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MURANG'A COUNTY GOVERNMENT



MURANG'A COUNTY ASSEMBLY
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EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION (ECDE) POLICY 2023.

ABBREVIATIONS

PP1	- Pre-primary 1
PP2	- Pre-primary 2
UNICEF	- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
KICD	- Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
QAS	- Quality Assurance and Standard
MOH	- Ministry of Health
MOE	- Ministry of Education
ECDE	- Early Childhood Development & Education
CBC	- Competency Based Curriculum
CPSB	- County Public Service Board
CECM	- County Executive Committee Member
BOM	- Board of Management
FY	- Financial Year
EFA	- Education for All
SDGs	- Sustainable Development Goals
CRA	- Child Rights Act
ASAL	-Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
ECD	- Early Childhood Development
CEB	- County Education Board
CBOs	- Community Based Organization
SFP	- School Feeding Program
MDG	- Millennium Development Goals
SIMBA	-School Instructional Materials Bank Account
GPA	- General Purpose Account
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
AKF	- Aga Khan Foundation
BVLV	- Bernard Van Leer Foundation
FBOs	- Faith Based Organizations

DEFINITION OF ECDE TERMS

1. **Early stimulation** - Opportunities experience and appropriate activities provided to young children to arouse their senses and support their mental language, social and emotional development.
2. **Early childhood development** - The physical cognitive language social and emotional development of a child from prenatal up to eight (8) years.
3. **Early intervention** - Arrange of services designed to enhance the development of children with disabilities or at risk of developmental delay
4. **Pre-primary education** - Early stimulation and early learning for children before entry to grade one.
5. **Special needs education**- Special educated programs which are designed for children with disabilities including gifted and talented.
6. **Stake holder**- A person or group or organization that has interest or concern in pre-primary education.
7. **Child development**- The way in which a child develops overtime.
8. **Early childhood education**- The unique way young children learn and the ways they are taught, part of the larger field of education.
9. **Basic education**- Refers to the educational programs offered and impacted to a person in an institution of basic education and it includes adult basic education and education offered in pre-primary education institutions and centers.
10. **Curriculum**- All planned programs and activities offered in a learning institution.
11. **Early learning**- Activities and experiences provided to young children to facilitate acquisition and development of basic concepts, competency, value and attitude.
12. **County Education Board**- A board established as an agency of the National Government to adverse provision of education and training at the county level to serve the relevant county under Section 17 of 2013 Basic Education Act.

FOREWORD

Murang'a County Government recognizes the importance of Early Childhood Development as one of the most important levers for accelerating the attainment of Education For All (EFA) and its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Kenya Vision 2030. The EFA goal number one obligated Murang'a County Government to expand and enhance comprehensive Early Childhood Development Programs which is essential to the achievement of the Basic Education goals. There have been tremendous efforts by Murang'a County Government and collaborating partners to improve the welfare of Murang'a child.

This policy also provides a frame of reference to the county government in their endeavors to ensure quality and relevant pre-primary education services in line with the Forth Schedule of the Constitution. The schedule assigns the National Government the functions of education policy. The development of the policy is in line with numerous policy frameworks amongst the Children's Policy (2010) Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 and the Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012. The Children's Policy assigns responsibilities to ensure survival development to participate and protection rights of the child to specific departments of the County Government including education, health and children services.

Development of this policy framework has taken into cognizance the critical role of investing in young children in order to achieve Millennium Development Goal of poverty reduction, universal school enrolment, reduction of child mortality and maternal mortality. This policy is also in line with the African Union (AU) declaration to strengthen and support families in their responsibility as primary caregivers of children to ensure their survival, growth and development.

It is my wish that implementation of this policy by Murang'a County Government will ensure enhanced financial access, quality, equity and efficient management of the ECD service. This will put the development of young children as an urgent priority in the development agenda of our county, Murang'a.

Hon Faith Njoroge

The County Executive Committee Member for Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The county ECD policy framework is a product of the experiences, practice and wisdom of various ECD stakeholders at the county level. Participants in stakeholders included NGOs representatives, development partners, ECD parents and teachers.

The County Department of Education and Technical Training in liaison with local partners appointed a technical committee to lead the development of this policy.

Last but not the least, we acknowledge the staff members from my department for providing all the required information that aided this process, participating in the strategy vision meetings and making all the effort to see this process through.

Isaac W. Karoga

C.O Education and Technical Training.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The early childhood years are recognized as a crucial period of development for young children and physical health as well. The early childhood development education (ECDE) plays a very important role in the development of children and their preparation for school.

Kenya's education system has evolved overtime with change witnessed in 1984 when the 7-4-2-3 system was replaced with the 8-4-4 system. This system came with a broad based curriculum at all levels. Its scope incorporated technical skills and pre- primary education for learners 4-5 years of age. The promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010 enacted of the Basic Education Act 2013 and review of various policy documents to align the curriculum with the national priorities led to publication of the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF). The BECF proposes a Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) to replace the 8-4-4 system. Under the CBC basic education is organized in three levels; early years education, middle school and senior school. Early years of education include pre-primary and lower primary education. Pre-primary is for 2 years in pp1 and pp2.

The objective of pre-primary education is to prepare and develop a child's mental, social and self-esteem and readiness for formal education. Pre- school education enables the child to develop understanding and appreciation of his or her culture and environment as well as develop a child's explanatory skills, creativity and self-expression.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Education starts from the moment we are born and it is a lifelong endeavor. We are always learning but 90% of our brain growth takes place outside the womb, in the first three years of life. Unsurprisingly, the birth through Pre-School (4-5 years) is the first optimal period for human development. Early Childhood development (ECD) is essential for all children to achieve their full potential as individuals.

Early childhood refers to the period between birth and eight years of age where in child's brain is highly sensitive to the environment around them. The social and economic cost of not taking action to promote ECD is too high to afford for a country. ECD is widely recognized as being the foundation for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's 2016 -2030)

A laudable think of Murang'a County Government is promoting Early Childhood Development (ECD) through a holistic approach towards human resource development and poverty reduction and sustainable social and economic development.

1.1. DEFINITION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

It is the formal teaching and care of young children by people other than their family or in settings outside their home before the age of normal schooling.

1.1.1. EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA

The ECD or Early Childhood in Kenya is associated with the holistic development of the children in Kenya of the age group 4 to 5 Years old. In the early decades after Independence, Pre-Primary education was exclusively the responsibility of local community and non-governmental organizations such as Churches, voluntary organizations, local authorities and individual investors. However, in early 1980s the government concerned streamlined the Pre-Primary programs into the government administration.

The government took over the training of Pre-School teachers and preparation of teaching materials and curriculum. However, the construction of Pre-Primary education facilities and teachers' remuneration continued to be met by the communities and other non-governmental agencies.

In 2006 the government published the sessional paper No1 of 2006 which ought to deal with issues of policy framework for training research and education.

In 2007, the government launched the National Early Childhood Development Service Standard Guidelines for Kenya (2006)

The objectives of these policy documents include:

- Ensuring that services for children are equitably accessible, relevant, affordable and of good quality.
- Regulating the provision of services.
- Ensuring maintenance of high quality standards and coordination.
- Harmonizing good quality services and maximizing resource utilization across sectors.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the County Government, the United Nations, International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Early Childhood Development Education Service providers developed the Pre-Primary education policy to align the Constitution of the Basic Education Act 2013, the sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Kenya's Economic Blue Print, the vision 2030.

Schedule (IV) Four of the Kenyan Constitution (2010) the development of Pre-Primary education and childcare to County Government. The Constitution of Kenya provides for free and compulsory basic education to every child and identifies ECDE as a function of the County Governments. This has created a space for County Governments to allocate more resources to ECDE and explore innovative ideas such as engaging with private bodies and establishing model ECDE centers.

The County Governments have invented significantly in the development of ECDE centers following the MoE guidelines that Pre-Schools should be established within a 2 Kilometers radius of residential areas and in the vicinity of primary schools. Majority of the County Governments have prioritized construction of ECDE Centers, comprising of two standard classrooms, an office, a kitchen and a store and a lavatory block for both boys and girls. Most of these centers are domiciled in primary schools

The ECDE Structure covers Pre-Primary education for 2 years Pre-Primary 1 and Pre-Primary 2 expected to be for learners aged between 4 to 5 years.

The learners from Pre-Primary 2 are supposed to join lower primary in Grade 1 at about 6 years of age.

1.1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

1. Registration of ECDE Institutions.
2. Supervision of provision of ECDE Service.
3. To provide education geared towards development of the child's mental capabilities and physical growth.
4. Enable the child enjoy living and learning through play.
5. Develop the child's self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence.
6. Improve pupils' capacity to concentrate and assimilate information by reducing short term hunger.

1.1.3. EARLY CHILDHOOD BASIC EDUCATION ACT 2021

The Early Childhood Act (No. 3) 2021 provides a framework for establishment of system for the administration of early childhood education within a county.

The Act provides for among others the:

1. Procedure to the registration of early childhood education centers.
2. Management of early childhood education centers
3. Establishment and operations of boards of management of County Childhood education centers.
4. Administration of the early childhood education system in the county with reference to matters such as the administration of the children, the standards of education in private education center, the curriculum education centers programs and school feeding programs to be implemented in all education centers.
5. Quality of education and standards required to be maintained and childhood education center.
6. Establishment of the County early childhood quality assurance committee to ensure implementation of the policies and standards of education.
7. Transition provision in relation to existing education centers to schools that offer early childhood education services.
8. Formulation of regulation by the Cabinet Secretary for the effective implementation of the Act.

9. Amendment to the Basic Education Act 2013 to align it with the Constitution with regard to the provision of the early childhood education services of the County Government in line with the fourth schedule of the Constitution.

1.1.3.1. 2013 BASIC EDUCATION ACT

The Basic Education Act 2013 guarantees the implementation of the right to free and compulsory basic education (Part IV). It provides for the establishment of the preprimary, primary and secondary schools, adult and continuing education center as well as special and integrated schools for learners with disabilities (Article 28). Article 29 provides that no public school shall charge or cause any parent to pay tuition fees for or on behalf of any pupil in the school. Admission fee is also prohibited (Article 32). A school or the person responsible for admission shall not discriminate against any child seeking admission on any ground including ethnicity, gender, sex, religion, race, colour or social and in legal disability, language, culture (Article 34) and there are remedies if admission is denied (Article 34.6) Pupils shall be given appropriate initiative to learn and complete basic education.

1.1.4. RATIONALE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The justification of the policy is to provide a framework for all stakeholders including families, communities, NGOS (Non-governmental organizations) and Development partners for coordination in planning and implementing ECD services and interventions.

Another justification for this policy is reflected in the Child Rights Act (CRA) that points out the responsibility of the state to provide good guidance care, assistance and maintenance for the child and assurance of the Child's survival and Development. The CRA advocates that a disabled child has a right to special care, education and training wherever possible to develop maximum potential so as to be self-reliant.

Promoting ECD and scaling up ECD services are smart investments for a county to promote effective and sustainable social and economic development. ECD is one of the most cost effective ways to break the inter-generation poverty cycle.

Laws and policy can improve childhood development by increasing access to and quality of health and other services as well as money and time for parents to provide nurturing care for their young children.

2.0. VISION, MISSION, GOAL PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ECDE POLICY

2.1. VISION

All children in Murang'a County aged 4-5 years including the vulnerable groups such as poor children orphaned children and children with disability achieve their developmental potential within an environment characterized by nurturing care.

2.2. MISSION

To ensure equitable access to quality ECDE services and interventions for young children between 4 to 5 years.

2.3. GOALS

To continually improve access to equity and quality services for all children in Murang'a County from 4-5 years.

2.4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON ECDE POLICY FRAMEWORK

The ECD policy framework is based on principles that are universally accepted as forming the cornerstone of quality Early Childhood Development services and programs as follows;

1. Quality and equity access to Early Childhood Education.
2. Collaboration with Early Childhood development stakeholders.
3. The policy must safeguard the rights and welfare of the child as per the Children Act of 2001.
4. The policy must be a partnership of all Murang'a County departments and other partners offering services and programs for children.
5. Transparency, accountability, integrity and good governance.
6. Inclusiveness and attention to children with special needs.
7. Fair and just distribution of capitation and other resources.

2.5. ECDE POLICY OBJECTIVES

1. Improve quality and educability of children in poor households in Murang'a County.
2. Improve child health and Nutrition
3. Increase school enrollment at the appropriate age.
4. Reduce drop out and repetition rates in lower primary school.

5. To mobilize resources to provide quality services to all children in Murang'a County.
6. To promote and strengthen partnerships and collaborate among all stakeholders involved in provision of services and programs for children.

2.6. STAKEHOLDERS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The ECDE programs in Kenya operate on the basis of partnership, collaboration and networking. The main stakeholders are parents, the community and private sector who provide funds and other resources. Other partners are the Government of Kenya and its constituents Ministry of Education (MoE) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) have been providing support as well as bilateral and multilateral partners including UNICEF, Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) World Bank, Bernard Van Leer Foundation (BVLF) and UNESCO. The roles of these stakeholders and coordination mechanism were defined in the National ECDE policy Framework developed 2005 by UNESCO in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Standard guidelines launched 2007. The ECDE policy will be adopted and implemented in collaboration with the stakeholders whose roles and responsibilities are;

2.6.1. ROLE OF MURANG'A COUNTY GOVERNMENT

1. The County Government to earmark adequate funding for ECDE in their financial planning on a yearly basis.
2. The County Government should ensure that all children under age of eight (8) are receiving regular health care and timely immunization, adequate nutrition and nurturing.
3. To ensure that their policies and programs are friendly towards the young children.

2.6.2. ROLE OF THE ECDE PARENTS

Parents are compelled to send their children to school regularly and legal steps can be taken against parents failing in their duties. They are also required to provide for their physical and emotional needs in the form of shelter, nutrition, health and safety. Parents also have the right to be informed of their children's progress and behavior and should also have the opportunity to meet ECDE teachers regularly.

Parents can also request certain information be kept confidential and not placed on any record on the ground that it could prejudice the child later in life. Parents are regarded as the impact stakeholders in education and their participation in education is indispensable.

Parents are believed to be their children's first teachers, having to teach them hundreds of skills before a child enters the first year of school, hence involvement is much needed.

2.6.3. ROLE OF ECDE TEACHERS

ECDE teachers fulfill different roles and positions ECD, depending on the particular situations and legal relationship involved. The roles of ECDE teachers are that they must be able to design an environment that motivates children to participate actively, design developmentally appropriate activities that stimulate children to develop holistically, model language usage, listen and respond to children's communication, help children to experience success, promote effective learning in an unbiased and multicultural manner and to assess children's learning and the effectiveness of his/her own teaching effort.

2.6.4. ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ECDE

A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is an organization established by a group of individuals that wishes to pursue goals and aspirations that relate to the public social or political good of a nation or the world. Some NGOs in Kenya finance the education of children from low income families provide uniforms and textbooks as well as helping to supplement teachers' salaries.

NGOs have provided a lot of support to ECDE through;

- 1) Offering donations
- 2) Sponsorship of seminars and workshops
- 3) Funding of ECDE projects
- 4) Technical assistance in form of in-services
- 5) Provision of knowledge skills and research on ECDE.
- 6) The NGOs have also partnered with the governmental religious organizations and individuals to provide ECDE programs.

2.6.5. ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

- 1) Provide policy guidelines on capacity building of Early Childhood Development and Education personnel.
- 2) Develop curriculum program.

- 3) **Supervise ECDE programs.**
- 4) **Register ECDE centers.**
- 5) **Undertake early identification of disabilities and assessment.**
- 6) **Provide assessment centers and personnel.**
- 7) **Coordinate national ECDE policy.**
- 8) **Maintain standards and quality assurance**
- 9) **Train and certify ECDE teachers and trainers.**

2.6.6. ROLE OF FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

- 1) **Sponsor ECDE centers.**
- 2) **Support health services for children.**
- 3) **Provide early education to children.**
- 4) **Support capacity building for ECDE programs.**
- 5) **Carry out advocacy**
- 6) **Mobilize resources.**
- 7) **Provide support to children with special needs (orphans and disabled)**

2.6.7. ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Development partners have supported Early Childhood programs through resource mobilization, capacity building, advocacy, technical support and funding of early childhood Education programs through the ministry of Education. Muranga County Government through community based projects will serve at least sixty percent of the community based projects to ECDE centers.

3.0. CHALLENGES AFFECTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION.

Despite the growing importance of early childhood education, there are a number of challenges that have continued to pull down its effective implementation. These include:

3.1. INADEQUATE TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Teaching and learning resources are materials that are crucial in facilitating teaching and learning process through teacher's guidance. They form a major component which schools must prepare for effective implementation of any program. The term resources refer not only to teaching methods and materials but also the time available for instructions, the knowledge and skills of teachers acquired through training and experience teachers learn different concepts through interaction with different teaching and learning materials.

Many ECDE centers lack adequate learning resources and facilities suitable for ECDE in their learning environment. These include lack of properly ventilated classrooms, furniture suitable for children, kitchen safe clean water, playground, toilets and play materials. Teachers do not have adequate teaching and learning resources to enable them implement the ECDE Curriculum effectively.

ECDE centers are prepared to implement the new competence based curriculum (CBC). The current curriculum advocates for the use of different teaching and learning materials for example audio-visual materials, aids like dolls and toys and other teaching aids like charts that can assist the child to learn and acquire new knowledge.

Instructional materials help learners to develop holistically leading to smooth transition from Pre-Primary to primary school.

3.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC FACTORS

Malnutrition and ill health are factors associated with the social-economic factor. Children whose processing capacity is impacted by ill-health and malnutrition may require more hours of instruction to learn various skills. Socio-economic differences affecting effective implementation of early childhood education also cut across regions with some being labeled marginalized or Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL). Communities in rural and marginalized areas in developing countries suffer from lack of access to early childhood Education. They are left at the mercy of the community.

3.3. FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Financial constraints can lead to ineffective implementation of early childhood education. The result has been families bearing more responsibilities in implementation of early childhood education programs. The Education For All report (2007) confirms that children's success in life begins in the early years of childhood and therefore investment in early childhood has a direct and positive impact on primary school enrolment, retention and completion rate.

3.4. HIGH TEACHER –CHILD RATIO WITH POOR REMUNERATION

Research shows that teacher-child ratio has continued to grow still with this high ratio. ECDE teachers are poor remunerated and under the mercy of parents most of whom have little or nothing to give. Muranga County has witnessed gradually declining education performance standards in primary schools and secondary schools. The challenge could be traced back to poor early childhood education.

Other challenges include;

- Lack of effective utilization of locally available materials,
- Lack of clear understanding of children's rights and requirements for early childhood centers.
- Challenges of managing ECDE centers within primary schools that are under the management of the National Government.
- Lack of fencing ECDE centers.
- Inadequate facilities for kids living with disabilities at ECD level.
- Absence of fathers in the journey of the child at ECD stage. Most ECD meetings are attended by mothers.

4.0. SITUATION ANALYSIS AND STATUS OF ECDE IN MURANG'A COUNTY.

The current situation of ECDE in the County with respect to child rights and child protection access and equity, quality and teacher situation, infrastructure and learning environment, curriculum adaptation and implementation quality assurance and standards health and Nutrition.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Murang'a County is made up of 9 Sub-Counties named Kiharu, Kigumo, Gatanga, Murang'a South, Kandara, Ithanga, Kangema, Kahuro, Mathioya and are further divided into 35 wards distributed across the County.

4.2. ACCESS & EQUITY IN EARLY LEARNING

There are 650 public ECDE centers available in Murang'a county and 1070 teachers spread across the county. The population of learners is 42,000.

SUB COUNTY	NO. OF ECDE CENTERS
Kigumo	79
Kiharu	69
Kahuro	72
Maragwa	101
Kangema	53
Gatanga	79
Mathioya	76
Kandara	88
Ithanga	33
Total	650

Source: Murang'a County Department of Education and Technical Training.

In the County, majority of the children begin school at 4 years of age. Enrollment of children with special needs is minimal in most of the sub counties.

Most of the ECDE centers have no special needs facilities to take care of such children and majority of the teachers have not been trained to take care of children with special needs hence rendering inclusive learning difficult.

4.3. CHILD RIGHTS AND CHILD PROTECTION

The early childhood act (No 3) 2021 provides a framework for establishment of a system for the administration of early childhood education within a county.

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya (Article 53) recognizes the right of all children to be protected from abuse, neglect harmful cultural practices, all forms of violence, inhumane treatment and punishment and hazardous or exploitative labour, Murang'a County Government is committed to ensuring children have improved access to prevention, care, support and justice services required for their physical, mental and social well-being.

4.4. QUALITY AND TEACHER SITUATION

The recruitment of ECDE teachers is supposed to be done by the County Government through County Service Public Board (CSPB) are expected to be guided by the draft ECDE Teacher's scheme of service launched in 2018 which guides the recruitment and career progression.

However, there has been low and irregular recruitment and remuneration of ECDE teachers which adversely affects their morale. In some sub counties, the ECDE teachers are recruited by parents and school management.

The Murang'a County Government observes that this poses challenges related to unreliable and delayed payments and remuneration.

The County Executive Committee Member (CECM) in charge of education matters in consultation with the County Service Public Board (CSPB) will ensure that more teachers are recruited. The CECM would ensure the appropriate training opportunities and facilities are provided to assist serving ECDE teachers, acquire the necessary additional qualifications and specialization required for both efficient performances of their duties and advancement.

4.5. INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is important in ensuring a conducive learning environment. The availability of adequate child friendly centers to cater for all children has direct impact on the holistic development of ECDE learners.

In many ECDE centers classrooms, water, sanitation and physical environment in general does not meet required standards set by the Department of Health and Sanitation and Public works. In many centers, Pre-School children are hosted in worst buildings some of which are condemned by public works.

4.5.1. ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN MURANG'A COUNTY

- 1) Provide proper housing.
- 2) Ensure efficient communication.
- 3) Create access to ECD Centers and health facilities.
- 4) Provide construction plans and supervise construction of ECDE Centers.
- 5) Help in the design of appropriate and affordable equipment for young children.
- 6) Ensure quality of ECDE physical facilities.

5.0. HEALTH AND NUTRITION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

A school feeding program is a crucial component in the development of a holistic child. The feeding program supports the government of Education For All (EFA). The government initiated school meals activities in 1980 in collaboration with development partners and since then school meals have remained a core development intervention to support the country's achievements in the education centers. The constitution of Kenya guarantees the right to the highest attainable standards of health and freedom from hunger. This guiding principle directs the County Government to provide ECDE learners with the necessary health and nutrition services.

5.1.1. HEALTH

The early years of life are critical for the physical, emotional and intellectual development of a child. Early childhood is the most critical time in a child's life. Before age 5 our brains develop faster than any other time in our life. Health is more than merely the absence of illness. It is an evolving human resource that helps children and adults to adapt to the challenges of everyday life, resist infections, cope with adversity, feel a sense of personal well-being and interact with their surroundings in ways that promote successful development.

Research shows that many adult health issues such as High Blood Pressure, Heart diseases and diabetes are linked to what happens during early childhood. We also know that during childhood there are biological systems that are more sensitive to environmental factors such as child mistreatment, malnutrition and recurring issues to infectious diseases. It is vital for children and

their families to provide support for children's physical, oral and mental health. This happens through promoting health and protection from illness. Healthy eating and being active are essential to a child's well-being.

5.1.2. FEEDING PROGRAM

A school feeding program (SFP) is essential for providing a balanced diet to ECDE learners which would in turn enable the learners to increase their attention span hence better academic achievement.

This program aims to address the challenges of children failing to attend classes due to hunger. Global nutrition foundation believes school feeding programs are a powerful and integrated way to encourage children to attend school and support their learning attendance. School meals have remained a core development intervention to support the centers achievements in the education sector. This is also supported by nutritional school meals strategy 2018-2022 developed by the nutritional and county government in collaboration with key development partners.

School feeding program in the counties provide food to ECDE learners while attending school. The meals also vary in the quantity of food provided and their nutritional content. Some counties provide fortified porridge while majority provide milk. A few county governments have started requiring the ECDE centers to prepare food on the site requiring kitchen facilities, cooking staff, eating serving utensils and a space for the school for consuming the meal which sometimes makes the programs relatively costly and unsustainable. The feeding program targets young learners to boost their enrollment.

Murang'a County Government is therefore putting measures in place to enforce implementation of Constitutional mandate to provide children with adequate nutrition through feeding program with priority given to uji program in all public ECDE centers and later other meals to be included. Murang'a County Government is committed to ensuring that all ECDE learners in the county are benefitting from ECDE School feeding programs and also the programs are sustainable.

5.1.2.1. HOW THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM CAN IMPROVE EDUCATION QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY

SFP's are one of several interventions that can address some of the nutrition and health problems of school age children. SFP's and other school based nutrition and health programs can also motivate parents to enroll their children in school and to see that they attend regularly.

Experience show that properly designed and effectively implemented SFP's can;

- 1. Alleviate short-term hunger in malnourished or otherwise well-nourished school children-** This helps to increase the attention and concentration of students producing gains in cognitive function and learning.
- 2. Motivate parents to enroll their children in school and have them attend regularly-**When programs reduce absenteeism and increase the duration of schooling, educational outcome (performance, dropout and repetition) improves.
- 3. Increase community involvement in schools-** Particularly where programs depend on the community to prepare and serve meals to children. Schools with communities behind them are more effective than schools with less community involvement.

6.0. FREE ECD EDUCATION IN ALL PUBLIC ECDE SCHOOLS IN MURANG'A COUNTY

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Every child has the right to free and compulsory education in a public education center. The Children Act puts this responsibility on the Kenya Government, County Government and parents.

6.2. ECD EDUCATION

The main objective of free ECD Education in Murang'a County is to increase access, retention, quality, equity; completion and transition to enable all children 4-5 years access ECD education without discrimination. The county government has identified ECD fees charges as the major obstacle hindering children of school going age from accessing and completing ECD Education in the county.

To ensure 100% access, retention and transition for all ECDE learners in Murang'a County, the County Government has proposed to scrap all levies charged in all public ECDE centers. This

measure aims at easing the burden from parents and guardians and enable all learners access free early childhood education. The County Government shall meet the cost of teaching and learning materials, salaries for the teaching and the non-teaching staffs in ECDE centers as well as school feeding program.

6.2.1. RIGHTS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Every child has the right to free and compulsory early childhood education in a public education center. The right to early childhood education shall be enjoyed without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, colour ethnic origin, tribe, birth or religion, disability or other status.

6.3. OBLIGATIONS OF MURANG'A COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN PROMOTING THE RIGHT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- 1) Provide free and compulsory early childhood education in public education centers within the county.
- 2) Establish public education centers as they may be necessary for free and compulsory education.
- 3) Provide the necessary infrastructure and funds for the development of education centers and for the administration of early childhood education within the county.
- 4) Identify and undertake an assessment of children with disabilities in the county and put in place special programs.
- 5) Ensure the children belonging marginalized, vulnerable or disadvantaged groups within the county are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing early childhood education.
- 6) Carry out public awareness and programs in relation to early childhood development and education.

6.4. CAPITATION TO ALL PUBLIC ECDE CENTERS

The County Government shall pay for the education of each ECDE learner in all public early childhood development and education centers as tabulated below:

Allocation for Vote Heads for Account 1 (SIMBA ACCOUNT)

S/N	Vote Heads	Allocation per child(KSH)
1.	Text books and supplementary readers.	210/=
2.	Exercise books, stationery e.g. Chalks, dusters, manila pencils and rubbers.	300/=
3.	Teachers guide and reference materials	90/=
4.	Play equipment	80/=
	Total	680/=

Allocation for Vote Heads for Account 2(GPA ACCOUNT) General Purpose Account.

S/N	Vote Heads	Allocation per child(KSH)
1.	Repair, maintenance and improvement (RMI) of physical facilities	40/=
2.	Co-curricular activity fees	100/=
3.	Local transport and travelling	40/=
4.	Capacity building and workshops	40/=
5.	Electricity and water	100/=
	Total	320/=

Each learner in the public ECDE Center will receive a capitation of ksh.1000/= (One Thousand shillings) per year. This will also ensure free and unconditional admission to pre-school for children aged 4 to 5 years.

NB:

- This amount can be reviewed by the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) after some years.
- The capitation will only be given to schools which will comply with the county policy.

6.4.1. CAPITATION BANK ACCOUNT

Each ECDE center shall coordinate the opening of the bank account and ensure proper use of funds and their management. The signatories of the bank accounts will be:

- ECDE teacher who is the mandatory signatory and also the responsible officer appointed by the CECM.
- Head teacher of the primary school.
- Two ECDE parents representative elected by the parents.

NB: The ECDE teacher is a mandatory signatory.

Parents will drop being signatory immediately their children exit from the ECDE center and other signatories will be elected by parents.

The school management shall maintain proper books of accounts and other records and avail all records for audit purposes.

Murang'a County Government will ensure that all ECDE centers are audited by the County Government Auditors.

7.0. COMMITMENT OF MURANG'A COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Since the primary purpose of preschool education in Kenya is to prepare children for school. Understanding the factors that influence enrollment is essential. Such understanding could help the government and all other intended parties to provide the needed resources. As Murang'a County Government grapples into the issue of making ECD education affordable and accessible, the county government needs to explore the various ways in which wealth and poverty affects education for young children.

Majority of the families in Murang'a County live in poverty and are unable to enroll their children in early childhood programs. Meanwhile, the Murang'a County Government is considering increasing its commitment to early childhood education in the following ways:

- 1) Provide feeding program to all public ECDE centers. Currently the county Government is providing free nutritious porridge to all ECDE public centers and where resources allows the county will add milk, juices and nutritious food.
- 2) Provide free education to all ECDE learners age 4 to 5 years.
- 3) Encourage parental involvement in childhood education through community based training.

- 4) Continue monitoring ECDE at the grass root levels to ensure the planning, development and implementation of quality programs.
- 5) Ensure compulsory admission and attendance of children of compulsory ECDE school age in all public ECDE Centers.
- 6) Ensure that children belonging to marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged families are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing basic education.
- 7) Provide human resource including adequate teaching and non-teaching staff.
- 8) Provide infrastructure including schools learning and teaching equipment and appropriate finances.
- 9) Ensure quality basic education conforming to the set standards and normal.
- 10) Provide special education and training facilities for talented and gifted pupils and also those with disabilities.
- 11) In an event the school would want to enhance the feeding program, the decision should be made by parents. Before the intension permission must be sought from CECM through a written letter where the CECM will write a letter to notify the parents of the meeting. CECM or any other representative from the County Government must attend otherwise the decision will be null and void.
- 12) Decision of the parents will be done electronically through automation provided by the county government.

8.0. STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

To address the challenges, Murang'a County Government shall employ the following strategies:

1. Ensure that all primary schools have a functional Pre-Primary unit.
2. Create a funding for Pre-Primary to include capitation, school feeding programs, maintenance and the development of Infrastructure and institutional materials.
3. Develop a mechanism for early detection of special needs children.
4. Establish strategic partnership with service providers to ensure provision of adequate health from 4 to 5years.
5. Mobilize resources and engage stakeholders
6. Develop and implement appropriate ECDE programs for all children with special needs including the needy and the disadvantaged groups.

7. Ensure that only approved Pre-Primary education curriculum and programs are implemented.
8. Institute measures to enhance participation by parents' community and other stakeholders.
9. Ensure establishment of BOM members at the ECDE level.
10. Set out quality standards and curriculum framework for Early Childhood Development and Pre-School Education service.
11. Mobilize funds to construct ECDE centers in all public primary schools in the county and renovate all existing infrastructure. In doing so, the County Government will ensure new infrastructure and renovations in ECDE centers can accommodate children with special needs.
12. Ensure that continuous and structured capacity building is done for various categories of ECDE personnel.
13. Progressively recruit sufficient qualified and experienced personnel through various mode of engagement thus contract permanent and pensionable terms to enhance learner-teacher ratio in the County Government.
14. All funds provided for the management of ECD programs should be properly monitored with fair and equitable distribution.
15. Parental involvement on ECD should be manifested in all ECD programs at all levels.
16. In-service training course should be organized for educators already teaching in Pre-Schools. Both caregivers and educators should be included in trainings as appropriate.
17. Provision of approved curriculum resources.
18. Establishment of the county Early Childhood Education Committee.

9.0. CONCLUSION

By adopting and deploying this policy is therefore, necessitated by the need to ensure provision of quality ECDE services in the dispensation of the devolved government system in Murang'a County. By bringing this policy to full implementation, a strong foundation will be built for the future of Murang'a County.