

Community perspectives on early childhood development in Kenya: A qualitative study.

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Background and Hypothesis: Kenyan children are at risk for having delayed early childhood development (ECD). The Care for Child Development (CCD) is a program created by UNICEF for the promotion of ECD by increasing caregiver's knowledge about attitudes, nutrition, communication, playing, and physical health. The objective of this study was to assess key informants' and caregivers' perspectives on ECD and the introduction of this CCD-based intervention within the community, as well as caregivers' perspectives on ECD after receiving the intervention. We hypothesize that caregivers who implement CCD practices into their daily life will have increased nurturing interactions with their children and positively influence their child's development.

Experimental Design or Project Methods: This study used semi-structured interviews of key informants and focus group discussions of caregivers to elicit perspectives on ECD and a CCD-based intervention in Eldoret, Kenya. The intervention was a curriculum adapted from the CCD program administered within 10 mother-group sessions. Caregivers were interviewed both before and after the intervention, while key informants were interviewed at one time-point. All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated. Qualitative analysis was performed using Dedoose software.

Results: Collectively, community members and caregivers believed the relationships a child has with their caregiver, family, and community greatly influences their development. In addition, they believed emotional burden and social stigma are challenges caregivers experience and this limits their ability to take their child to necessary medical services. The intervention group appreciated the parental ECD education and further disseminated the information to other caregivers and members in their community.

Conclusion and Potential Impact: By understanding the community's collective views, we can implement the CCD program more effectively in Kenya and empower caregivers with the knowledge on how to create an environment that stimulates ECD.