

SIDE EVENT AT EAST AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

Increasing access to early childhood services through leveraging digital technologies at the community level

In short

This panel discussion is going to unpack and explore how we can increase access to early childhood services in the region by engaging with community health workers and leveraging digital technologies. The panelists will discuss opportunities and challenges, and share good practices and concrete actions of what the government, funders and NGOs can consider to advance early childhood development in the region.

Event Description

All children need to receive early childhood services, but still, so many children are not getting the support they need to fully thrive in Tanzania, showcased by the daunting number of 53% of children being developmentally off-track (TDHS 2022). Prioritizing early childhood development is one of the best investments a country can make not only because it is the right of the children but also to boost economic growth, education performance, promote peaceful and sustainable societies, and eliminate extreme poverty and inequality.

Providing all children with the services they need requires resources and coordination through a multi-sectoral and holistic approach, exemplified by the Nurturing Care Framework. The first 1000 days of a child (pregnancy + first 2 years) are a particularly crucial time for the development of a child. Therefore, we do not only need to work together but put particular emphasis on health sector interventions, reaching young children, parents and caregivers.

The moderated panel discussion will shed light on how we can increase crucial access to early childhood services in the region. We will explore real-life examples of how digital technologies and community health workers can help to bridge this urgent healthcare gap and deliver ECD services at scale.

Specifically, what we will explore and discuss are:

- The role of community health workers in introducing the concept and importance of ECD to community members, including fathers
- The role community health workers play in delivering these services, concepts and practical skills, including what support they need to be able to do so.
- The important role community health workers play in mentoring caregivers on how to develop positive practices and behaviors to enhance child growth and development

- The role community health workers play in identifying children with potential disabilities, facilitating early referral and encouraging discussions to tackle stigma and discrimination for children living with disabilities.
- The role of digital technologies in enabling access to early childhood development services in Tanzania and the region, including overcoming the challenges of equitable access.
- The role digital technologies have in guiding community health volunteers to deliver standard messages and concepts on ECD and for community members to follow with visual material
- Strategies to improve coordination and inter-sectoral collaboration for ECD Services
- How strong partnerships, across government actors and others, can help to provide quality early childhood services.

We will be drawing on real-life case studies to illustrate practical examples that actors can use to implement in their work so that we can accelerate progress and work together for children to thrive everywhere.

Panel

- D-tree (moderator)
- Patma Ali Mati, Community health worker, Zanzibar
- Dr. Tumaini, Ministry of Health, Tanzania
- Lazaro Ernest, Programs Manager, Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network
- Radhia Mataka, Early Childhood Development trainer, Ministry of Health, Zanzibar
- Roland Van de Ven, Technical Director, Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric AIDS Foundation

Contact

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