

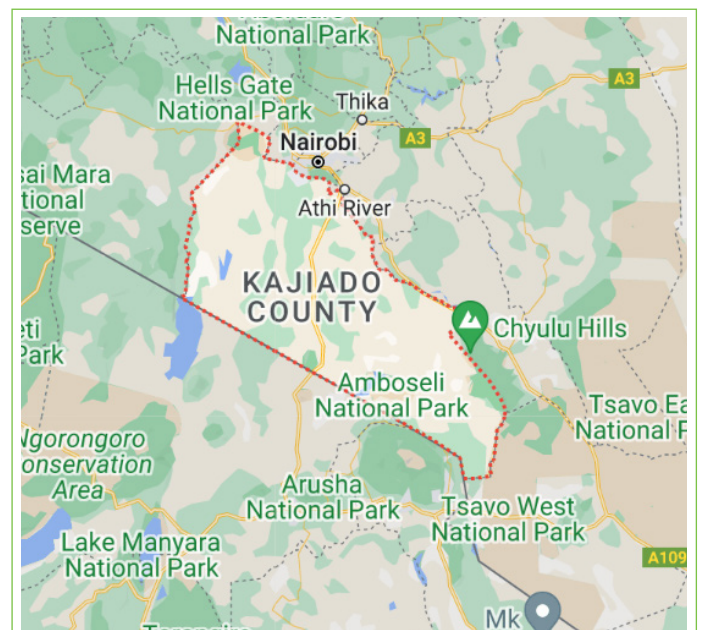


From Bills to Cradles: Designing Effective Guidelines for Childcare Policy Implementation - Lessons from Kajiado County

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Introduction

Impactful stakeholder engagement can provide learnings to create guidance on effective childcare provision, especially within nomadic pastoralist settings such as the Maasai community. In such communities where cultural practices inform day-to-day activities, it is important to develop appropriate practices that incorporate culture into child care. The successful implementation of childcare policies requires more than just passing legislation; it demands the development of clear and actionable guidelines. This policy brief outlines the considerations in designing effective guidelines for implementing childcare policies, emphasizing the importance of translating legislative intent into practical action to support childcare provision within nomadic pastoralist communities.



Overview of the stakeholder engagements

The purpose of the engagement activities was to facilitate an exchange of learnings on effective provision of childcare services among nomadic pastoralist families. Through previous engagements, stakeholders from Kajiado County expressed a desire to learn more about existing childcare practices in Nairobi City County and apply them to their growing portfolio of childcare activities. The recommendations from these learnings would be applicable to other nomadic or semi-nomadic communities and would, therefore, be impactful beyond just Kajiado County. One of the strategies we employed to promote wider application beyond Kajiado County was to engage the Council of Governors (CoG), whose mandate is to ensure the sharing of best practices; offer a collective voice on policy issues; promote inter-county consultations; initiate and encourage information sharing; and, provide a forum for collective consultation on matters of interest to County Governments.

Phases of engagement with stakeholders

Phase one of the project involved knowledge exchange activities among stakeholders in Kajiado and Nairobi Counties to assess existing childcare practices and identify areas for improvement. Workshops were held to gather insights from various stakeholders, including government officials, childcare providers, and community members. Stakeholders from Nairobi reported on their experiences with childcare provision, highlighting challenges and best practices.

Lessons learned during the knowledge exchange visits included appreciation of the differences in the setup of childcare facilities; increased awareness of the importance of ensuring availability of space for children to play, maintaining appropriate sanitation standards, and provision of healthy food; and recognition of the need to support caregivers to balance childcare and other work responsibilities.

In the second phase, stakeholders engaged in co-design and co-development of recommendations for improving childcare provision, with a focus on addressing the unique needs of the Kenyan Maasai community. The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) organized workshops to review the Kajiado Childcare Facilities Bill in relation to the Nairobi Childcare Facilities Act (2017). Through this process, stakeholders understood the contextual differences in the counties and how to review the Kajiado Bill to fit within its context.

During the workshops, stakeholders also developed regulations, and co-created recommendations for childcare provision in Kajiado County. Stakeholders committed to finalizing the Bill by incorporating learnings from the workshops and recommendations from both Kajiado and Nairobi City Counties.



Lessons from the engagements

Understanding the landscape: Before designing guidelines, it is crucial to grasp the intricacies of the childcare landscape within a specific jurisdiction. This involves assessing the needs of families, understanding existing childcare infrastructure, and identifying gaps in services. By conducting thorough research and analysis, policymakers can tailor guidelines to address the unique challenges and opportunities present in their community.

Stakeholder engagement: Continual engagement with stakeholders is key to ensuring that the process of developing guidelines takes into consideration the diverse perspectives and priorities within the childcare sector. Such a process includes consulting with parents, childcare providers, educators, policymakers, and community leaders to gather input and build consensus. By involving stakeholders throughout the process, policymakers can ensure that guidelines are informed by real-world experiences and are responsive to the needs of those they aim to serve.

Aligning with legislative frameworks: Effective childcare guidelines must align closely with existing legislative frameworks and policy objectives. This requires a thorough examination of relevant laws, regulations, and mandates governing childcare provision, ensuring that guidelines are legally sound and enforceable. By harmonizing guidelines with existing legislation, policymakers can streamline implementation efforts and mitigate potential conflicts.

Prioritizing quality and accessibility: Effective childcare guidelines prioritize both quality and accessibility to ensure that all children have access to high-quality early childhood education and care. This involves establishing standards for curriculum, staffing, health and safety, and infrastructure, while also addressing barriers to access such as affordability and geographic availability. By prioritizing quality and accessibility, policymakers can create an equitable childcare system that promotes positive outcomes for all children.

Monitoring and evaluation: Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to assess the impact of childcare policies and ensure accountability in implementation efforts. Guidelines should include mechanisms for ongoing data collection, performance monitoring, and feedback loops to track progress and identify areas for improvement. By establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems, policymakers can make informed decisions and course corrections to optimize the effectiveness of childcare policies.

Conclusion

Designing effective childcare implementation guidelines is a collaborative and iterative process that requires careful consideration of the needs of children, families, and communities. By engaging stakeholders, aligning with policy objectives, prioritizing quality and accessibility, and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, policymakers can ensure that childcare policies translate into tangible benefits for all stakeholders involved. Through concerted efforts and a commitment to evidence-based policymaking, we can create a childcare system that supports the well-being and development of every child.



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