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EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD): EDUCATION
DISPARITIES IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES : (THE CASE OF
RURAL AND URBAN KENYA.)

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Early Childhood Development: Education Disparities;

The case of Rural and Urban Kenya.

ABSTRACT

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Early Childhood Development:

Education Disparities: (The case of Rural and Urban Kenya)

The future multi-dimensional development of this country Kenya, lies in the Early Childhood Development Programmes put into practice today. This paper provides the importance of investing in the foundation of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a tool to the future political, social and economic development.

With 80% of Kenyan population living in rural parts and only 20% living in urban Kenya (Ministry of Finance and Planning, (2002).)

The paper will outline major issues of disparity existing in the provision of Early Childhood Development (ECD) opportunities. It should be noted that most Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes like children's homes, rehabilitation centers, orphanages, well equipped nursery schools and kindergartens along with highly qualified teachers are concentrated in Urban areas to cater for the 20% of the population of Kenyans residing there. The paper argues that with the majority of Kenyans living in

rural Kenya where poverty has hit hard, the disparities need to be addressed. The paper holds that fairness needs to be applied.

Finally, the paper offers recommendations and intends to discuss the solutions to the existing disparities in Early Childhood Development (ECD) The implementation of the above solutions will be a landmark achievement in laying the foundation of the future Kenyan society and generation.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is the process by which young children aged 0-8 years are nurtured to grow and develop into responsible youth. It is a critical development stage of a person since it determines the future of a child and that of the nation and so the world. Education is defined as the process of bringing desirable change into the behavior of human beings (Dahama and Bhatuager, 1990). Education plays an important role in Early Childhood and that it inculcates in a child a high sense of socio-political and economic responsibilities. This paper will discuss among other issues: - the goal and objectives of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme in Kenya, examine issues of disparity in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in rural and urban areas in Kenya; the role played by various partners involved in Early Childhood Development (ECD); suggest and recommend the solutions to the disparities as a way forward.

The issues mentioned above have a direct bearing on the development of child in future. The future social, political and economic development of Kenya should be mirrored in the education system consumed by Kenyans.

It is a fact that there are disparities in the education system in Kenya as it relates to Early Childhood Development (ECD). The disparities are: poverty; health and nutrition; HIV/Aids; Special Education Units: The Early Child Enrollment Teacher Education; provision of facilities.

The disparities are experienced in rural areas where 80% of Kenyan population reside (Ministry of finance and planning, 2002). With only 20% of Kenyan population living in urban areas, these disparities have devastating implications on the future multi-dimensional development of Kenya.

In this presentation, there will be a reflection on the disparities in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in rural and urban areas. The paper recognizes or argues that if these disparities: -

- Poverty
- Health and Nutrition
- HIV/AIDS
- Special Education Needs Units
- Early Childhood Development Curriculum
- Enrollment and ECD Teacher Education
- Provision of learning facilities.

Are not addressed and dressed, the social, political and economic structures are bound to collapse.

1.1 The goal and objectives of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme in Kenya.

First and foremost, education disparities refer to the proportional inequalities in opportunities related to education matters affecting the rural and urban populace. In relation to the Early Childhood Development in Kenya therefore, there appears to be evidence that the children aged 0-8 years have all along and are still receiving by far disproportionate attention in rural and urban areas. The Government of Kenya has been committed to providing quality education to all its citizens as exemplified by the

allocation of 36% of the annual recurrent budget to the educational sector. The government has also provided education in a partnership approach between the government; local communities, religious organizations and the private sector. In the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sub-sector the government aimed at increasing participation rate from 35% in 1996 to 50% by the end of the year 2000. However, this has not been possible due to a depressed economy, among other reasons.

Furthermore, the Government has through the sessional paper No. 6 of 1988 and the National Development Plan of 1989 –1993 and the 1994-1996 set out the sub-sector policy, which outlines the goal and objectives of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme. The goal of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme is to improve the quality of life of all the children aged zero to eight years. Specific objectives as stated in the master plan of education are: -

- To improve nutritional status of children and provide them with a secure physical and psychological setting.
- To develop the integrated nurturing of children's effective, cognitive and physical attributes.
- To develop children's self confidence and free expression, spiritual and social values, and appreciation of the other people's needs and views.
- To develop children's knowledge of physical biological world.

It is worth mentioning that the government policy in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sub-sector, the following commendable steps have been undertaken as a government commitment to Early Childhood Development (ECD) for

the period 1997 –2002,during the World Bank supported Early Childhood Development (ECD) project.

- **Increased budgetary allocation** - There has been a significant increase from 0.1% of the Ministry of Education recurrent budget in 1995 to 1% in 2000.
- **Expansion of pre-school teacher training** - The number of training District Centers for early Childhood (DICECE) have increase from 18 in 1997 to 31 with increased intake of in-service teachers.
- **Strengthening the management of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers and service delivery** - Several Early Childhood Development (ECD) Management committees have been trained on management and resource mobilization countrywide. The implementation of these sub-sector policy issues to achieve the afore-mentioned goal and objectives has broadened the disparity between the rural and urban areas as will be seen below.

1.2 ISSUES OF DISPARITY IN RURAL AND URBAN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) IN KENYA

Consequently, a brief in depth examination of some issues should be proof enough. The rural areas compared with urban Early Childhood Development (ECD) are far a part as are the North and South poles. Poverty as a factor has a far more effect on the rural population than it has had on the urban dwellers with 52% of Kenyans living under absolute poverty; the majority of children are growing up in very hardship conditions. The majority of those afflicted by poverty are the rural landless and poor communities in Arid and Semi Arid Land (ASAL) areas and the squatters. Increased poverty is attributed

to a number of factors ranging from natural calamities like prolonged drought (1991 – 1992, 1997 – 2000) flooding, like the El-nino rainfall which destroyed roads, houses and other infrastructure; Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which have seen many people lose jobs and source of income resulting in increased household poverty and high level of increasing HIV/AIDS infections. In rural areas the first priority need is food.

Parents in these areas are concerned most in search for food most parts of the year.

Poverty is denying children access to clean water and good sanitation.

These poverty conditions deplete household food resulting in inadequate nutrition and malnutrition (State of the World's Children, 2001 –UNICEF). The access of good health and education is compromised and children do not attend or are constantly absent from school due to fees or ill health. Poverty leads to increased family quarrels, sometimes resulting to separation, divorce or domestic violence. Children in such homes are likely to experience trauma, are socially and emotionally disturbed often affecting their growth and development. This paper holds strongly that these conditions are most prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas.

As if that is not enough, health and nutrition status has been a big point of disparity. The common health and nutrition problems affecting children zero to eight years include; parasitic disease such as malaria, intestinal worms and Schistosomiasis, Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), malnutrition, micro – deficiency disease, diarrhea, skin disease, dental cavities, and eye infections (S. Vander Vynckt and Nkinyangi J.A ; Children Health Nutrition and Participation 1991). Where as children in urban areas may have a problem with these health and nutrition problems, proper medical care is more accessible unlike those in rural areas where parents have to walk long distances to access medical care.

Refugee children have no access to education, adequate care and good health. They are most of the time emotionally disturbed and often go hungry; their rights are grossly violated.

Most refugee centers are placed into the remote and rural parts of the country like Dadaab in North Eastern Kenya and Kakuma in Lodwar.

Regretably, about 2 million Kenyans are infected with HIV/AIDS, including children who acquire infection through maternal transmission .HIV/AIDS is one of the most important sources of insecurity for children in Kenya. It has placed an enormous strain on the coping capacities of households, communities and the country at large. About 800,000 children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS (National AIDS Council). These children are traumatized and lack adequate care. They are denied the protection and care of their parents. Emotional and financial resources are drained hence children are at risk of infections and drop out from school to care for the sick parents or relatives.

The rural areas are adversely affected since most people who acquire HIV/AIDS in urban areas are relocated to rural areas for care and eventually burial. Even those who die in urban areas are buried in rural areas. This still proves that the disparity in Early Childhood Development (ECD) exists between the rural and urban areas.

Not forgetting, some children have Special Education Needs (SEN). They may include:- physically handicapped, visually impaired, mentally handicapped, hearing impaired and the Gifted and Talented (GT)

Most of these problems result from the health and nutrition provision at early age during pre-natal and post-natal period. Most parents in rural areas are ignorant and may

not attend clinics for some of these disabilities to be detected and corrected. Other rural communities still associate this handicapped ness with cultural superstitions like bad omen and inheritance. The situation may be abit better in urban areas where the level of awareness is high up. As children start going to school, those in urban areas with disabilities are better endowed. The special schools have all along been exclusively situated in urban areas. Children with SEN cases cannot be cared for in rural areas unless the parents are financially able to afford the payments. The government has established the Education Assessment Resource Service (EARS) centers at each District Education Office to create awareness and open up special education units in rural areas. This remains a big area of disparity though the government's efforts should be lauded.

Needless to say, the Early Childhood Development (ECD) curriculum is another area of disparity. The Early Childhood Development (ECD) sub sector constitutes government and community efforts to provide integrated development for children zero to eight years. The government adopted a holistic approach to Early Childhood Development (ECD) in 1997. The holistic approach comprises the nurture of the whole personality of the child, encompassing physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions. In traditional African communities the family including members of the extended family provide childcare. This system of childcare has been affected by the onset of modernization and has resulted to development of non-family day care institutions for children. The common types of childcare include: institutionalized academic oriented day care normally referred to by several names such as Nursery School, Kindergartens, Pre- unit, Pre-school and day care: home based care by child minders (Ayahs); Early Childhood Development (ECD) services (integrated, either

institutionalized or non-institutionalized) and community organized home care. In institutionalized academic oriented childcare centers, children are introduced to out-of-home situations where they mix with others ranging from the aged of three years to six. They learn how to adjust to new situations and environment: They learn social concepts like sharing and obeying simple rules and hygiene. In most rural areas, the curriculum is DICECE (District Centers for Early Childhood Development) oriented whereas the urban curriculum is Maria Montessori oriented mixed with the DICECE (District Centers for Early Childhood Development) one. The DICECE emphasizes the “Thematic Approach” as the Maria Montessori emphasizes the “Interest Approach”. This results in a disparity in that these children meet and mix when they enroll for primary education. The curriculum has a provision for a snack to the children, which averagely is missing from major rural areas due to poverty and other factors. Urban areas are better placed and can afford even meals leave alone snacks.

In spite of the above-mentioned factors, Early Childhood Development (ECD) Enrollment and Teacher Education are key issues. Institutionalized childcare in Kenya started in the late 1940s, but it was after independence that there was a rapid increase in the number and enrollment in these centers. By the end of 2000 there were a total of 26,294 pre-schools (Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres) with a total enrollment of 1,096,626 out of whom 49% were girls. The number of trained pre-school teachers has increased to 19,408 from 14,987 in 1997. However, national Early Childhood Development (ECD participation rate remained constant at 30% with large regional disparities.

Participation is very unusual in Arid and Semi Arid Land districts, urban squatter areas and in areas of poverty in other districts. The major problem facing communities in these areas are poor nutrition and insufficient health care as well as inadequate opportunities for education. Teachers from these areas have generally low academic qualification (mostly C.P.E and K.C.P.E) that undergo in-service training. Most of these teachers also take long under training due to inability to meet the training charges. Enrollment is also disproportionately distributed with some areas with very low enrollment unlike the urban areas that are normally congested. In terms of teacher qualifications urban areas have average highly qualified ECD teacher with some having Diploma Certificates in Early Childhood Development (ECD) from recognized institutions. There is a major disparity in gender teacher enrolment. Most Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers are female teachers, which gives an impression that the Early Childhood Development (ECD) is an enclave for ladies. In rural areas one may hardly find a male Early Childhood Development (ECD) teacher unlike in urban areas where interest among the males is developing. At the moment the level of qualification for Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers in rural areas is rising with the young teachers joining the teaching with form four academic qualification. The problem of enrolment of children and teacher qualification is tied to fee payment in rural areas. Most children are not able to complete fee payment. This leads to low enrolment. The teachers in these areas earn very little if any. It discourages the highly qualified teachers to work there and even enable teachers to afford training costs. The urban areas have most pupils paying because parents are pre occupied with income generating

activities like “jua kali” or small-scale businesses. That alone leads to better pay for teachers and so high qualification.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) ENROLMENT AND
TEACHERS STATISTICAL TREND 1991-2000**

YEAR	ENROLMENT			TEACHERS			NUMBER OF ECD CENTERS
	Boys	Girls	Total	Trained	Untrained	Total	
1991	349,124	423,563	772,687	8,595	16,214	24,809	17,650
1992	469,681	467,805	937,486	8,967	16,714	25,681	18,327
1993	472,024	452,070	924,094	10,435	16,196	26,625	18,487
1994	485,352	466,645	951,997	10,551	17,278	27,829	19,083
1995	507,129	481,697	988,826	11,877	17,374	29,251	20,086
1996	528,840	504,527	1,033,367	12,512	20,658	33,170	21,261
1997	540,948	523,105	1,064,053	14,985	21,144	36,129	23,344
1998	556,196	524,430	1,080,626	16,006	21,973	37,983	24,127
1999	544,644	519,249	1,063,883	17,541	22,750	40,291	25,529
2000	558,130	538,499	1,096,629	19,408	23,201	42,609	26,294

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Headquarters

Additionally, there exists a disparity in the provision of learning facilities in rural and urban areas; in rural areas some children learn in mud-walled churches; shops and

under trees: those centers that are attached to primary schools are also put in classrooms where the environment is not conducive. The Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers operating in churches and shops away from schools work with little or no supervision at all. The provision of facilities like black board, chalk, and books, pencils, sitting desks are a nightmare. The provision of a snack and rest facilities is poor and may even be unhygienic. The urban areas have better facilities ranging from classrooms, meals, books, among others since they can afford financially. The management aspect of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) is still poor at rural level where those elected, nominated or appointed are either ignorant, unconcerned or have abdicated their roles about Early Childhood Development (ECD) needs.

1.3 THE ROLE PLAYED BY VARIOUS ECD PARTNERS.

However, the role-played by various partners in Early Childhood Development (ECD) should be recognized. The Ministry of Education has a network of sections both at national and district levels that co-ordinate the implementation of activities. The National Center for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) was established in 1984 through the assistance of Bernard Van Leer Foundation. National Center for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) acts as a national resource center for Early Childhood Development (ECD) and is also responsible for: - developing school curriculum and support materials; Training of Trainers (TOT); research on Early Childhood Development (ECD); co-ordination of community capacity building and mobilization activities; and teacher training programmes. District Centers for Early Childhood

Development (DICECE) are a decentralization of the National Center for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) at district level. There are 70 District Centers for Early Childhood Development (DICECEs) and five city/Municipal centers for Early Childhood Education(C/M-CECE).

They are responsible for; training of pre-school teachers; development of localized curriculum; research in Early Childhood Development (ECD) issues and community sensitization and mobilization. Other government ministries involved in Early Childhood Development (ECD) are: -

- (i) Ministry of Health – Co-ordinates immunization programmes and growth in monitoring of young children. It also gives the education messages to the expecting and lactating mothers through programmes like MOH, PHC, KEPI, CDD, etc.
- (ii) Ministry of Culture and social services – Is concerned with orphanages and children’s homes and issues related to children in need of special protection.
- (iii) Ministry of Local Government – Some local authorities are employing pre – schoolteachers. They also allocate land for construction of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers.

Parents and communities own about 80% of pre-schools in Kenya. They are responsible for the provision and maintenance of physical facilities including land, buildings, furniture, recruitment and payment of teachers and management of pre-school through the Early Childhood Development (ECD) management committees.

The fact that most of these communities are found in rural areas means that 20% of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers are found in urban areas.

Religious organizations and voluntary groups are also involved in Early Childhood Development (ECD). Religious organizations have established pre-school in churches, temples and mosques. Some state co-operations and farming plantations have built pre-schools for their employee's children. In most urban areas, there are pre-schools owned and managed by private individuals in private firms. This trend is now expanding to the rural areas and tends to commercialize Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme and has proved problematic in providing quality childcare.

External donors have also taken part in Early Childhood Development (ECD). UNICEF is a long-standing partner in pre-school development in Kenya. Currently UNICEF is supporting the alternative approaches programmes in 13 districts under the (GoK) and UNICEF programme of co-operation running from 1999 – 2003. The Aga Khan Foundation has since 1985 been supporting Early Childhood Development (ECD) in various districts. Currently, the biggest partner in Early Childhood Development (ECD) is the World Bank.

Through the support of the World Bank the Government has been able to reach most people of the communities in all the districts. There have been expanded training opportunities for teachers and trainers as well as increased mobilization and improved integration of health and nutrition in Early Childhood Development (ECD). This has been

well defined in rural areas since urban areas already have Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes going in a diversified form.

1.4 SUGGESTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY

FORWARD.

Conclusively, the paper would like to reiterate the important role played by children in society leading to the need to strengthening Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes equally in rural areas as well as in urban areas.

In terms of age, children could be categorized in three groups, less than three years who are found at home, three to six years and mostly found in pre-schools and the rest six to eight years are found in lower primary schools. These children are the base of the future of this country and anything that goes to their Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme directly affects the future of the Kenyan society.

It is therefore the wish of this paper that if the following recommendations can be put into account, the existing disparity would be bridged:-

- Establish mobile Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers that could be at the watering points for the pastoral communities.
- Establish Early Childhood Development (ECD) for street children.
- Establish Early Childhood Development (ECD) for orphaned children.
- Decentralize and build some factories and give credit facilities to people in rural areas to curb the rising household poverty.

- Raise participation level in Early Childhood Development (ECD) by intensifying community awareness creation, capacity building and mobilization.
- Increase Early Childhood Development (ECD) training capacity and remuneration.
- Train Early Childhood Development (ECD) center committees on management skills
- The central government should include the Early Childhood Development (ECD) children into the free and primary school funding.
- The Early Childhood Development (ECD) pre-school teachers should get a central employer and recruit according to qualification.
- Establish a programme for children less than three years.
- Improve maternal and child health care.

1.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

In this presentation the following issues have emerged: -

- Education is a bedrock necessity for early childhood and for the development of a country.
- There are disparities in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in rural and urban areas in Kenya.
- All stakeholders need to address these issue of disparity for the future social, political and economic stability of Kenya.
- The free primary education programme should be expanded to include Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes.

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