

Empowering women through provision of quality childcare services and strengthening their capacities to engage in paid labor opportunities:

Preliminary findings from Nakuru County

Context of the study

- Women spend disproportionately more time on unpaid work such as childcare and household chores than men
- Women's childcare responsibilities impede their participation in paid work
- Interventions that provide alternative childcare options will enable women to meaningfully contribute to economic production processes

Summary of findings at midline

- Childcare center providers in the intervention arm reported improved income
- Mothers in the intervention arm reported improvement in childcare services
- Mothers reported that they had adequate time to participate in paid labor
- Childcare centers enabled mothers to combine childcare and paid work

Introduction

Women spend disproportionately more time on unpaid work such as childcare and household chores than men. Childcare responsibilities and household chores seem to impede women's participation in paid work. The quality and cost of paid childcare services also influence a woman's decision to take her children to childcare facilities and engage in employment or stay at home and look after her children. Interventions that provide alternative childcare options can enable women to meaningfully contribute to economic production processes.

The challenges faced by women in balancing childcare and paid work are compounded in low-income urban contexts where employment opportunities are limited, and fragmented social networks often mean that mothers cannot rely on kin to provide childcare support. Work-related constraints such as long working hours and workplace environments that are not conducive for parenting obligations such as exclusive breastfeeding further frustrate women's ambitions.

In awareness of this gap and to have a sustainable solution, Kidogo, a social enterprise, seeks to improve women's access to high-quality, affordable early childhood care and education to support their



children's healthy growth and development. The overall purpose of the study which was carried out by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Kidogo model in improving women's labor outcomes and identify aspects of the model that could work in other settings.

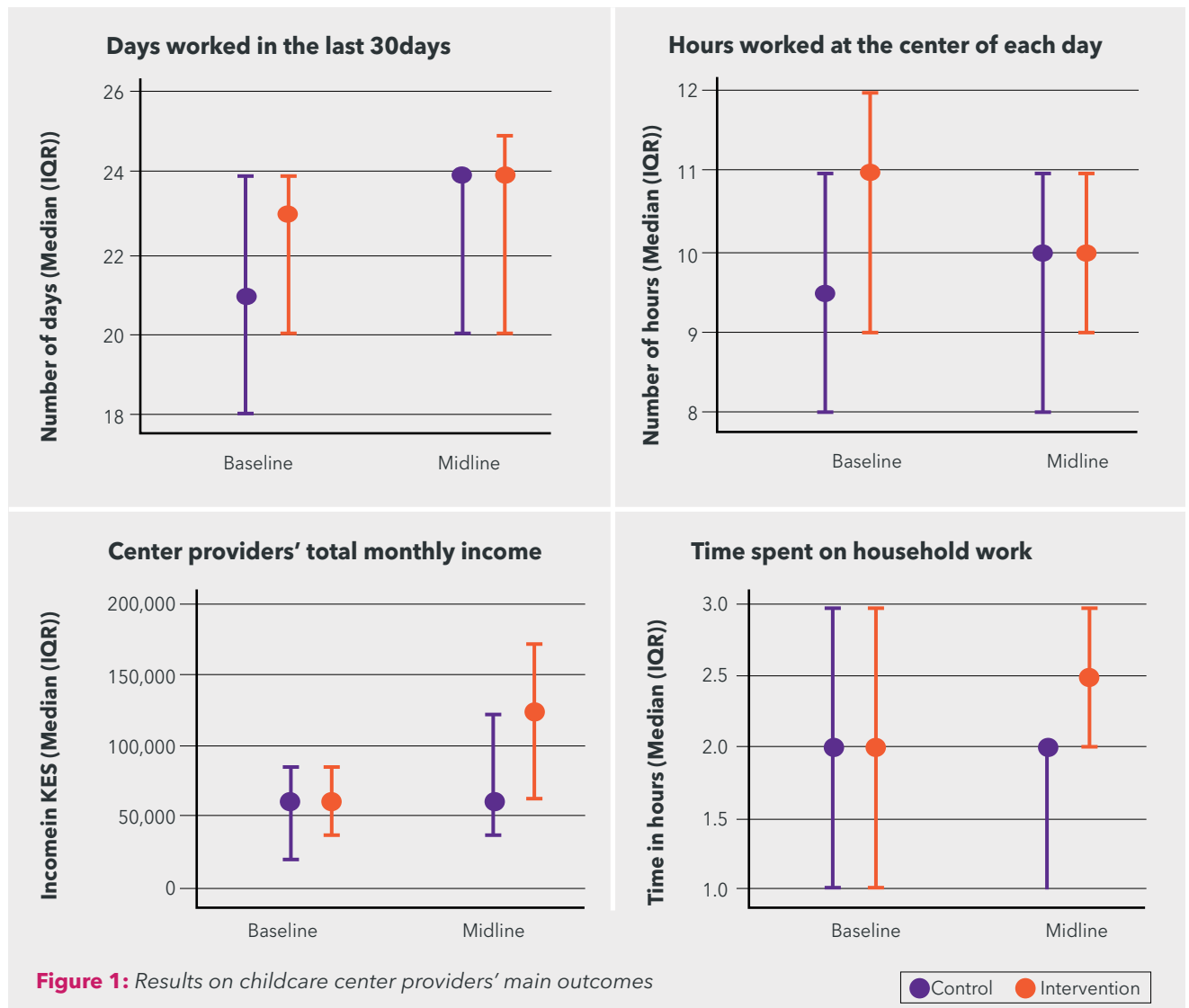
Research Approach and Results

The study is being conducted in Nakuru Town West sub-County in Nakuru County.

We used a quasi-experimental design with two study arms, that is, intervention and comparison groups. The intervention arm comprises women using childcare services within the Kidogo spokes. The Kidogo model provides quality childcare services to families in low-income settlements by improving the childcare environment and providing training and mentorship to center providers. Women using childcare services from other centers that are not supported by Kidogo form the comparison arm.

We used a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, and records review.

The total income among childcare center providers in the intervention arm was higher than that of those in the control arm. Center providers in the intervention arm allocated more time to household tasks than those in the control arm (Figure 1). At midline, the total income of mothers in the intervention arm was slightly higher than that of those in the control arm (Figure 2).



The aspects of training of center providers and improving the quality of the childcare facilities seemed to have enhanced the provision of childcare services. Center providers mentioned that they had benefited from the training that they received through the Kidogo program. They indicated that such training had improved their caregiving skills and the quality of services they provided in the childcare centers.

"There are so many changes. They trained me on how to make daily routine, I also learnt that a first aid kit is very important in the daycare. We also learnt to observe high levels of hygiene, even though we observed that before, but it wasn't at that level after training... Again, providing toys for the children makes them feel comfortable." **IDI with mamapreneur**



Figure 2: Results on mothers' main outcomes

Some mothers reported that fathers provided support by taking care of children and feeding them. However, the level of male involvement in childcare activities was quite low.

The women using the childcare centers reported that their children were well fed and happy. Children who were taken to Kidogo-supported centers received

better care in terms of provision of good nutrition and benefitted from improved hygiene in the childcare environment. They were also exposed to opportunities for learning through play. In addition, women got adequate time to engage in paid labor. The findings show that there was an increase in income for women who took their children to Kidogo-supported centers.

Discussion and Conclusion

To our knowledge, this study is the first to evaluate the effectiveness of the Kidogo model in empowering women through provision of quality childcare services and strengthening their capacities to engage in paid labor opportunities. The findings from the midline study provide evidence on those aspects of the Kidogo model that could work in other contexts, including training of center providers and setting up a peer-mentorship system. The findings from the midline study also illustrate the initial success of the Kidogo program in a 'virgin' county.

The findings offer critical information on how to improve the implementation of the Kidogo program in order to meet caregivers' needs.



Implications and Recommendations

Our findings suggest that enhancing the quality of childcare service provision can lead to improvements in women's earning capacity.

Based on our findings we recommend that:

▶ 01

A strategy to provide more training and sensitization of male caregivers to increase their participation in unpaid care work should be put in place.

▶ 02

It is important to have policies and implementation guidelines in place that support women to successfully combine work and childcare.

▶ 03

There is a need for an agency or department that focuses on early childcare for children aged below three years.



Contributors:

Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo, Linda Oloo, Nelson Langat, Margaret Nampijja, Silas Onyango, and Charity Waweru-Mwangi

Acknowledgements:

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the study participants, the Kidogo Team, and the Nakuru County Departments of Education, Gender and Social Services, and Health. This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Ottawa, Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of IDRC or its Board of Governors.