well-being of women and children, recognizing them as the cornerstone of a thriving society. He applauded Kenyatta University for its leadership in deploying research-based, community-responsive solutions and commended the collaboration between the University, the County Government of Tharaka Nithi, and other stakeholders. He concluded by reaffirming the government's dedication to strengthening Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE), especially within the framework of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which aligns well with the goals of the RCT intervention. He also emphasized on three things we need to consider about the child all the time: *child entry to school, child development at school, child transition to Grade 1*

Prof. Caroline Thoruwa Deputy Vice Chancellor Research Innovation and Outreach (Representing Prof. Waceke Wanjohi, VC, KU)



Prof Caroline Thoruwa, DVC Research Innovation and Outreach delivered the remarks of the Vice Chancellor Prof. Waceke Wanjohi as one of the Key speakers of the workshop. Her speech underscored Kenyatta University's enduring commitment to addressing human development needs through education, with a special focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women. She emphasized that the university not only leads in research and policy engagement but also implements practical solutions within its own community.

A testament to this commitment is the establishment of a daycare center at the university, designed to support student mothers and young women employed at the institution and within the surrounding neighborhoods. The facility caters for children aged six months to three years,

offering a safe and nurturing environment that enables women to pursue their academic and professional goals without the burden of full-time childcare.

In addition to the daycare, Kenyatta University also operates a pre-primary school that enrolls three-year-olds, reflecting a deep institutional investment in early childhood education. Prof. Wanjohi called for greater support and expansion of such initiatives, reinforcing the idea that no child or woman should be left behind in the journey toward educational and economic empowerment (see **Appendix 4** for the full speech of the Vice Chancellor).

Deputy Governor H.E. Hon Muisraeli Nyaga

Address by His Excellency Governor Onesmus Muthomi Njuki of Tharaka Nithi County



The Governor of Tharaka Nithi County H.E. Hon Muthomi Njuki Delivers his speech During the RCT Intervention Stakeholders' Dissemination Workshop on 26th March 2025

Presiding over the Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) Intervention Stakeholders' Workshop, His Excellency Governor Onesmus Muthomi Njuki of Tharaka Nithi County delivered a compelling address that reaffirmed his administration's unwavering commitment to early childhood development and women's economic empowerment.

The Governor began by recognizing Kenyatta University's pivotal role in leading the intervention and extended his appreciation to the various stakeholders and partners. He thanked the Gates Foundation for funding the project. He acknowledged key dignitaries and institutions represented at the forum, including Prof. Waceke Wanjohi (Vice Chancellor, Kenyatta University, represented by Prof. Caroline Thoruwa), Prof. Judith Waudu (KU-WEE Hub Leader), Deputy Governor Mr. Muisrael, Samuel Ngaruiya (representing the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Education), Ms. Halima Abdi (Assistant Director, Department for Gender), Hon. Dorothy Naivasha (TNC CECM for Education), Prof. Simon Onywere (RCT Project PI, KU), and Ms. Emma Porter (representing Prof. Costas Meghir, Yale University), alongside other political leaders, parents, headteachers, caregivers, and mentors.

Governor Njuki reflected on the origins of the intervention, tracing it back to the Chuka Market Crèche, a county government initiative launched in 2017 to support trader-mothers by relieving them of childcare duties during working hours. He explained that while the initiative faced initial resistance, the redesigning of the crèche with transparent glass walls won parental trust and ultimately paving the way for broader acceptance. The Governor acknowledged that the RCT model appeared to have drawn inspiration from this early success, transitioning the concept into a more scalable model embedded within the school system.

He emphasized that child development and women's empowerment remain top priorities within his administration's legacy. Recognizing the substantial difference the RCT intervention was making in the 60 participating schools, he applauded the dedication of mentors and caregivers. However, he candidly pointed out the program's early challenges and the critical need for sustainable infrastructure and workforce development.

Governor Njuki reiterated that while scaling up crèches across the county it posed logistical challenges, the integration of early childcare within the existing school system through the RCT offered a practical and impactful solution. He confirmed that plans were underway to expand the intervention beyond the initial 60 schools to all 454 ECDE centers in Tharaka Nithi County.

To this end, he urged the County Government to allocate sufficient budgetary allocations to support the employment of ECDE teachers and the construction of child-friendly facilities, such as dedicated ablution blocks. He stressed the need for a formal policy framework, calling for the development and adoption of the **Child Care Protection Act** to ensure long-term sustainability of childcare programs at both county and national levels.

The Governor made a passionate appeal to Members of the County Assembly (MCAs), particularly those in the Education Committee, to prioritize ECDE funding in the forthcoming budget cycle. He announced his government's intention to absorb the 60 RCT-trained teachers and mentors into permanent positions in the next financial year, recognizing their experience and innovative teaching approaches. Referring to them as "*nation builders*," he emphasized the critical role they play in shaping the future of education in the county.

In his concluding remarks, Governor Njuki reaffirmed his administration's full support for Kenyatta University's innovation and leadership in the education sector. He advocated for greater stakeholder collaboration and called for policy reforms to integrate three-year-olds into the school system. He expressed his aspiration to see the program scaled up across all sub-counties with continued technical support from KU.

Tracing the Origin of the RCT Model

In recounting the origins of the initiative, Governor Njuki shared how the Chuka Market Crèche was developed in 2017 to ease the childcare burden for women traders. Despite initial resistance, the project gained traction following thoughtful adjustments such as introducing glass walls to allow visibility and build trust. This early innovation laid the foundation for the RCT model, which proved even more scalable by leveraging existing school infrastructure. With 60 schools already participating, the county now envisions rolling out the initiative to all its ECDE centers.

To ensure sustainability, the Governor proposed reallocating funds from less impactful infrastructure projects toward teacher employment and child-friendly facilities. He again underscored the importance of establishing the **Child Care Protection Act** to institutionalize childcare programs within the policy and legal frameworks of the county and the country.

Key Resolutions and Commitments

The Governor closed his remarks with a set of clear, actionable resolutions:

1. **Absorbing RCT Teachers:** The County Government will employ the 60 trained RCT teachers post-project to sustain the gains made.
2. **Policy Integration:** The Child Care Protection Act will serve as a guiding framework for institutionalizing the initiative.
3. **Scaling Up:** The RCT program will be expanded to all sub-counties, with continued support from Kenyatta University.
4. **Nutrition Interventions:** Addressing child malnutrition will be a priority to boost school readiness and learning outcomes.
5. **Collaboration:** Continued collaboration with Kenyatta university and other partners was reaffirmed.

Conclusion, Way Forward, and Recommendations

The RCT Stakeholders' Workshop offered strong evidence of the project's impact, generating a wealth of insights from implementation teams, academic partners, policymakers, and local leaders. The forum affirmed the RCT model as a viable, community-responsive solution for advancing both women's economic empowerment and early childhood development.

Key observations from the project thus far include:

- **Enhanced Women's Economic Participation:** Access to childcare enables mothers to engage more effectively in income-generating activities.
- **Improved Child Development Outcomes:** Significant gains were recorded in school readiness, nutrition, and socio-emotional development.
- **Strengthened Teaching Quality:** The mentorship model ensured fidelity to instructional approaches and built teacher capacity.
- **Enhanced collaboration:** working with other stakeholders was emphasized

Recommendations from the Workshop

1. **Integrate Nutrition Programs:** School feeding programs should be expanded to improve children's health and cognitive performance.
2. **Scale to Neighboring Counties:** Leverage the Kenya County Governments Network (KCGN) to replicate the RCT model in other regions.
3. **Support Policy Advocacy:** Invest in research-to-policy strategies to influence national ECDE frameworks and enhance sustainability.
4. **Employment :** employment of the skilled mentors and caregivers was urged.

The workshop closed with a strong commitment to reconvene at midline and endline stages to assess the project's progress and reinforce its long-term legacy. Stakeholders left the forum with a renewed sense of purpose and dedication to transforming the future of women and children in Tharaka Nithi County and beyond.

Appendix 1: RCT Intervention Project Dissemination Workshop Programme



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT HUB & COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF THARAKA NITHI

RCT INTERVENTION PROJECT DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP, THARAKA NITHI COUNTY GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE, KATHWANA 26TH MARCH 2025

Master of Ceremony: Naftary Kinyua, Tharaka Nithi County

Time	Activity	Facilitator
WEDNESDAY 26/MARCH/2025		
08.00 – 08.30	Arrival and Registration of Participants	Joseph Iguna Mutegi ECDE Director of Education in Charge. Supported by Ms Caroline Mukwanjeru, TNC ECD Department Secretary , Abigael Ohare – KU WEE Hub , Dollycate Mwende and Alicent Kathomi, RCT mentors
THOUGH the programme	Exhibition and display of teaching and learning materials (exhibition booth). To run through from the opening of venue	Prof. Teresa Mwoma, Curriculum Intervention Co-PI Coordinating and Brian Murithi Intervention Supervisor supported by Ms Lydia Karithi Nkonge – Kajiambaki ; Mercy Kiende Riungu – Yogari ; Gitundu Mary Mukami - Kamatumo 3 RCT Teachers
OPENING & WELCOME REMARKS		
08.30 - 08.40	Opening Prayer	Mr. Linus Gitaari, Headteacher Kamutiria
	National Anthem	MC Naftary Kinyua, Tharaka Nithi County (TNC)
08.40 – 09.10	Introductions and recognition of various groups and stakeholders present	Mr. Jonathan Mwiti, Chief Office (CO) Education and Vocational Training, Tharaka Nithi County Special Mention Ms Emma Lambert-porter – Yale University (project partner)
09.10 – 09.20	Welcome remarks	Ms Dorothy Naivasha, CEC, Education and Vocational Training, Tharaka Nithi County Prof. Judith Waudu, KU-WEE Hub Leader, Kenyatta University

09.20 – 09.50	RCT Playgroup Intervention baseline study findings	Prof. Simon Onywere, RCT Intervention Project Principal Investigator (PI), Kenyatta University
09.50 – 10.30	5 Minutes Each: Lightening Presentations of Schools/Classroom RCT Intervention Experiences	Ms. Mary Wanja Kanyaru, RCT Teacher, Ntoroni, Tharaka cluster Ms. Regina Kagwiria King'ori, RCT Teacher Kagira, Maara Cluster Beth Mwendu Njoka, RCT Teacher ACK Mwanani, Chuka/Igambang'ombe cluster Ms. Priscilla Makena Peter, PP1 Mentor Representative Ms. Mary Karimi Joseph, PP2 Mentor Representative Mr Julius M. Chabari, Headteacher Irereni, Tharaka cluster (TBC) Mrs. Katharine Gacheri Mutembei, Headteacher Kiairugu, Maara Cluster Mr. Dishon Murithi, Headteacher, KK Mwendwa, Chuka/Igambang'ombe cluster
10.30 – 10.45	The Main Results from the Baseline Survey	Prof. Costas Meghir, Yale University, USA (Via Video Conference - Virtual Link)
10.45 – 11.15	TEA BREAK	MC NAFTARY KINYUA, TNC
11.15-12.00	Address by invited guests	Mrs. Bridget Wambua, MoE County Director of Education Prof. Waceke Wanjohi, Vice Chancellor Kenyatta University Dr. Belio Kipsang, Principal Secretary, State Department for Basic Education, Ministry of Education
12.00 -13.00 pm	Governor's Address	H.E. Hon. Muthomi Njuki, Governor, Tharaka Nithi County
13.00-13.05	Closing prayer	Tabitha Kangaria Muthee, Kiaruni RCT Teacher, Closing Prayer
13.05 – 13.20	Photo session	MC. Naftary Kinyua, Tharaka Nithi County
13.20 – 14.20	LUNCH BREAK	MC NAFTARY KINYUA, TNC
14.20	Participants Depart at their own pleasure	Joseph Iguna Mutegi, ECDE Director of Education

Appendix 2: Baseline results presentation by RCT PI Prof Simon Onywere, KU-WEE Hub

Yale Economic Growth Center **KNBS** **BILL & MELINDA GATES** **KU-WEE**

A Randomized Evaluation of the Effects of a Preschool Intervention on Child Learning and Female Economic Empowerment in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

BASELINE FINDINGS

Ruguri Hill, Kajuki, Kathwana

26th March 2023.

Simon Onywere, Samson Okeyo, Teresa Mwangi, Dorothy Nativasha, Hudson Ouko, Margaret Mwangi, Esther Gachara, Eunice Mwangi, Judith Wando, Paul Samoei, Plus Ng'ang'a, Silas Mutua, James Onditi, Fred Okeyo, Jonathan Mwiti, Joseph Igona, Costas Meghir, Helen Baker-Henningsham

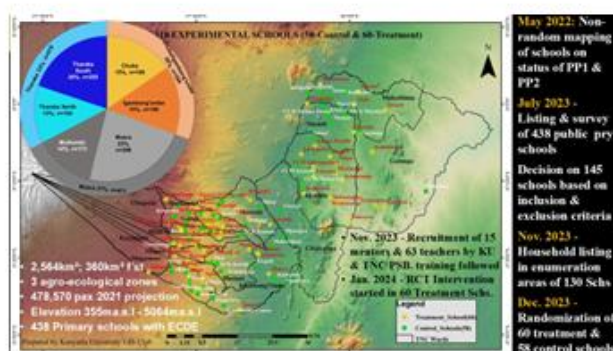
Empowering Higher Education, Enhancing Lives

Yale Economic Growth Center **KNBS** **BILL & MELINDA GATES** **KU-WEE**

A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of a Preschool Intervention on Child Learning and Women's Economic Empowerment in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

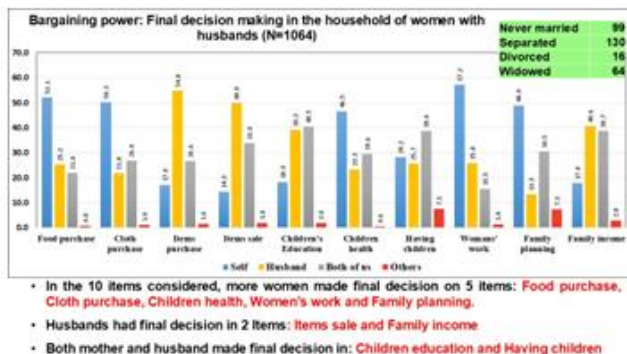
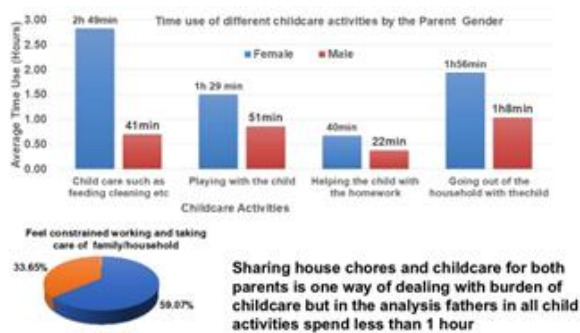
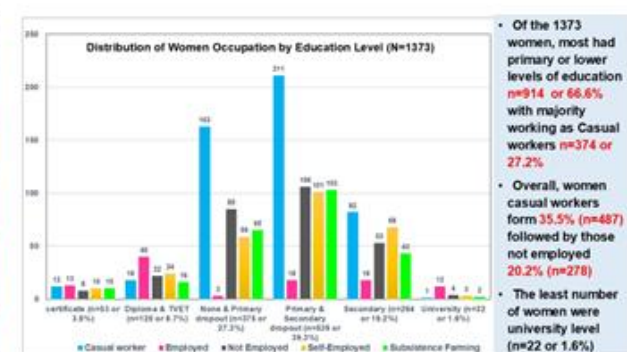
- Kenyatta University Women's Economic Empowerment Hub – (Dept. of Early Childhood & Special Needs, & Psychology)
- Tharaka Nithi County (Experimental Site and Study Population)
- Economic Growth Centre, Yale University (Knowledge Partner Together with Bangor University & University of West Indies)
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (Household Listing, Sampling Framework, Data Quality and Analysis)
- Common Goals Research Centre (CGR) (Independent Data Collector)
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Grant Investment INV-002289 - Oct 2023)

Empowering Higher Education, Enhancing Lives



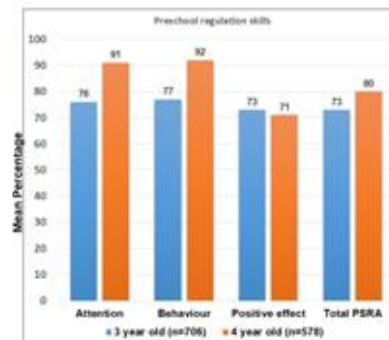
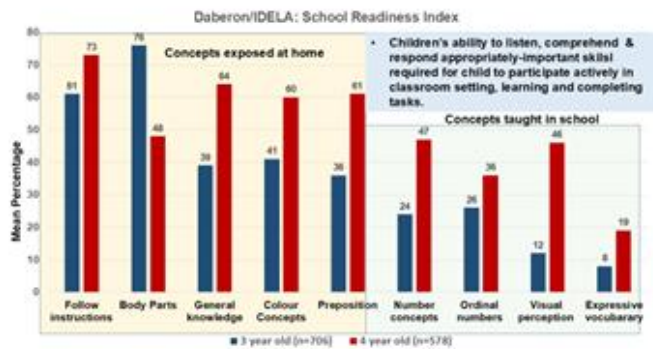
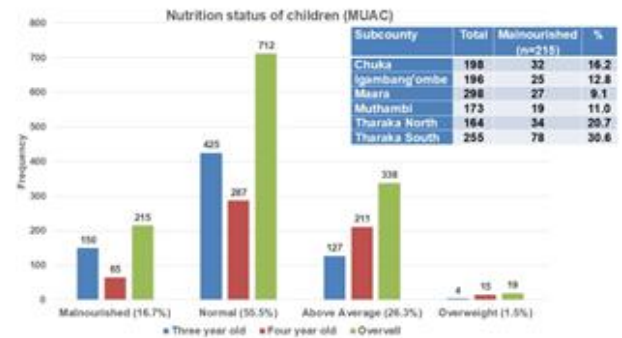
In the RCT intervention project there are two aspects:

- Childcare Curriculum Intervention:** Early childhood experts, intervention supervisor, mentors and teachers. Headteachers give administrative support
 - Requirements:** Enhanced curriculum, activity guides, and learning materials
 - Content and delivery:**
 - Activities focused on executive function, addressing cognitive concepts such as size, shape, colour, position, difference/similarity and quantity delivered through various play activities connected to children's daily experiences
 - Teacher-child interactions: two-way conversations, using open-ended questions and positive feedback
 - Socio-emotional development by encouraging sharing, taking turns and helping others.
 - Empathy teaching through stories with daily singing and story time.
 - Dialogic reading methods while emphasizing language skills.
 - Implementation strategy:** capacity building of teachers through training and weekly coaching by the mentors who in turn are supervised by the intervention supervisor
- Child assessment and Mother/father survey:** Child psychologists, field measurement lead, research assistants, assessors and enumerators
 - Worked with an independent data collection firm to collect data from mothers and the children which we are presenting today

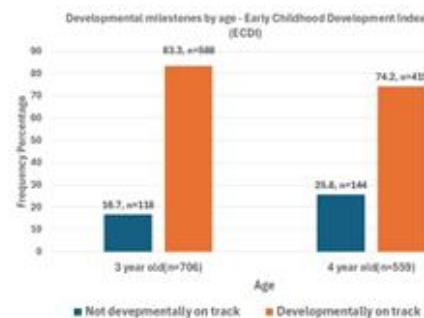


The women Dilemma!

- Dilemma to balance childcare and paid work against backdrop of lack of affordable and quality childcare support.
- Prioritizing either one of them-significantly impact on their labor participation and their children early development.
- Provision of affordable, **curriculum based** developmentally appropriate and quality **childcare**-address these twin issues of **low female participation** and **childcare burden** that adversely affect **women economic empowerment**.



- Preschool self-regulation is the capacity or ability of child to focus and maintain attention, control/delay/suppress behavior and regulate emotions and relate well with others
- The fact that the children performed above average in both overall and other dimensions (attention, behavioral, positive affect) is demonstration majority of child were ready to transit and learn in demanding class setting environment.



- Majority of children were developmentally on track (80.3%) and were more likely to be ready to learn when they start school.
- Need for inclusive and individual education plan that has rich learning environment to boost children at risk at developmental delay as learn together with peers.



Appendix 3: Presentation of main Baseline results by Yale University

Kenya Preschool Study - Some Baseline results

Emma Lambert-Porter and Costas Meghir¹

October 2024

¹Yale University, NBER, JPAL, CEPR, IZA and IFS (email: c.meghir@yale.edu).

The Team

- **Principal Investigators:** Helen Baker-Henningham (Bangor/UWI), Costas Meghir (Yale), Teresa Mwoma (Kenyatta), Dorothy Naivasha (Tharaka Nithi County), Simon Onywere (Kenyatta), Samson Oteyo (Kenyatta)
- **Senior Management:** Deanna Ford (Yale), Judith Waudu (Kenyatta), Jonathan Mwiti Nyaga (TNC).
- **Management and Implementation:**
 - **Research:** Emma Lambert-Porter (Yale), Mary Wawira (Yale)
 - **Intervention Supervisor:** Brian Murithi (Kenyatta)
 - **Adaptation and piloting of Curriculum and Child Assessments:** Taja Francis (UWI), Marsha Bowers, Jackline Kanana (TNC) and Brian Murithi (Kenyatta)

Motivation for the Study

- The path to improved women's empowerment and autonomy goes through their ability to build a career.
- One key constraint in women's careers is the availability of childcare.
- Providing high quality childcare can be turned into a double gain: Enabling women's work and improving child development
- Childcare without regard to the child's developmental needs can cause more harm than good

Motivation for the Study

- A Gates funded project was set up to examine the potential of this approach in the Kenyan context
- The key idea was to extend access to public pre-school education to three-year-olds (previously only four-year-olds were eligible)
- The new pre-school system would also improve the curriculum and teaching methods, to better support child development and school readiness.

The constraints and the design of the study

- The county lacked the infrastructure to admit an entire new class in pre-school.
- There was no practical possibility of creating separate creches for these younger children.
- It was decided to allow 5 children to join Pre-school with a class of four year olds.
- This system is not suitable for children younger than three and more specialized creches would need to be designed

The Design of the Randomized controlled trial: Year 1

- For the first cohort of children, we use two randomizations to improve power:
 1. We choose a population of eligible schools and we randomized 60 to treatment and 58 to control
 2. Within the neighborhood of each treatment school we identified 15 families with 3-year-old children and we selected 5 randomly to be admitted to school and five to serve as controls.
 3. Within the neighborhood of each control school we identified five families for observation
 4. Within each school we also sampled 5 four-year-olds

The Design of the Randomized controlled trial: Year 2

- We are now entering the second year of the intervention, where a second cohort of three year olds will be admitted.
- To mitigate this we will simply select five families to send their children to school (in treatment school neighborhoods). No explicit "rejections".
- In control school neighborhoods we will select five "control" families.
- Whether treatment or control schools we will choose the five closest families to the school, who consent to participate, before treatment status is revealed.

Outcomes

- **Outcomes include:**
 1. Labor Supply of mothers (in the home and in the market)
 2. Mental health and well being of the mother (CESD-10)
 3. Cognitive development of the children (WPPSI)
 4. School Readiness (Daberon and Idela) and ECDI
 5. Socio-emotional development of the children PSRA

Mothers – Key Takeaways

- The treatment and control cohorts appear **balanced across key descriptives** such as **school attainment, married status, wage earning status, household structure and dwelling material**.
- This means that the two groups (treatment and control) are **roughly similar for both the 3-year-old cohort and the 4-year-old cohort**.
- Any differences we see in the outcomes (child development, empowerment) at endline are **attributable to the programme**.

Demographics and Balance for Four-year-olds

Variable	N	(1) Treat Kid Mean/SE	N	(2) Control Kid Mean/SE	T-test Difference (1)-(2)
Ever attended school	305	0.974 (0.009)	295	0.966 (0.011)	0.008
Completed primary	305	0.708 (0.026)	295	0.685 (0.027)	0.023
Completed secondary	305	0.315 (0.027)	295	0.268 (0.026)	0.047
Currently married	305	0.770 (0.024)	295	0.776 (0.024)	-0.006
Earns a wage	305	0.456 (0.029)	295	0.488 (0.029)	-0.032
Self is head of household	305	0.210 (0.023)	295	0.224 (0.024)	-0.014
Dwelling unit is temporary material	305	0.321 (0.027)	295	0.339 (0.028)	-0.018
HH owns radio	305	0.531 (0.029)	295	0.627 (0.028)	-0.096**

Notes: The value displayed for t-tests are the differences in the means across the groups. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level.

Time Use - Mothers of three-years-old

Variable	N	(1) Treat Kid Mean/SE	N	(2) Control Kid Mean/SE	N	(3) Control School Mean/SE
Time on child care	257	3.004 (0.115)	254	2.897 (0.157)	261	2.874 (0.134)
Time on chores	257	3.716 (0.123)	255	3.914 (0.128)	261	3.870 (0.116)
Time on hh work	257	4.790 (0.166)	255	4.427 (0.172)	261	4.651 (0.172)
Time on wage work	257	4.432 (0.233)	255	4.271 (0.244)	261	4.659 (0.238)
Time selling produce	257	1.634 (0.142)	255	1.514 (0.138)	261	1.245 (0.125)

Notes: The value displayed for t-tests are the differences in the means across the groups. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level.

Mothers and Fathers – Key Takeaways

- There are **no significant differences** between treatment and control mothers and fathers of 3-year-olds in terms of time allocation (**across childcare, chores, household work, wage work, and selling produce**).
- Both treatment and control mothers of 3-year-olds view **child education as important and want child career success**
- Frequency of educational activity and encouraging child interests remains in the low-middle range.

Mothers - three-year-olds. Demographics and Balance

Variable	N	(1) Treat Kid Mean/SE	N	(2) Control Kid Mean/SE	N	(3) Control School Mean/SE	T-test Difference (1)-(2)	(1)-(3)	(2)-(3)
Ever attended school	257	0.965 (0.011)	255	0.976 (0.010)	261	0.985 (0.008)	-0.011	-0.020	-0.008
Completed primary	257	0.759 (0.027)	255	0.741 (0.027)	261	0.770 (0.026)	0.018	-0.011	-0.029
Completed secondary	257	0.342 (0.030)	255	0.373 (0.030)	261	0.381 (0.030)	-0.030	-0.048	-0.018
Currently married	257	0.787 (0.026)	255	0.761 (0.027)	261	0.766 (0.026)	0.006	0.000	-0.005
HH members	257	4.891 (0.111)	255	4.925 (0.106)	261	4.743 (0.091)	-0.034	0.148	0.182
HH members <5	257	1.226 (0.027)	255	1.220 (0.033)	261	1.157 (0.023)	0.006	0.066*	0.063
Earns a wage	257	0.537 (0.031)	255	0.562 (0.031)	261	0.529 (0.031)	0.035	0.068	-0.027
Self is head of household	257	0.253 (0.027)	255	0.235 (0.027)	261	0.234 (0.026)	0.018	0.019	0.002
Regularly saves money	257	0.342 (0.030)	255	0.341 (0.030)	261	0.326 (0.029)	0.001	0.017	0.016
Dwelling unit is temporary material	257	0.412 (0.031)	255	0.349 (0.030)	261	0.257 (0.027)	0.063	0.156***	0.062**
HH owns radio	257	0.626 (0.030)	255	0.612 (0.031)	261	0.590 (0.031)	0.035	0.036	0.022

Notes: The value displayed for t-tests are the differences in the means across the groups. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level.

Mothers and Fathers – Key Takeaways

- There are **no significant differences** between treatment and control mothers and fathers of 3-year-olds in terms of time allocation (**across childcare, chores, household work, wage work, and selling produce**).

Time use - Fathers of three-year-olds

Variable	N	(1) Treat Kid Mean/SE	N	(2) Control Kid Mean/SE	N	(3) Control School Mean/SE
Time on chores	164	2.302 (0.148)	149	2.050 (0.148)	154	2.030 (0.152)
Time on hh work	164	5.012 (0.243)	149	4.718 (0.225)	154	4.510 (0.230)
Time on wage work	164	6.082 (0.311)	149	5.465 (0.304)	154	6.214 (0.301)
Time selling produce	164	1.424 (0.138)	149	1.552 (0.170)	154	1.342 (0.138)

Importance of Success and Education - three-year-olds

Variable	N	(1) Treat Kid Mean/SE	N	(2) Control Kid Mean/SE	N	(3) Control School Mean/SE
Importance of child edu (likert)	257	3.825 (0.024)	255	3.788 (0.028)	261	3.824 (0.024)
Want child career success (likert)	257	4.677 (0.033)	255	4.671 (0.032)	261	4.785 (0.027)
Freq of edu activity (likert)	257	2.638 (0.056)	255	2.718 (0.056)	261	2.728 (0.055)
Freq of encouraging child interests (likert)	257	2.510 (0.062)	255	2.561 (0.059)	261	2.609 (0.058)

Notes: The value displayed for t-tests are the differences in the means across the groups. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level.

Mothers and Fathers Decision Making – Key Takeaways

- We observe interesting differences in perceived **decision-making between** mothers and fathers
- Around **13.7% of mothers** claiming **mothers make child education decisions** and **40% claim that fathers** do.
- This compares with fathers: only **7% of fathers claim that mothers make child education decisions**, while **50% claim that fathers** do.
- Almost **75% of the sample** (both men and women) believes that men and women should have **equal opportunity to work**. Interestingly, 69% of mothers believe that a woman is **free to work outside the home**, while 80% of fathers reported the same.

Autonomy and attitudes compared between cohabiting women and men - 3-year-old sample

Variable	Women	Men
Decisions on Child upbringing		
The mother makes decisions on child's education	0.137	0.065
The father makes decisions on child's education	0.390	0.503
They jointly make decisions on child's education	0.446	0.414
Attitudes to Women's Work		
Men and women should have equal opportunity to work	0.766	0.734
Men are better business managers	0.347	0.503
Women who work outside the home are bad mothers	0.12	0.10
Women's Autonomy		
The woman is free to work outside the home	0.688	0.801
The woman is free to visit family/friends	0.642	0.809
Sample size	372	372

Child Nutritional Status– Key Takeaways

- We observe globally that **child development levels**, as measured through tests like Daberon/IDELA, **increase with age**
- **Height-for-age** is a considered a standard indicator of **nutrition**

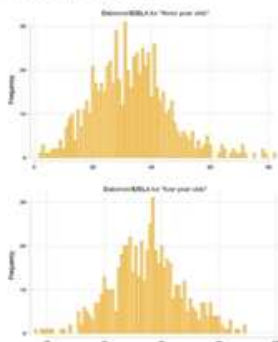
Child nutritional status

Table: Nutritional Status: WHO-based z-scores

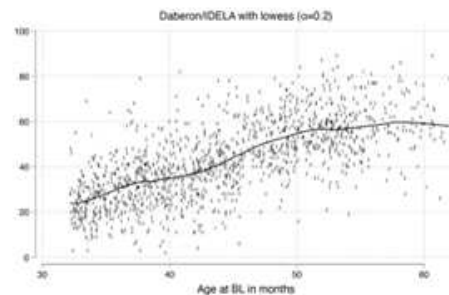
Variable	Female 4-year-old	Male 4-year-old	Female 3-year-old	Male 3-year-old
Arm Circumference	-0.955 (1.12)	-0.961 (1.19)	-1.167 (1.16)	-1.199 (1.12)
Height for Age	-1.462 (1.49)	-1.529 (1.38)	-1.672 (1.50)	-1.779 (1.52)
Weight for Age	0.129 (1.36)	0.256 (1.45)	0.569 (1.60)	0.581 (1.49)
BMI for Age	1.487 (2.00)	1.915 (2.23)	2.244 (2.35)	2.556 (2.37)
Weight for Length	1.633 (2.02)	2.032 (2.20)	2.292 (2.30)	2.406 (2.22)

Note: Standard Deviations in Parentheses. z score < -1.96 is in the lowest 2.5%, z score > 1.96 is in the lowest 5%, and z score < -1.64 is in the lowest 10%.

Distribution of Idela/Daberon



Child Developmental Progression - Daberon



Child Nutritional Status– Key Takeaways

- In the case of our study, **we find that child development scores (school readiness) appear strongly associated with height-for-age**, reflecting the possible impact of malnourishment.
- This is true for both 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds (where it is strongest for boys)
- These children are malnourished, not in calories but in **quality of nutrition**. This seems to be affecting their development.

Child development and Nutritional Status

Table: Association of School Readiness/Daberon with nutritional status

Variable	3-year-old All	3-year-old Female	3-year-old Male	4-year-old All	4-year-old Female	4-year-old Male
Arm Circumference	0.018 (0.023)	0.027 (0.017)	0.051 (0.028)	0.021 (0.026)	0.025 (0.038)	0.018 (0.028)
Height for Age	0.027*** (0.008)	0.030*** (0.010)	0.028*** (0.013)	0.048*** (0.014)	0.012 (0.021)	0.058*** (0.021)
Male	-0.008*** (0.002)	-	-	-0.118*** (0.042)	-	-
Intercept	0.090*** (0.022)	0.114*** (0.035)	0.027 (0.034)	0.148*** (0.040)	0.132*** (0.044)	0.048 (0.040)

Note: Standard errors in Parentheses. Dependent variable net of ancestor effects and of age (2001 index polynomial) and measured in units of standard deviation. *** and ** indicate significance at the 1% and 5% respectively.

Thank you

Appendix 4: Opening remarks by the CECM Education and Vocational training Ms. Dorothy Naivasha



WELCOME REMARKS BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING MS. DOROTHY NAIVASHA DURING THE RANDOMIZED CONTROL TRIAL (RCT) BASELINE DISSEMINATION ON WEDNESDAY 26TH MARCH 2025

*Prof. Caroline Thoruwa KU DVC Research, Innovation and Outreach
representing the Vice Chancellor of Kenyatta University,
Professor Judith Waudu KU WEE Hub Leader,
Dr. David Watene - Director State Department of Higher Education,
Dr. Sam Ngaruiya - Director State Department for Basic Education,
Ms. Halima Abdi - Assistant Director State Department for Gender,
Ms. Dorothy Naivasha TNC CECM in charge of Education and Vocational
Training,
Mr. Jonathan Mwiti -TNC Chief Officer of Education and Vocational Training,
Professor Simon Onywere – the KU RCT Project Principal Investigator,
Ms. Emma Porter - Representative from Yale University,
Members of the Women Economic Empowerment University Board,
The Assembly Committee Education, Science and Technology led By Chair
Honorable Kamunyu,
The County Public Service Board led by Chair, Julius Miriti,
The Head teachers,
The Teachers,
Members of the Fourth Estate,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of the County Government of Tharaka Nithi, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to each of you, having taken time from your busy schedules to join us

here today. It is both an honor and a delight to welcome you to this Randomized Control Trial (RCT) Dissemination forum, which is a culmination of months of hard work and sacrifice. We aim to present the findings of the baseline study, which took place in Ntoroni in three clusters: Tharaka, Maara and Chuka/Igambang'ombe. We are grateful to have representatives from each institution join us.

As we celebrate each institution, we should remember that skills we impart on our children should also reflect on our vision for them to be productive members of society, capable of earning a living, providing for their families and support one another.

H.E. Governor Muthomi Njuki is passionate about us raising our children well, as they prepare to take on the reigns as our next generation of leaders, capable of building upon the foundations we set today. Through the years, we have worked to gradually increase investments made in education and vocational training to make this a reality.

Women of our country have been pivotal drivers of economic growth, innovation, and sustainability. Their (*or should I say **our***) contributions, span formal and informal sectors, often overcoming systemic barriers to deliver results in every part of our economies, despite turbulent changes that are fed by market dynamics. Women's roles in our lives are irreplaceable. They are the engine of development, prepared by years of observing, nurturing, learning and adapting, for such a time as this, when their participation in society continues to mold our future.

Your diverse perspectives and expertise are the cornerstone of this gathering; providing insights on how best to interpret the results of the study. This forum also plays a crucial role in promoting open dialogue, healthy curiosity, exchange knowledge, from which we can learn and identify more areas we can collaborate on in future.

Once again, I thank each of you for joining us here today. Let's embark on this forum to connect and grow together. Without further ado, let us begin

Asanteni sana.

Appendix 5: Opening remarks by KU-WEE Hub Leader and Director Centre for Gender Equity & Empowerment, Prof. Judith Waudo

**PROF. JUDITH WAUDO,
DIRECTOR, CGEE & KU-WEE HUB LEADER DURING
THE RCT DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP HELD AT
THE GOVERNOR’S RESIDENCE, THARAKA NITHI
ON 26TH MARCH, 2025**

-
- Your Excellency the Governor Hon. Muthomi Njuki
 - Permanent Secretary, State Department of Education;
 - Prof. Waceke Wanjohi, Ag. Vice-Chancellor, Kenyatta University;
 - Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Kenyatta University
 - Members of Parliament present
 - CECs and CEOs present; MCAs present; Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

May I take this opportunity to welcome all of you to this dissemination meeting. Before I make my remarks, let me recognize a few people in this forum; KU-WEE Advisory Board members, KU-WEE Hub staff, RCT researchers, RCT supervisors, the County Public Service Board, Kenyatta University staff.

- Project on What Works to Advance Women’s Economic Empowerment began in 2020 and is funded by the Gates Foundation.
- Three themes of a **Total of 14 projects** namely;
 1. Women’s Roles in Public and Private Sectors 5 projects
 2. Skilling and Mentoring 3 projects
 3. Violence, Crisis and Women’s Work 6 projects

Two projects namely the Livelihood and RCT are anchored in this County.

- Purpose of this projects is to advance women’s economic empowerment.

- The approach is to evaluate projects, identify gaps, develop policy briefs and push for policy uptake.
- The Randomized Control Trial is an experiment that touches on women's economic participation and child development.
- The backbone of this RCT is you Mr. Governor who came up with the Creche facility in one of your markets to take care of children while women engage in economic activities.
- The RCT is mirrored on the same principle of allowing 3-year-old children to an ECDE facility to enable mothers participate in other activities.
- We focused in ECDE because construction of crèche was a very expensive venture.
- On this note, let me take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Education, and your County for approving legislation to allow Kenyatta University work in this sphere.
- This RCT was started in January, 2024 with one cohort of 3-year old. As of 2025, it has 2 cohorts.
- It is composed of two components:
 1. The curriculum intervention
 2. The Measurement of children's development

The objectives are:

1. To test how early child enrolment of 3-year old children in PP1 would enable mothers to engage in economic activities.
 2. To understand how an enriched curriculum could promote holistic development of a child and improve school readiness.
- This RCT has three phases; baseline, midline and the endline, in which the same variables are assessed at each phase.
 - The purpose of this meeting is to:
 - i) Share the baseline data on the women's economic participation and children's development milestones.
 - ii) To hear from the voices of the people implementing this programme namely; the ECDE teachers and head teachers of the schools.

Thank you!

Appendix 6: Kenyatta University Vice Chancellors Speech



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SPEECH BY

**PROF. WACEKE WANJOHI
THE AG. VICE-CHANCELOR**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
DISSEMINATION OF BASELINE RESULTS ON WOMEN'S
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
HELD AT**

KATHWANA, THARAKA NITHI COUNTY

WEDNESDAY 26TH MARCH 2025

- ❖ Honourable Muthomi Njuki, Governor, Tharaka Nithi County;
- ❖ Representative of the Principal Secretary, State Department of Basic Education, Ministry of Education;
- ❖ Distinguished Guests;
- ❖ Esteemed Representatives from the County Government;
- ❖ Our valued Partners present;
- ❖ Researchers and policy makers present;
- ❖ Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning!

It is a great honour and a privilege to join you today for this dissemination workshop as we receive the baseline findings of the critical Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) in childcare intervention aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment.

Kenyatta University's Philosophy on sensitivity and responsiveness to societal needs and the right of every person to knowledge is in-tandem with this project's objective of promoting women empowerment through childcare. Indeed, we take immense pride in being the leading institution in Sub-Saharan Africa in education especially in early childhood education, gender equality and equity and women's economic empowerment. Our mandate reflects our unwavering commitment to ensuring that education remains a powerful tool for transforming lives, strengthening families, and fostering economic development.

The Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) intervention is cognizant of the existing education policies and guidelines of basic education within which early childhood is an integral component.

With this in mind, Kenyatta University's Women's Economic Empowerment Hub and the intervention PIs with the County Tharaka Nithi's government indulgence and cooperation, we were able to enrol 3-year-old children in the intervention cohort for the RCT intervention experiment in 60 school.

We recognize your government's keen interest in education particularly early childhood education. This intervention made possible through the use of established physical infrastructure within the county and through the support of a county Policy on early childhood development.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This programme we are implementing, in collaboration with our esteemed partners (Yale University, Bangor University, University of West Indies, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and a data collection unit for Common Goals Research (CGR) and funded by the Gates Foundation, seeks to address one of the

biggest barriers to women's economic participation—the challenge of unpaid childcare.

Many women in Tharaka Nithi County, and indeed across the country, struggle to engage in economic activities due to the lack of affordable and accessible early childhood care centres and education facilities where the children can be enrolled as their mothers get engaged in an economic activity. However, though this initiative, enrolling children aged three in pre-primary school (PP1), is not only giving children a strong educational foundation at an early age but also creates an opportunity for women to pursue meaningful economic endeavours in diverse sectors.

This intervention is, therefore, a two-fold empowerment strategy—investing in our children's future while simultaneously unlocking the economic potential of women.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we receive the shared results of the baseline study, which provides crucial insights into the current state of early childhood education and women's economic participation in Tharaka Nithi County.

Some of the key findings reveal that:

- A significant number of women in this county face economic limitations due to childcare responsibilities.
- The enrolment of children in PP1 remains low due to challenges such as inadequate school infrastructure, lack of awareness, and economic constraints.
- Women who have access to early childhood education services for their children demonstrate greater participation in income-generating activities, leading to improved household well-being.

These findings reaffirm what research has continuously shown that when women are economically empowered, the entire communities thrive.

Therefore, this intervention has benefited immensely from the expertise from two major Kenyatta University departments,

namely; The Department of Early Childhood and Special Needs Education from the School of Education and Lifelong and The Department of Psychology from the School of Law, Arts and Social Sciences

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While this intervention marks a significant step forward, we implore the County Government of Tharaka Nithi, development partners, the private sector, and community leaders to support policies and programmes that enhance access to quality early childhood education.

We advocate for:

- Increased investment in pre-primary infrastructure, including classrooms and child-friendly learning materials.
- Capacity-building for early childhood educators to ensure quality teaching and care.
- Sensitization campaigns to encourage parents to embrace early childhood education for their children.

And to this end, Kenyatta University remains committed to working closely with all stakeholders to turn these recommendations into actionable policies that will create lasting change. As an institution deeply rooted in education and gender equality, Kenyatta University will continue to provide research, policy guidance, and capacity-building programmes that promote early childhood education and economic empowerment.

We stand ready to support this county and others in developing innovative solutions that will leave no woman or child behind.

In the recent past, Kenyatta University has done a lot to enhance Women Economic Empowerment such as: Setting up a day care centre within the University to nurse babies of student mothers and young women working at KU and the neighbourhood. The day-care takes care of children aged 6 months to three years. It has trained caregivers and a medical nurse who looks after children in case of illness. The day-care is closer to KU Health Unit in case of any emergency. Further at Kenyatta University through the KU

Academy, three-year-olds are admitted to playgroup within the pre-primary school. This is meant to relief young mothers from caregiving to engage in economic activities.

Further, through the KU Model School, situated in Ruiru, the school admits three-year-olds to join pre-primary for the same reasons mentioned above. Through these model programmes, KU is placed to partner with the County Governments and other partners to transform early childhood education in this country.

And as I conclude, let us remember that investing in women's economic empowerment is not just a moral obligation but a smart economic strategy. Investing in early childhood education is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of poverty and create a future where every child has a strong foundation and equal chance to succeed.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the partners and stakeholders who have made this initiative possible. In particular the governor of Tharaka Nithi County, Hon Muthomi Njuki for standing in a leadership position on this. Together, let us ensure that every child in Tharaka Nithi beyond the intervention schools, has access to quality early learning opportunities and that every woman has the freedom to contribute meaningfully to economic growth.

THANK YOU!

Appendix 7: The Speech by his Excellency the Governor of Tharaka Nithi Hon. Muthomi Njuki



**TRANSFORMING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION THROUGH
COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
TALKING POINTS FOR THE H.E. MUTHOMI NJUKI, E.G.H.,
DURING THE RANDOMIZED CONTROL TRIAL (RCT)
BASELINE DESSIMINATION FORUM IN THARAKA NITHI
COUNTY, HELD IN IGAMBANG'OMBE WARD ON
WEDNESDAY 26TH MARCH 2025**

*Prof Caroline Thoruwa KU DVC Research, innovation and Outreach
representing VC, Kenyatta University,*

Prof Judith Waudu KU WEE Hub Leader

Dr. David Watene - Director State Department of Higher Education

Dr. Sam Ngaruiya - Director State Department for Basic Education

Ms. Halima Abdi - Assistant Director State Department for Gender

Ms Dorothy Naivasha TNC CECM Education

Mr. Jonathan Mwiti TNC Chief Officer Education

Prof Simon Onywere KU RCT Project Principal Investigator

Ms. Emma Porter Representative Yale University,

The Women Economic Empowerment University Board,

The Assembly Committee Education, Science and Technology led

By Chair Hon Kamunyu

The County Public Service Board led by Chair, Julius Miriti

The Head teachers

The Teachers

Members of the Fourth Estate...Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is a great honor and privilege to stand before you today to host this crucial forum on the Randomized Control Trial (RCT) program; a groundbreaking initiative taking place in our public primary schools. This program is more than just an academic

experiment: it is a transformative effort designed to assess the impact of early childhood education interventions on women's economic empowerment and child development.

2. Globally, women and children face a wide range of challenges that threaten their safety, well-being and rights. These vulnerabilities stem from economic disparities, social inequalities and systemic discrimination. Governments play a critical role in ensuring their safety, rights and wellbeing through developing and implementing laws, policies and programs that ensure a safer and more equitable society for a better future.
3. I take great pride in the fact that this initiative was inspired by a project close to my heart, a crèche my administration constructed at Chuka Market to support the trading mothers. *For those who don't know, a crèche is a facility, within a building, that provides supervised care for infants and young children, typically between the ages of three months to three years old. It is designed to offer a safe and nurturing environment where children can engage in age-appropriate activities.*
4. These mothers, who balance the demands of trade with raising young children, deserve safe and nurturing spaces for their little ones. This was a step towards easing their burden, and today, we build on that vision through this larger initiative. I take great pride in the fact that Tharaka Nithi is the first county in Kenya to experiment the RCT intervention in ECDE sector.
5. These mothers, who balance the demands of trade with raising young children, deserve safe and nurturing spaces for their little ones. This was a step towards easing their burden, and today, we build on that vision through this larger initiative. I take great pride in the fact that Tharaka Nithi is the first county in Kenya to experiment the RCT intervention in ECDE sector.
6. **Ladies and Gentlemen,** As pioneers, we have a responsibility, not just to our county, but to the entire country, to ensure that this program is executed with integrity. By adhering to the scientific design of the RCT experiment, it's our hope that

credible data generated shall inform policy decisions and potentially lead to the scaling up of this program nationwide.

7. We all acknowledge that research plays a critical role in the education sector by driving innovation, improving teaching methodologies and shaping educational policies. As a government, we have a responsibility to ensure that the intervention curriculum remains relevant and aligned with Competency Based Curriculum (C.B.C), integration of digital learning technology and new teaching techniques. Therefore, the RCT is a tool that will scientifically guide decision making based on the findings that will be generated.
8. We are gathered here today to appraise and celebrate the remarkable social and economic impact that the RCT project has had on our communities. This initiative has not only created employment opportunities for our sons and daughters, but has also opened doors for learning and professional growth. For instance, in intervention, we have employed one (1) intervention supervisor, 8 mentors, 63 ECDE teachers and more than 70 enumerators during data collection period.
9. By providing training of international standards to our teachers and mentors, the project has equipped them with skills that place them on a competitive global stage. To this end, I encourage a TOT (Trainer of Trainers) model amongst our teachers which involves peer learning in the spirit of leaving no one behind. I am also impressed that the project was keen to engage Tharaka Nithi residents to develop most of the learning materials exhibited here.
10. We are positive that during the upscaling of the project, these individuals will benefit greatly, thus improving their livelihoods. This assertion is informed by the feedback I have received, which confirms that children who have been trained using this curriculum have demonstrated significant intellectual and physical growth - a testament to the program's effectiveness.
11. The efforts of the talented RCT team who developed this curriculum and the capabilities of our very able ECDE teachers has not gone unnoticed.

12. I take this opportunity to thank each of you for your efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the curriculum and reaffirm my unwavering commitment to supporting and advancing this program, as we await the findings and recommendations of this experiment.
13. I will also continue advocating for this approach and ensure that more communities benefit from its transformative impact on curriculum development and improvement. I express gratitude to the County Assembly of Tharaka Nithi in particular, for approving our Child Care Legislation which has enabled this project's implementation.
14. **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
My administration remains fully committed to strengthening the Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) infrastructure, through investments in modern facilities, well-trained teachers, and fostering a conducive learning environment for our children to receive the best possible foundation for their future.
15. We will continue supporting all our ECDE centers with relevant materials approved by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), in addition to furthering skills introduced through the RCT program. I have also directed the Department of Education to procure learning materials for the current PP2 class, who were the pioneers of the program, to sustain the academic improvements they have acquired.
16. Finally, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to the teams and partners working tirelessly to ensure the success of this initiative: The Kenyatta University, Yale University, University of West Indies, Bangor University, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Common Goal Research Centre (CGR) and my remarkable team from Tharaka Nithi, led by Ms. Dorothy Naivasha.
17. Your contributions, insight, sacrifices, and commitment are invaluable. Let us continue to champion innovative solutions that empower our people, uplift our communities, and shape a brighter future for our children together.

Thank you.