

The Climate Change and Early Childhood Care & Development Nexus: A case of Eswatini

If you are thinking a year ahead, plant a seed.

If you are thinking a decade ahead, plant a tree.

If you are thinking a century ahead, educate the children.





Presentation Outline

- ❖ Contextual Definitions
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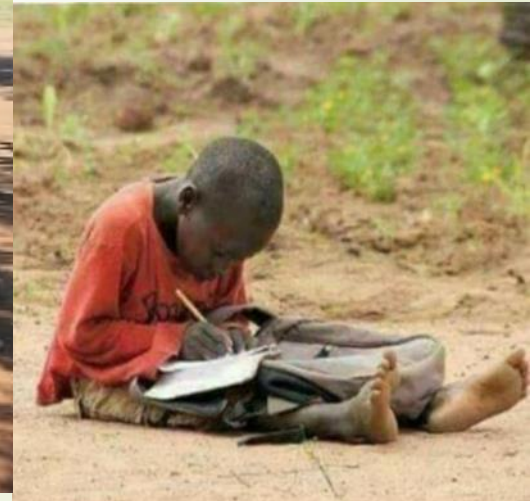
Contextual definitions

Climate change

A change in the climate that can be directly or indirectly linked to human activities, that modifies the global atmosphere's composition, and that is additional to natural climate variability seen over comparable time periods (UNICEF, 2021)

Early Childhood Care and Development

The term ECCE is used interchangeably with other terms such as Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), Early Childhood and Development (ECD) and Early Childhood and Education (ECE). However, Eswatini opted for ECCD because of the importance of proper care to the holistic development and learning of a child (Government of Swaziland, 2014)



Research Background

- ❖ Climate change is indisputably one of the most tenacious global issues (Paris Agreement, 2015).
- ❖ Eswatini experiences the impacts of climate change including increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, (Government of Swaziland, 2016b).
- ❖ Climate change induced hazards faced by Eswatini include droughts, floods, landslides, heatwaves, wildfires, invasive species, and epidemics, (Mlenga & Jordaan, 2019).
- ❖ Education is a basic human right, every Swazi child has the right to free education in public schools (Government of Swaziland, 2009).
- ❖ In Eswatini ECCD models are in the form of Preschools, Neighborhood Care Points (NCPs) and Kagogo Centres
- ❖ Innumerable challenges face education of young children in eSwatini; amidst many are poor quality teacher development, low levels of parental involvement, as well as poor learning environments (Steyn et al., 2016).
- ❖ Contextually, the study focused on how climate change-induced extreme weather patterns affect access to ECCD learning centres, food security and nutritional requirements for ECCD learners.

Research Methodology

- ❖ The study utilised a mixed-methods participatory approach for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and verification of the problem, (Johnson et al., 2014).
- ❖ Phenomenon of interest in this instance was the Climate Change and Early Childhood Care and Development nexus as in the case of Eswatini.
- ❖ Following a multiple case study research design, participants were purposively selected, (parents/caregivers, children, Ministry of Education officials, Tinkhundla officials).
- ❖ The study employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques to holistically gather data using semi semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions, (Cohen, et al 2011).
- ❖ In analysing data, thematic approach was utilised to identify, evaluate and report emerging themes, (Braun & Clarke, 2016).

Study Findings

Extreme weather patterns affect ECCD children in Eswatini especially those in rural settings -
lack access to safe water and adequate, proper sanitation
decline in food production and a rise in food prices
housing units (destroyed by cyclones, floods)

- ❖ Heavy rains and hailstorms damaged roads and bridges infrastructure resulting in ECCD centres being inaccessible to young children
- ❖ Threats to children's health are inevitable as adverse effects of food supply shortages occur causing hunger and malnutrition.
- ❖ Drought is an inherent feature of the current semi-arid climate in eSwatini- households that depend on agriculture output suffer losses in income and food
- ❖ Inconsistency in the food supply reduces the numbers of young ECCD children, as feeding resources are affected

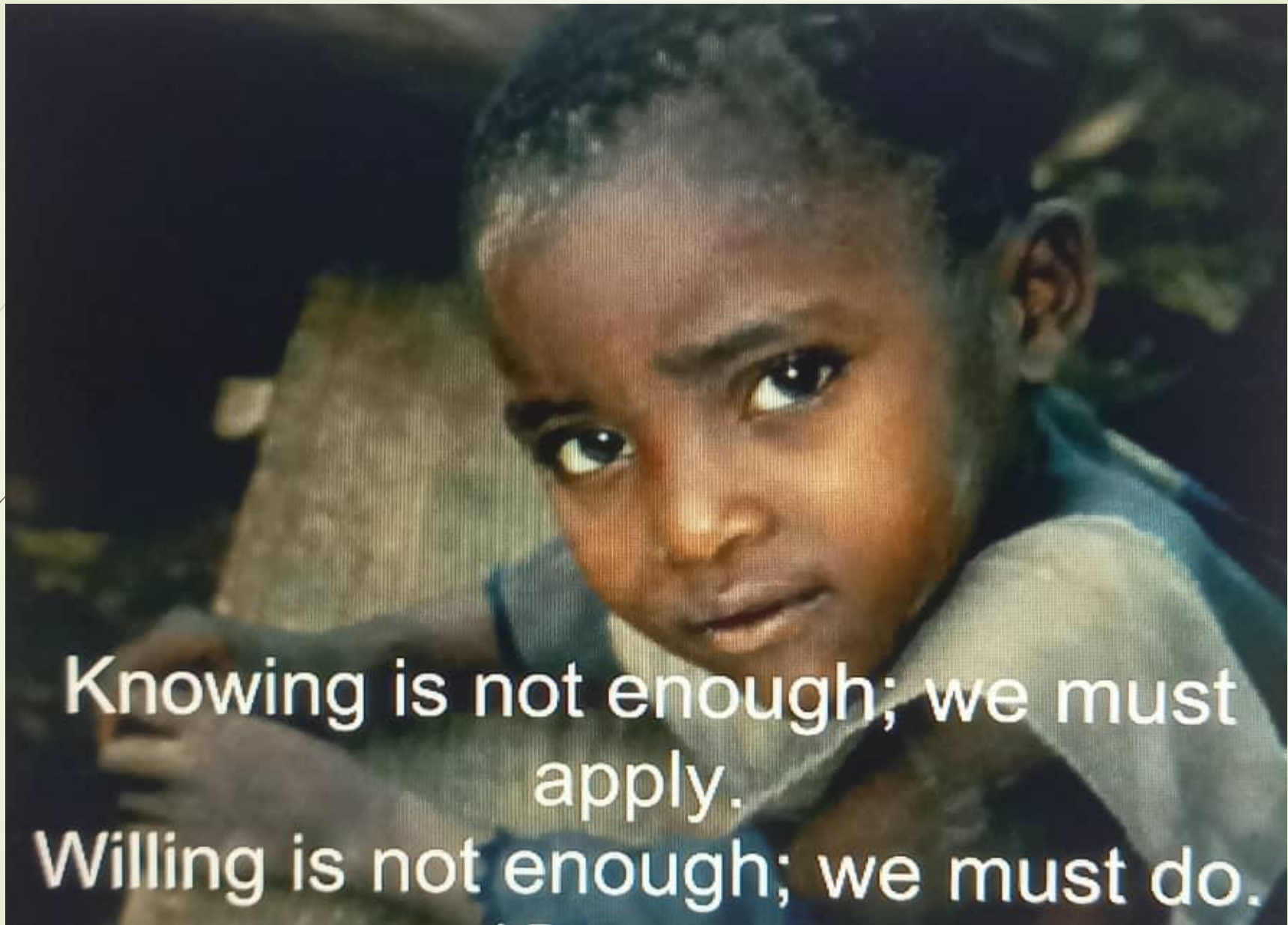


Recommendations

- ❖ Recycling and waste reduction programs or vegetable gardens are likely to be most impactful, nutritional gardens would be helpful.
- ❖ There is a need for rehabilitation of damaged school infrastructure, roads and bridges
- ❖ It is recommended that dialogues with donors to promote and extend resilient and climate smart agriculture (CSA) at household level be implemented to mitigate the challenges
- ❖ The reality is that children need support and the priority should be to improve the quality of the supplementary feeding programmes for ECCD children in Eswatini
- ❖ Provision of psycho-social support targeting children where there have been severe impacts of climate change -induced hazards affecting households and young children
- ❖ Establishment of online resources which educators can be used to arm young children with knowledge, empowering them to make their own choices to create change.
- ❖ Education and awareness campaigns that may help eSwatini rural communities prepare and plan for disaster recovery and build resilience

Conclusion

- ❖ A natural disaster can ruin a family's home, livelihood, access to food, and clean water, causing stress and reducing the resources available to expectant mothers and young children.
- ❖ Early learners' exposure to extreme weather events has an influence on children at crucial developmental stages, possibly putting them at a disadvantage academically compared to others who encountered more favourable climatic conditions.
- ❖ Most families have been impacted by food security (loss due to floods and droughts), a basic need for growing children.
- ❖ Compared with adults, children are physically more vulnerable to the direct effects of extreme heat, drought, and natural disasters.
- ❖ Climate change's indirect effects can also derail children's developmental trajectories, through conflict, diseases, economic dislocation, under-nutrition, or migration, thus making it harder for them to reach their full potential.



Knowing is not enough; we must
apply.
Willing is not enough; we must do.