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Title: Murang’a County amplifies its ECDE feeding programme to increase class enrollment.

County:	Murang’a		
Sector/s:	Education	Sub-sector/Theme:	
Keywords: (for search in the online platform)	Uji champions ECDE feeding programme ECDE Quality control measures class enrollment		
Target Audience:	Counties Education partners		
Authors (contacts and their institutions can be included as well)	Nzei Mwende- Program Assistant , Maarifa Centre		
Resource Persons (include their designations)	Esther Nduta- Director Governor’s Press Murang’a County Catherine Wambui – Director of Education & ECDE		

Introduction

In Kenya, Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) is an education system designed for children aged between three and six years old. This is the foundation of education, offered in both private and public schools to promote cognitive development through a curriculum that provides play-based learning, socialization, and an exploration environment. In Murang’a County, there are 676 public ECDE centres with 42,000 learners from diverse backgrounds.¹ Though most parents can afford three

¹ Information shared by the Director of Education, Murang’a County during a virtual interview with the author



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meals a day to feed their children, there are those who still struggle to provide food. With escalating cases of drought in some places like in Ithanga constituency, most parents are unable to keep their children in school. To encourage school attendance and support parents, the County Government of Murang'a started the ECDE feeding programme. Through this programme, the County partnered with Food for Education to provide nutritious porridge to all ECDE learners in public schools. Previously, during the onboarding stage of the programme there were questions about the safety of the porridge with some parents choosing to pack home-cooked food for their children. To address these challenges, the County Government embraced cooking of porridge in one ECDE centre then distributing it to other areas by *Bodaboda* bikes. Each ECDE centre has a Uji champion, a parent to one of the pupils responsible for tasting the porridge to ensure safety for consumption.

Implementation of the practice (*Solution Path*):

- The County Government of Murang'a first started by advertising tenders, a call for submission of documents from any organization that qualified to facilitate the ECDE feeding programme.
- Food for Education Organization (the Organization) submitted their documents for vetting and evaluation by the team of selected members from the Education and Procurement Department at the County.
- The Organization won the bid and proceeded to conduct a pilot project from 2nd October 2022 to 19th February 2023 in Mt Olive ECDE, Kakuzi Mitumbiri Ward.
- The pilot project included cooking porridge for the school and identifying a specific ECDE Centre at a central position in every ward where the cooking and packaging of the porridge would be happening during the County project roll-out.
- The Members of County Assembly proposed *bodaboda* riders and cooks while the school parents were requested to identify a fellow parent, an uji champion to ensure the seals on the delivery buckets are not tampered with. This was strategized for quality assurance.



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- After the success of the piloting stage, the County disbursed Ksh 130 million for the project to cover the following expenses: porridge flour, payment of Uji champion, *bodaboda* delivery, cooks and cooking expenses. Food for Education also provides metallic buckets for transporting porridge, cups for drinking porridge in all ECDE Centres and uniforms for the cooks.
- The project was rolled out to the rest of the ECDE Centres on 20th February 2023.

To sustain this project, the County Department of Education shared the Murang'a County ECDE feeding program draft policy for discussion and approval at the cabinet. The draft was approved by the cabinet and forwarded to the Assembly for approval. The County awaits this approval from the County Assembly.

Results of the practice (*outputs and outcomes*)-

- There was a 4% increase in class enrollment of the ECDE learners.²
- The project provided job opportunities for the *bodaboda* delivery persons, cooks and uji champions.
- With the uji champion, parents were more comfortable and assured of the porridge quality hence reducing the financial burden involved with budgeting for tea break homecooked porridge.

Lessons learnt:

- Involving parents as uji champions and the community in the feeding project is important for creating ownership and for quality assurance.
- Conducting a pilot project before the final launch of the programme is important to identify gaps and work on improving the implementation of the project.
- School feeding programmes increase class enrollment.

Conclusion:

- County Governments should consider pilot projects and involve the community in the implementation of similar projects for ownership.

² Information shared by the Director of Education, Murang'a County during a virtual interview with the author



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Murang'a County Governor H.E Irungu Kangata serving ECDE children the nutritious uji