



COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS



## KAKAMEGA COUNTY ENHANCES TEACHING & LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECDE) CENTRES TO ENCOURAGE ENROLMENT, RETENTION & COMPLETION

County:	Kakamega		
Sector/s	Education	Sub-sector/Theme:	ECDE
Keywords	Early Childhood Development Education, ECDE centres, Kakamega County, County Government of Kakamega, ECDE learning environment, ECDE learner enrolment, ECDE learner retention, ECDE learner completion		
Target Audience	County Departments of Education, Health, Social Services, Water & Agriculture, and development partners in education		
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### Introduction

Before devolution, Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) in the country had been neglected and gained recognition with the inception of County Governments in 2013, yet some parents were still not willing to release their children to attend school, jeopardising their right to education. According to the Kakamega County Task Force Report 2014, the enrolment of pupils in Kakamega County was low at 30,000, and there were 917 ECDE centres, most of which were old classrooms and, in other cases, pupils were learning under trees. Then Governor, H.E. Wycliffe Oparanya had noted this gap and included improving the teaching and learning environment to improve access and quality of ECDE in his manifesto to ensure children aged 4–5 years attend school in a good early learning environment.

### **Implementation of the practice**

- When Governor Oparanya assumed office in 2013, ECDE improvement was ratified through a cabinet memo. The Cabinet resolved to improve infrastructure (classrooms, instructional materials and tuition).
- Through budgetary allocation, the County Government expanded and modernised ECDE facilities. A modern ECDE centre has 2 classrooms, a staffroom, a water tank, a staff toilet and a learners' toilet.
- When Counties were established, the County Government employed 2,004 teachers with varied qualifications from certificate to degree. However, most are diploma holders.
- Some 316 new ECDE centres were constructed, bringing the current total to 917, and more are being constructed, complete with child-friendly toilet facilities. Most ECDE centres are located in existing primary schools which have enough land. In FY 2019/20 and 2021/22 the County Government purchased land at a cost of KSh 4.5 million to construct more centres where existing centres were far apart, bringing ECDE closer to the community.
- Some of the newly constructed centres have been established closer to the pupils.
- Some 615 centres have been equipped with child-size furniture (chairs and tables).
- The County has since enacted the Kakamega County Childhood Development and Education Act, 2016 and Strategic Plan 2021–2025, which prioritise ECDE and include public participation where parents, the County Assembly and other key stakeholders are engaged to make decisions concerning the children. It is now initiating a Policy to give further guidance.
- Through a multisectoral approach, the County's Department of Education works with other departments such as Health, Water, Social Services and Agriculture which help in advocacy and resource mobilisation activities.
  - With the help of development partners, the Health Department provides Vitamin A supplements and conducts deworming exercises for learners. And through its Public Health Unit, it monitors the ECDE centres by assessing the health of the learners and their environment.
  - The Department of Agriculture educates the community on the types of food crops they can grow to provide nutritious food to the learners.
  - The Water Department guides the Education Department on water harvesting techniques/structures and provides water purification agents. The schools also have adequate water.
  - The Social Services Department runs the Shelter Improvement Programme aimed at providing decent housing to the most vulnerable community members so that children from those schools can be comfortable and go to school.

- Development partners such as USAID, World Vision and Cheshire Disability Services Kenya have also come in to help.
  - USAID is helping with the sensitization on nutrition and training ECDE teachers on nutrition.
  - The County has partnered with World Vision to construct 48 ECDE centres with two classrooms per school and an office in Chevaywa and Lwandeti wards. The classrooms are fitted with modern furniture (tables and chairs) to make the children comfortable. World Vision also helps with curriculum delivery training for the Boards of Management and teachers.
  - In addition, the County has partnered with the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, to provide branded learning and teaching materials at a cost of KSh 49 million. They have also partnered with UNICEF to offer capacity-building and learning material for the children.
  - The County partnered with Masinde Muliro University and other institutions to establish daycare centres in Ikolomani Sub-county. So far, 12 daycare centres have been established. Parents with children ranging from 3 months to 2 years are encouraged to take their children to the daycares.
  - Cheshire focuses on inclusive education for persons with disabilities by ensuring children with disabilities can access quality education and their special needs are well catered for through a multisectoral approach.

#### *Key implementers and collaborators and their roles*

- The County Government of Kakamega offers direct funding — provides a capitation of KSh 1,000 per child to buy teaching and learning materials for them and pay for hired services, i.e. salaries for BOM teachers and security guards. The County Government also purchases land on which new ECDE centres are constructed. It modernised existing ECDE centres and equipped them with furniture.
- Department of Education oversees the improvement and management of ECDE centres.
- Parents run the school feeding programme.
- Development partners give technical and financial support.

#### *Resource implications*

- Annual budgetary allocation. The current allocation for FY 2022/2023 is KSh 651,778,223.

#### *Sustainability*

- The County Government plans to sustain the initiative through annual budgetary allocation and sourcing of additional funds from development partners.

- Multisectoral approach to actualise the following sector priorities: manage Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE); strengthen strategic partnerships and linkages in the promotion of education in the County; improve learning environment; increase enrolment and retention rate; increase number of teachers; improve safety and security of learners; and improve the nutrition and health of the learners.

### **Results of the practice**

- ECDE in public centres is free. Before devolution, ECDE centres were run by the community, and poor parents were disadvantaged as they could not meet their financial obligations. The centres were manned by few teachers because their salaries were dependent on parents' contributions.
- Learner enrolment has since increased to 125,000 with the highest ECDE centre having 380 children. In 2013, the enrollment was at 45,000.
- The County Government always provides an annual budgetary allocation for ECDE improvement, and where necessary this is usually reviewed through supplementary budgets.
- Parents are now supportive and are currently running the feeding programme as the County Government mobilises resources to sustainably assume that responsibility.
- The ECDE centres offer porridge or tea and snacks (rice or succotash) to keep the children healthy.
- Additional teachers were employed and salaries for teachers have improved over time. Currently, a Certificate holder earns KSh 22,500 monthly, a Diploma holder KSh 25,300 and a degree holder KSh 38,270. They were initially paid KSh 8,000, KSh 12,000 and KSh 16,000 respectively because of lack of funds.
- All 2,024 ECDE teachers transitioned to permanent and pensionable on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022. The County Government is employing 2 teachers for Year 1 and 2 teachers for Year 2 to replace retirees.
- In early 2022, a scheme of service for ECDE teachers was developed and taken through the County Assembly and signed for implementation by the Legal Committee of the County Public Service Board. This facilitated the transition of teachers to permanent and pensionable terms (P&P), increasing their commitment and motivation, thus mitigating the risk of turnover.
- In-service training of teachers on CBC was done in 2020 in conjunction with the National Government to ensure that the trained teachers act as CBC champions.
- The County conducts public participation where parents, the County Assembly's Education Committee and other key stakeholders make decisions concerning the children. Before devolution, most children were not enrolled on ECDE. The Department works with MCAs to encourage parents to enrol them.

- The County also supports schools run by the Catholic church by providing teachers and classrooms.
- ECDE centres now have Boards of Management (BOM) comprising 5 members down from 7 members initially due to budget constraints. The minimum requirement for board membership is O-level education. The Teacher-in-charge of an ECDE is the Secretary to BOM. Other members include a parents' representative, a sponsor (religious), a special needs representative and a special interest representative for resource mobilisation (e.g. business person, artisan, CBOs, NGOs, etc.). Members pick a chairperson from among them.
- The County has 60 wards and is constructing one ECDE per ward. An ECDE costs KSh 4 million which constructs 2 classrooms, a staff room a water tank, and Asian toilets for teachers and learners.
- The County Government is piloting the construction of fixed-play equipment in some centres in the 3 regions (Northern, Central & South) of Kakamega County.

*Key activities undertaken that ultimately led to positive results*

- Multisectoral approach to ECDE implementation.
- ECDE was declared free and mandatory, thus increasing enrolment and retention.

*Key activities that negatively affected results*

- Delay in release of the County Equitable share of revenue by the National Treasury leading to missed project targets — 60 ECDE centres each financial year. The current FY2022/2023 has not yet been disbursed. The centres accumulate debts owed to the suppliers and support staff (cooks and guards) salaries.
- Some parents are still not willing to release their children to attend school, thereby causing stagnation in some areas. The ECDE centres are strategically built in existing public primary schools, and thus the little children now accompany their older siblings to school. Only 1 ECDE centre is built independently out of primary schools.
- Increased enrolment and retention have skewed the teacher-learner ratio. A long-term strategy would be to recruit more teachers and expand infrastructure. Some ECDE centres have ratios of 1: 70 up to 1:100 against the recommended ratio of 1:62. As a short-term strategy, some centres have employed BOM teachers, straining allocation.

## **Lessons learnt**

*What worked really well*

- Establishing ECDE centres within primary schools helps learners to adjust fast when transitioning. It is also easier for parents with children in ECDE centres and primary schools since they bring them together to the same school.

### *What did not work*

- The feeding programme supported by the County has not taken off because its budget has been withdrawn in the last two financial years due to financial constraints.

### *What to do differently*

- Create linkages with other stakeholders and partners to enhance the feeding programme.

### **Recommendations**

Counties seeking to improve ECDE using the Kakamega County model should:

- Ensure adequate budgetary allocation to match the needs of the ECDE centres.
- Ensure prompt disbursement of capitation.
- Construct enough centres near learners' homes and adequately equip them.
- Recruit adequate qualified teachers and continuously motivate them through in-service training and improved terms.
- include community sensitization on the financial implications in their work programmes.
- Sensitize parents on the available ECDE opportunities and their obligations to bring learners to the centres.
- Get community buy-in for ECDE expansion and prioritize local suppliers for the land, construction and equipping of ECDEs.

### *What to avoid*

- Depending fully on the County Government for financing.

### **Case study: Kakamega Primary School ECDE Section**

Kakamega Primary School ECDE Section is one of the many public ECDE centres in the County, complemented by private and feeder centres. The County Government of Kakamega provided it with the requisite infrastructure and teachers, and this has seen enrolment grow by 222 additional learners to 374 in total. Headed by the Teacher-in-Charge, Ms Rose Mwanje, the staff complement includes 6 County Govt teachers, 4 BOM teachers, 1 watchman, 2 cooks and 1 cleaner. The Centre. The Centre's infrastructure includes 3 classrooms for learners aged 4–5 years and 2 classrooms for 5–7-year-olds. A classroom session is managed by 2 teachers. The ablution block has 3 urinals and 3 pit latrines for boys, 3 pit latrines for the



Kakamega Primary School ECDE Section



girls and a two-door toilet meant for male and female teachers, though currently all of them are female.

**Further reading:**

1. Draft Kakamega CIDP 2023–2027 <https://kakamega.go.ke/download/draft-kakamega-county-integrated-development-plan-2023-2027/>
2. [Kakamega County Childhood Development and Education Act, 2014](#)
3. Kakamega County Task Force Report 2014
4. Kakamega County Strategic Plan 2021–2025
5. Kakamega County Weekly E-Paper [www.kakamega.go.ke](http://www.kakamega.go.ke)

**Gallery**



*Participatory learning ongoing at the Centre*



*Modern child-friendly toilet facilities for the ECDE learners at the Centre*