



Strengthening Early Childhood Development (ECD) Delivery in Kenyan Counties

This report provides an in-depth analysis of the status of Early Childhood Development at the county level to establish the progress and commitment of county governments in supporting ECD. The report also provides recommendations for strengthening the delivery of education at the county level. The report can be used by Government Officials and other Early Childhood Development stakeholders for awareness creation and advocacy for the realisation of child rights.

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Abbreviations

CBC: Competency-Based Curriculum

ECD: Early Childhood Development

ECDE: Early Childhood Development and Education

ECE: Early Childhood Education

GER: Gross Enrolment Rate

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

KNBS: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

MoE: Ministry of Education Kenya

MNCH: Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Services

NCF: Nurturing Care Framework

NER: Net Enrollment Rate

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WHO: World Health Organisation

WASH: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Key Terms and Definitions

Term

Competency-Based Curriculum

Definition

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) is a new system of education in Kenya launched in 2017 to replace the 8-4-4 system. The new system (2-6-3-3) comprises two years of pre-primary education, six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education, and three years of university. The curriculum starts at pre-primary school, which consists of two levels; Pre Primary 1 (PP1) and Pre Primary 2 (PP2) replacing the nursery and kindergarten classes under the 8-4-4 system. Children enroll in PP1 at age 4 and leave after completing Grade 12 when they are about 18 years old.

Early Childhood Development

The physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of children, 0 to 8 years old, that cuts across health, nutrition, education, and social protection

Early Childhood Education

All forms of education, both formal and informal, provided to children under 8 years of age that contributes to the child's brain development and lay a foundation for later learning

Early Initiation of breastfeeding

Proportion of children breastfed within 1 hour of birth

Key Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)	The number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population
Net Enrolment Rate (NER)	The ratio between all students in the theoretical age group for pre-primary education enrolled in that level and the total population in that age group
Pre-primary education	Formal education is provided to children aged 4 to 5 years before joining primary school. It consists of two levels; Pre-Primary 1(PP1) and Pre-Primary 2 (PP2)
Stunted children	Percentage of under-fives falling below minus 2 standard deviations (moderate and severe) from the median height-for-age of the reference population
Underweight children	The percentage of under 5 falling below 2 standard deviations (moderate and severe) from the median weight-for-age of the reference population
Wasted children	The percentage of children under 5 years of age falling below -2 standard deviations (moderate and severe) from the median weight-for-height of the reference population

1. Executive summary



The early years in a child's life, from 0 to 8 years, are the most important time for supporting holistic development and preparing the child for future success in life. In the last two decades, there has been a growing body of evidence from a variety of disciplines recognizing that investments in Early Childhood Development (ECD) are one of the best ways to lay a strong foundation for health, well-being, learning, and productivity.

Investing in ECD has strong dividends to individuals, communities, and national economies through improved livelihoods, workforce participation, and GDP growth. Every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood development yields between four to nine dollars in economic returns over the long term. In 2018, WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank Group, and other partners launched the Nurturing Care Framework for early childhood development to help children, 0 to 3 years old, survive and reach their full potential. The framework encompasses five crosscutting and inseparable components namely, good health, adequate nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving, and learning opportunities.

ECD in Kenya

In Kenya, ECD, encompassing Early Childhood Education (ECE), became a devolved function following the 2010 implementation of a new constitution. This means that each of the 47 counties in Kenya has the responsibility to deliver quality ECD services and budget for ECE independently. Kenya provides two years of pre-primary education to children between the ages of four and five, currently at 2.5 million.

At present, counties receive lump sum funding from the National Government with no comprehensive guidelines for budgeting to enable proper planning and costing for needs in pre-primary schools. Further, given limited resources, public spending on pre-primary education is still much lower than the recommended 10% target and tends to be biased towards tangible items such as the construction of facilities and hiring of teachers and often neglects other operating expenditure items such as teacher training and quality assurance.

Data on budgeting and expenditure on ECD is varied and scant from county to county and is often bundled up with other sectors such as sports and vocational training. This makes it difficult to analyse and make accurate inferences on ECD outcomes at county level, this flows through to the national level. This has also led to underinvestment in ECD given that between 2013 and 2018, primary, secondary and tertiary education received 43%, 28%, and 21% of the total funds earmarked for education respectively while pre-primary education received only 1% of the total funds. Pre-primary education in Kenya entails the first two years of ECE before children enrol in primary school.

Purpose of this report

This report seeks to close the data gap by providing an initial analysis of information from national and county-level statistics. This data is essential for government officials, policymakers, development partners, and other ECD stakeholders to understand what is working well and what needs remain unmet. A comparative view of county-by-county data can enhance a regionalized approach to policy responses and implementation. Performance indicators such as enrolment in public versus private centres can show areas where development partners and capital allocators need to put in more resources and make more informed and appropriate decisions that reflect the context on the ground.

We conducted desktop research obtaining data on expenditure and key indicators from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Education, and Office of the Controller of Budget websites. Supplementary information was also obtained through interviews with over 18 stakeholders including policy influencers, education and health service providers, Civil Society Organisations, National and County Governments in Kenya. Interim findings were also presented at the 4th Blended National ECD Stakeholders conference in Siaya County, Kenya on 27th October 2021 to over 200 participants including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), County Government Officials, and institutions of higher learning among others.

From our findings, 70% of early education is delivered in public schools on average, which accounts for 61% of total learning institutions. Counties in arid and semi-arid regions such as Turkana, Mandera, West Pokot, and Samburu recorded the highest student-teacher ratio at over 70 students per teacher. We recommend that special attention be given to these regions as well as select counties such as Nairobi and Garissa where there is a wide variation in student-teacher ratios between public and private centres. Additionally, less than half the counties (21) have spent more than 8.7% of their total expenditure towards ECD in the last 7 years with Kwale County registering the highest allocation at 23%.

This report assesses the commitment of county governments in the last 7 years (2014-2020) towards ECD through the budget allocation of funds and also provides recommendations on how counties can prioritise and increase ECD expenditure. Given our limited access to data, we recommend the setting up of standalone budget lines for ECD in the implementation reports to enable a more regular analysis to be done on ECD in Kenya. This will ensure better accountability and delivery of ECD by the county government and better decision-making by other stakeholders.

There are other aspects of ECD apart from education, namely, nutrition, health, caregiving, safety, and security. There are no data sets on nutrition at the county level but at the national level. Counties have initiated a feeding program that falls under the adequate nutrition pillar of the Nurturing Care Framework but there is no available data on how much is allocated as well as the number of pre-primary children who are supported.

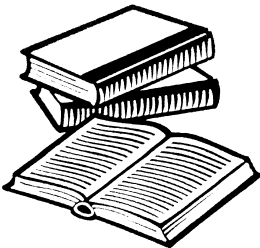
We saw a real opportunity to look into ECE because that is where the current need is and the highest potential utility and relevance. The work should not stop with ECE, this is just a start.

Recommendations

The following eight insights and recommendations emerged from this analysis for action and information:



1. Non-disaggregated data on ECD expenditure makes it difficult to determine the exact allocation and what the funds are being spent on. There is a need for standardised budget templates that emphasize standalone budget lines for ECD to not only track allocation but identify gaps that need to be addressed.



2. 70% of early education is delivered in public schools that account for 61% of total learning institutions. ECE interventions need to target the public sector, this is much more so than in other areas of social service delivery e.g., the health sector that is marked by privatisation.



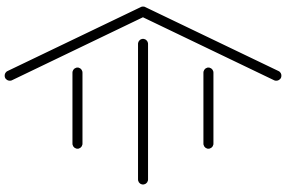
3. Implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in 2019 and effect of Covid-19 in 2020 has affected the way the education data is collected. Any comparisons made prior to 2019 may be distorted over several indicators such as enrolment rates, and the number of teachers.



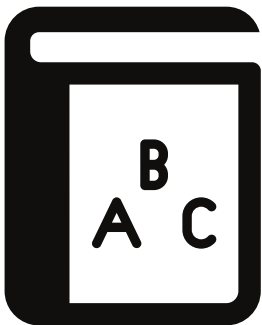
4. Student-teacher ratios for Kenya are highest in arid and semi-arid counties recording the highest variance between private and public centres. There is, however, a gap in student-teacher ratios outside of these regions in several counties that can be addressed. Special attention needs to be given to Arid and Semi-Arid regions regarding student-teacher ratio as well as select counties (Nairobi and Garissa) that have lower ratios on average but wide variation between public and private centres.



5. Semi-arid and arid regions lag behind other regions in Kenya in ECE outcomes. The regions have the highest student-to-teacher ratios, low enrollment rates, and spending. These regions have several outcome challenges and require a more systemic solution to address key gaps.



6. Data is only collected on two of the five pillars of the Nurturing Care Framework. No data is available on adequate nutrition, safety and security and good health at the county level. There is a need for coordinated efforts at the county level to implement the Nurturing Care Framework.



7. Following the implementation of NEMIS in 2019, there is no data available on the Net Enrolment Rate in 2019. In addition, given the challenges the country experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, pre-primary schools were closed for 9 months and reopened in January 2021, any comparisons made in 2020 may be inaccurate. Policymakers may have to rely on 2018 data as a baseline for setting policy going forward as it is the cleanest benchmark.



8. High expenditure counties have low indicators. There is a need to support counties to not only prioritise and increase ECD expenditure but utilise these funds in a manner that improves outcomes for children.

2. Methodology



This report sought to understand ECD expenditure against total expenditure at the county level from July 2014 to June 2020 with a focus on Early Childhood Education for several reasons:

- There is readily available data on education from the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) which makes it easier to assess ECE as a starting point that could be expanded to other areas of focus.
- While the Nurturing Care Framework leans towards an integration of 5 components including health and education, implementation for health below 5 years is handled at the national level with the latest detailed data on health components for children below 5 years as at 2014¹. Further, there is no consistent public data on funds allocated towards feeding programs.
- Early Childhood Education for children below 4 years is an identified gap that could be addressed by counties.

Other indicators that were reviewed besides the expenditure towards ECD include enrolment rates, spending per child and student to teacher ratios. Data was obtained from the following sources:-

- Economic Survey, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

[1] Kenya Demographic and Health Survey

- County Governments Budget Implementation Review Reports from the fiscal years 2015/16 to 2019/20 from the Office of the Controller of Budget website.
- Basic Education Statistical Booklets for the years 2014, 2016 and 2019 from the Ministry of Education website.

This information was gathered by Global Development Incubator who also sought supplementary primary information through interviews with the following organisations:

- Acumen
- Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN)
- Bridge International Academies
- Bridge Africa
- Big Win Foundation
- Children’s Investment Fund Foundation
- Council of Governors
- Dignitas
- ECD Network for Kenya
- Echidna Giving
- Hilton Foundation
- Imaginable Futures
- Institute of Economic Affairs
- International Budget Partnership
- Kays Foundation
- Kenya School of Government
- Partners for Equity
- Porticus
- Research Triangle Institute (RTI)
- Metis Foundation
- Their World
- Office of the Controller of Budget
- Ministry of Education
- UNICEF Kenya
- Uthabiti Africa
- World University Service of Canada (WUSC)

We are grateful for the time spent and invaluable information provided by the staff of the above organisations during the preparation of this report.

In addition, a summary of this report was presented at the 4th Blended National ECD Stakeholders conference in Siaya County, Kenya in October 2021 to over 200 participants including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), County Government Officials, and institutions of higher learning among others.

The length and breadth of this analysis was, however, limited to the available information.

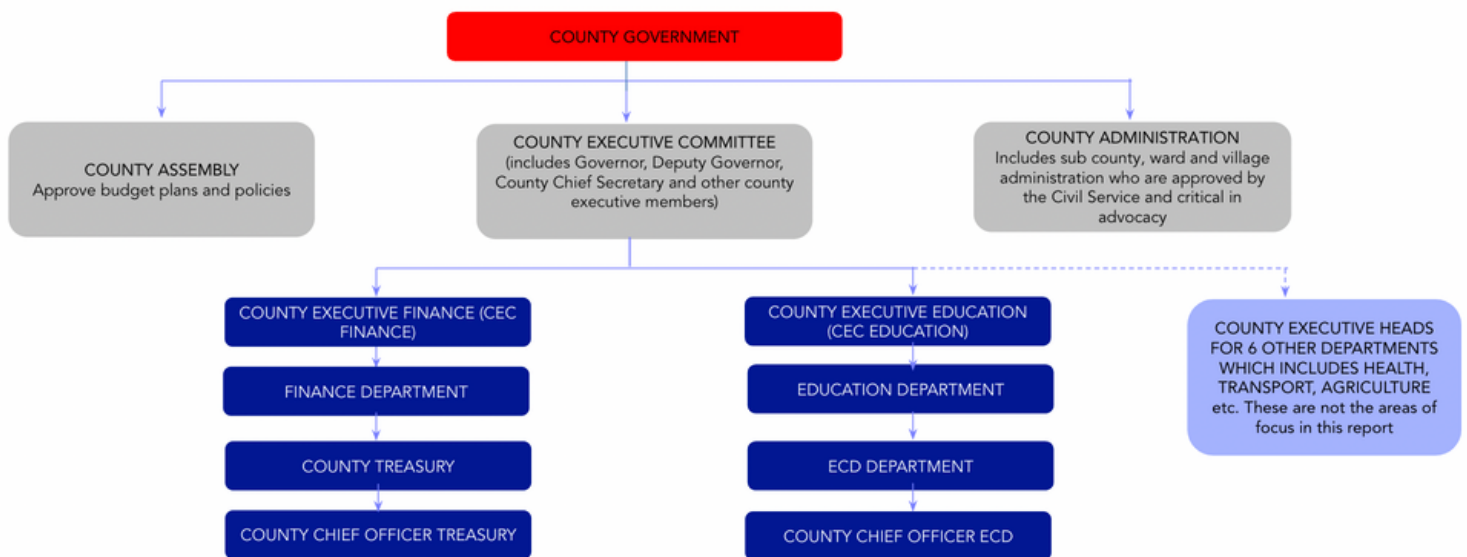
3. Overview of ECD in Kenya

3.1. Status of ECD in Kenya

The Government of Kenya has made significant strides in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the last 2 decades. The ECD Policy Framework was launched in 2006, and provides a coordination mechanism, explicitly defining the role of parents, communities, various Government ministries, and departments, development partners, and other stakeholders, in the provision of ECD services. A service standard guideline was developed as a separate document aimed at operationalising the ECD policy framework. Then the National Government was tasked with the responsibility of delivering ECD.

This changed in 2010 following the implementation of a new constitution that saw the responsibility to deliver quality ECD services devolved to the 47 counties. Counties are now responsible for implementing policies, developing programs, training personnel, and providing infrastructure for Early Childhood Education, while the National Government retains authority for ECD in terms of policy, standards, curriculum, and assessment. This means that each of the 47 counties in Kenya budget for and implement ECD independently. Prior to 2010, the implementation of pre-primary education was left largely in the hands of private actors.

Figure 1: County Government structure



Source: Council of Governors, Constitution of Kenya

The decentralisation has brought opportunities as well as challenges. On one hand, there has been a significant improvement in enrollment rates and the number of ECDE centres. Gross Enrollment Rate in pre-primary schools rose from 62.5% in 2009 to 78.4% in 2018. ECDE centres rose from 38,247 in 2009 to 42,317 in 2018. In 2006, ECD received only 0.05% of the National Government’s education budget which has slightly improved to 1.1%² in 2018. The table captures some select child indicators that give a broader picture of access to learning for children.

[2] UNICEF Kenya 2018 Budget Brief: <https://www.unicef.org/esa/sites/unicef.org/esa/files/2019-03/UNICEF-Kenya-2018-Education-Budget-Brief.pdf>

Table 1: Select Key Education Indicators

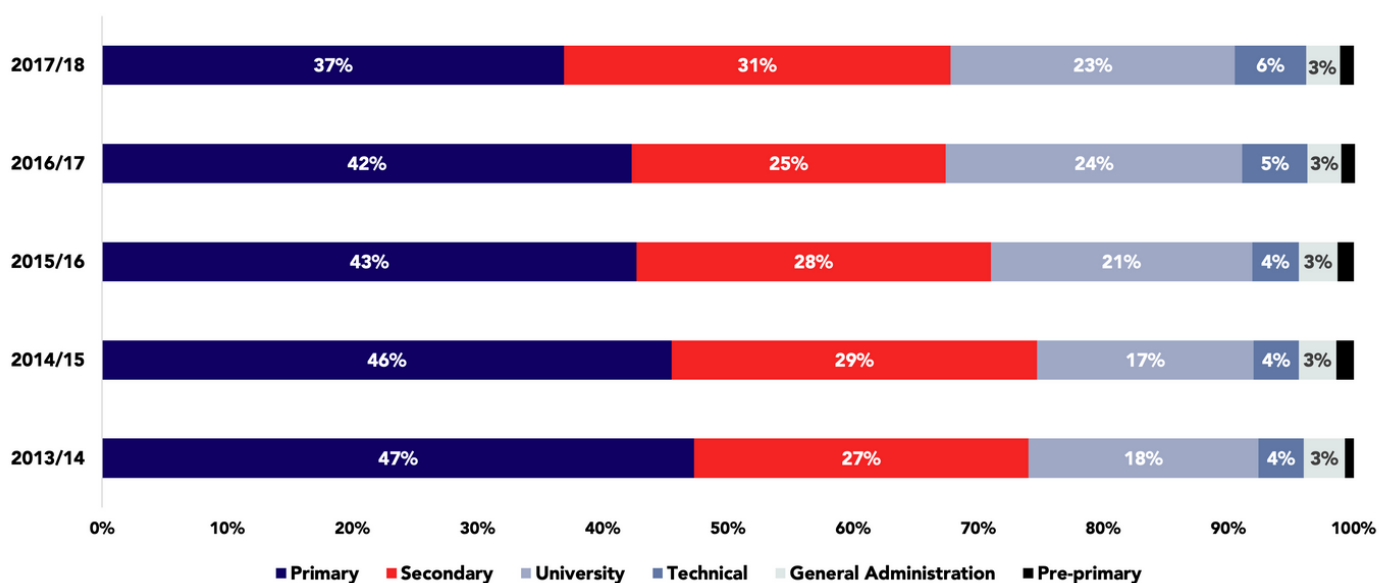
	2009	2018	2019
Total Population (million)	38.6	46.5	47.6
Children (0-8 years) population (million)	10.5	n/a	11.0
Children (4-5 years) population (million)	2.4	n/a	2.5
GDP Growth Rate	2.6%	6.3%	5.4%
Per Capita GDP (USD)	905.1	1,708.0	1,816.6
Pre-Primary GER	62.5%	78.4%	109.4%
Pre-Primary NER	56.1%	77.2%	-
Primary GER	107.7%	104%	99.6%
Primary NER	87.5%	92.5%	-
% ECD budget to county budget	-	8.4%	6.75%

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Controller of Budget

On the other hand, there is some disconnect in ECD implementation between the national and county governments. First, while the government provides policy guidelines, it has no oversight over its implementation at the county level. Secondly, there is no specific budget allocation from the national government given to counties to provide ECD services with the latter receiving a lump sum amount to fund the education programs which has to be split between ECD and vocational skills, another function that was also devolved. Since the benefits of ECD are largely visible in the future, the sub-sector is at a disadvantage in budget negotiations involving trade-offs with other sectors that offer more immediate economic payoffs.

Currently, counties receive lump sum funding from the National Government with no comprehensive guidelines for budgeting to enable proper planning and costing for needs in pre-primary schools. Further, given limited resources, public spending on pre-primary education is still low at 1% of the total budget for education and tends to be biased towards tangible items such as the construction of facilities and hiring of teachers and often neglects other operating expenditure items such as teacher training and quality.

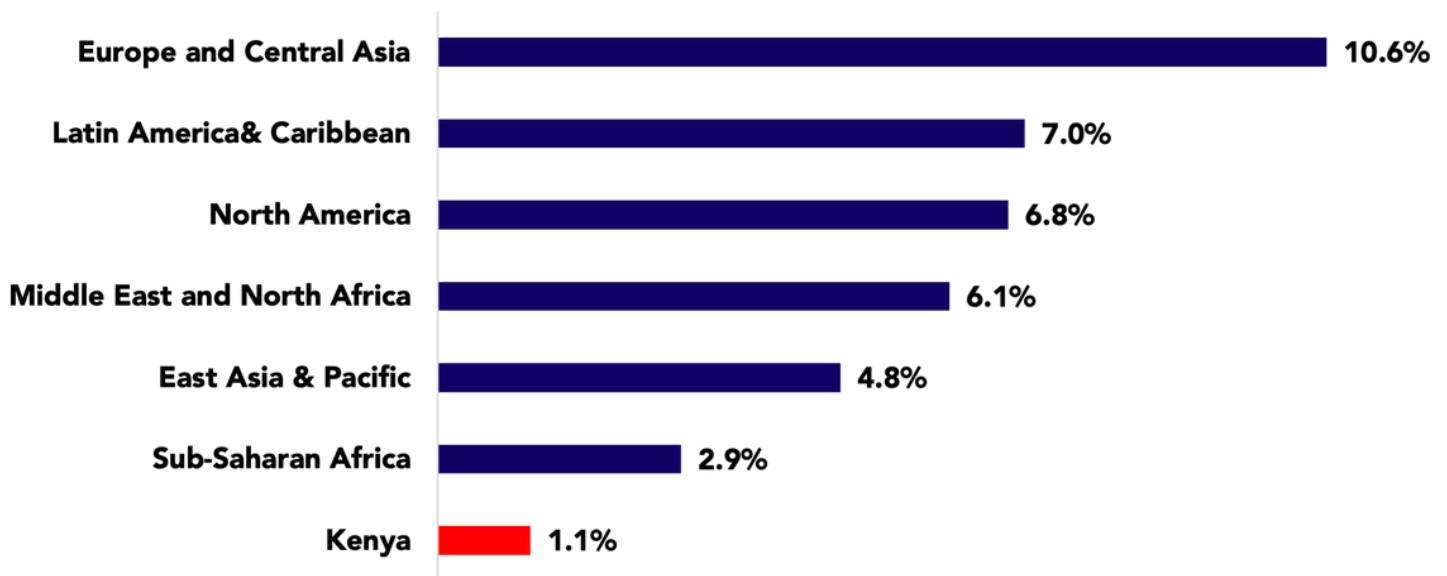
Figure 2: Education sector spending by levels/services (%) in Kenya



Source: The Kenya Institute for Public Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), Education and Budget Brief

Often, deployment of resources is channeled towards primary, secondary, and tertiary education as this has a more immediate visible return to society. Between 2013 and 2018, primary, secondary and tertiary education received 43%, 28%, and 21% of the total funds earmarked for education. In comparison pre-primary education received only 1% of the total funds; still lagging behind sub-Saharan Africa at 3% as indicated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Pre-primary spending in Kenya as a percentage of total education spend compared with spend in other regions in 2016



Source: Their World Report (*Bright and Early: How financing pre-primary education gives every child a fair start in life*)

3.2 Implementation of the Nurturing Care Framework in Kenya

There has been growing momentum for integrated early childhood programming that engages multiple sectors based on compelling new global evidence on the importance of reaching pregnant women and young children with holistic services. The Nurturing Care Framework, which was launched in 2018, provides guidance to help children and families thrive through care for the individual child within a broader enabling environment of capable caregivers, empowered communities, supportive services, and enabling policies.

The framework presents a roadmap for action building on evidence on how early childhood development is important. It focuses on the critical period from pregnancy to age 3 when children are most sensitive to environmental influences drawing special attention to the role of the health sector in collaboration with other sectors.

According to the framework, children need five crosscutting and inseparable domains of nurturing care namely, good health, adequate nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving, and learning opportunities.

Nurturing care is especially important in the earliest years of child development, 0-2 years, as this is the stage when the brain develops fastest compared to any other life period and thus sets the foundation for later health and well-being. NCF centres on the foundational period from pregnancy to 3 years. In these earliest years, the health sector is uniquely positioned to provide support for nurturing care. The Ministry of Health is responsible for multi-sectoral coordination for nurturing care in Kenya.

Since its operationalisation, there has been some progress in 4 of the 5 pillars in Kenya. The health and education sectors have systems that are being leveraged to promote good health, adequate nutrition, and early learning opportunities. For instance, the current under-five mortality rate has improved from 58 out of 1000 children in 2010 to 43 per 1000 children in 2019 while gross enrolment rates for pre-primary education have improved from 61% in 2010 to 78% in 2018.

Figure 4: Nurturing Care Framework Pillars



Source: *Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development*, 2018 Report

a. Good Health

The health pillar focuses on the health and well-being of children at birth, growth, immunisation, prevention and treatment of childhood illnesses and care for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities. The physical and mental health of caregivers is also included as it can affect their ability to care for the children. Out of 1000 children under five years in Kenya, 43 died in 2019, an improvement from 2010 when the under-five mortality rate was 58 out of 1000 children. The main causes of death are largely diarrhoea, pneumonia and neonatal conditions. In 2019, 76% of the children were fully immunized with the figure increasing to 88% in 2020.

Table 3: Tracking the health pillar in Kenya

	2009	2018	2019	SSA Performance in 2019	Kenya's target by 2030
Under 5 Mortality (per 1000 live births)	60	45	43	38	24
Children fully immunized	n/a	74%	76%	n/a	85%

Source: UNICEF, Kenya Health Policy 2014-2030, Kenya Demographic Health Survey, 2014

b. Adequate Nutrition

Child and maternal nutrition is essential for healthy brain development in the early years and child development. Stunting is the most frequent form of under-nutrition among young children, which, if not addressed, can cause damaging long-term effects such as diminished mental and physical development. The nutritional status of children in Kenya has improved, with underweight rates decreasing from 17% to 11%, stunting rates from 35% to 26%, and wasted rates from 7% to 4% between 2009 and 2014.

Table 4: Tracking status of adequate nutrition pillar in Kenya

Metric	2009	2014	Target (2023)
Underweight children³	17%	11%	7%
Stunted children⁴	35%	26%	17%
Wasted children⁵	7%	4%	n/a
Early initiation of breastfeeding⁶	58%	62%	n/a

Source: Kenya Demographic Health Survey-2014, Kenya Health Sector Strategic Plan 2018-2023

c. Responsive Caregiving

This refers to the ability of a caregiver to notice, understand, and respond to their child’s signals in a timely and appropriate manner. It is considered the foundational component since responsive caregivers are better able to support the other four components.

Education on proper caregiving is mainly offered by private charity organisations⁷ that carry out home visits especially in marginalized communities in Kenya.

There are no global indicators and data on responsive caregiving.

d. Safety and Security

This component addresses the need for safe and secure environments for children and their families. It includes safety from physical dangers, emotional stress, environmental risks, and access to food and water. The frequently used indicators under this pillar are the percentage of children below 5 whose births are registered and children covered by social projection systems.

[3] Underweight children is defined as the percentage of under 5 falling below 2 standard deviations (moderate and severe) from the median weight-for-age of the reference population

[4] Stunted children is defined as the percentage of under-fives falling below minus 2 standard deviations (moderate and severe) from the median height-for-age of the reference population

[5] Wasted children is defined as the percentage of children under 5 years of age falling below -2 standard deviations (moderate and severe) from the median weight-for-height of the reference population

[6] Early Initiation of breastfeeding-Proportion of children breastfed within 1 hour of birth

[7] Organisations that have been providing caregiving services include ChildFund, Catholic Relief Services, Kidogo Network, PATH and World Vision

Table 5: Status of Safety and Security pillar in Kenya

	2009	2014	Target	SSA
Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered ⁸	60%	67%	n/a	45% ⁹
Children covered by social protection systems (aged 0-14) ¹⁰	n/a	8.1% (2015)	15.9%	17.8%

Source: Demographic Health Surveys of Kenya, World Bank

e. Opportunities for Learning (0-3 years)

Any opportunity for a child to interact with a person, place or object in their environment is vital as it contributes to the child’s brain development and lays a foundation for later learning. In Kenya there is no public data on early learning opportunities for children below the age of 3 years, which is the focus of the NCF. From age 3, children move into more formal preschool settings where the education sector plays a pivotal role.



Insight: No data is provided on the other 3 pillars (adequate nutrition, security & safety and good health) of the Nurturing Care Framework at the county level

3.3. Overview of Kenyan ECD legislation and policies

Overall, the Kenyan Government has put in place policies to support improved Early Childhood Development, such as free pre-primary education, free health care for children under 5, and health workers are required to receive training in promoting ECD. Additionally, laws have been put in place to protect the rights of children with disabilities and promote their participation and access to ECD services.

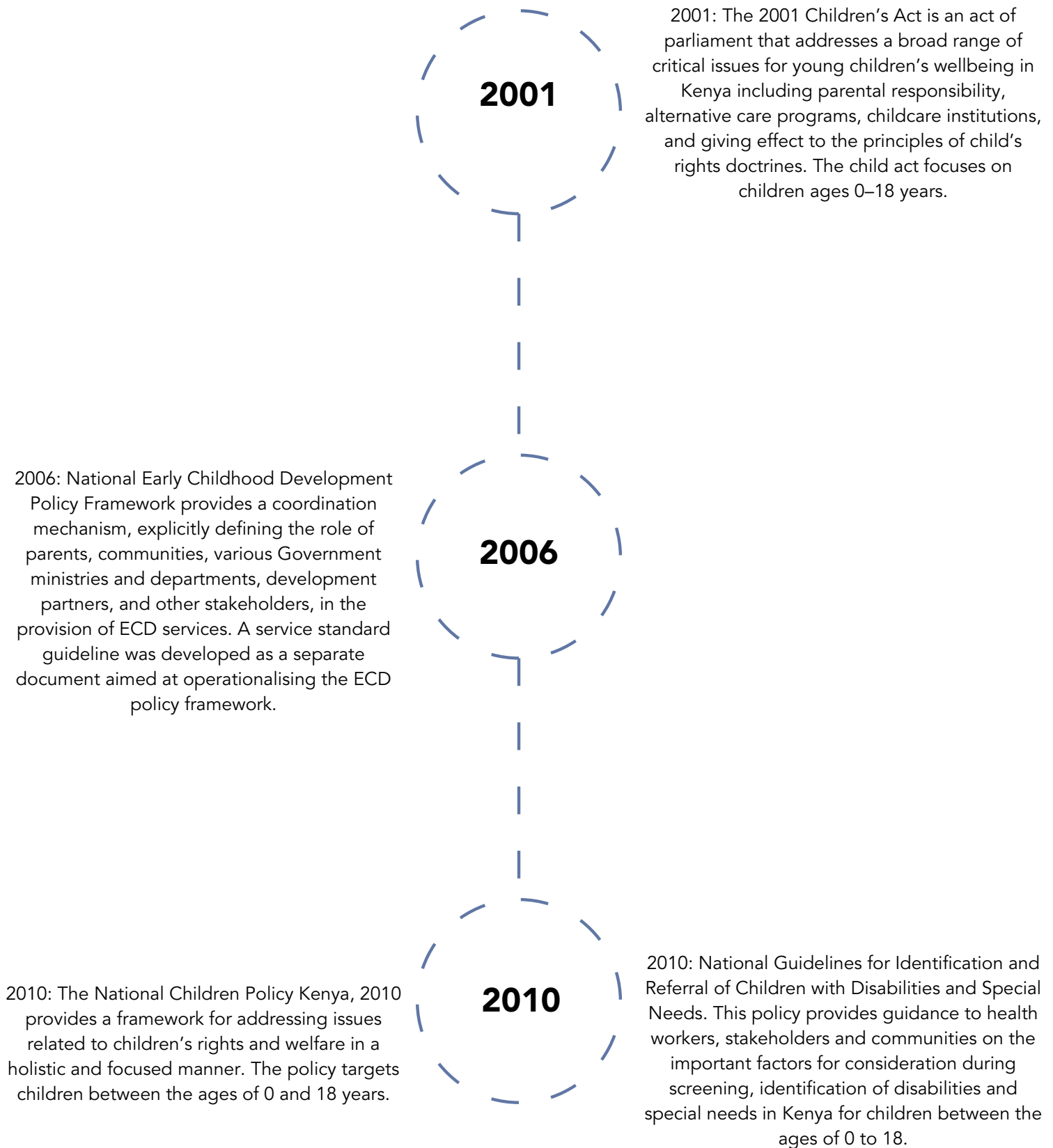
[8] Demographic Health Survey of Kenya (2008-2009) and 2014

[9] World Bank, Birth Registration indicator

[10] World Social Protection Report 2017–19: The indicator is calculated as the ratio of children/households that receive child cash benefits to the total number of children/households with children.

Overview of Kenyan ECD legislation and policies

Figure 5: Overview of Kenyan ECD legislation and policies



Overview of Kenyan ECD legislation and policies



2010

2010: The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 acknowledges the need to provide for and meet the rights of each child in Kenya. It also enables childcare service providers to engage with county government while advocating for adequate resource allocation towards the provision of ECD services.

2014: Guidelines for the alternative family care in Kenya, 2014 supports child welfare and protection practitioners to improve the quality of family support and alternative care services in Kenya.

Alternative family care is defined as a formal or informal arrangement whereby a child is cared for at least overnight away from parent home.

2014

2014: The Kenya Health Policy (2014-2030) aims to attain the highest possible standards of health, in a manner responsive to the needs of the population. The policy focuses on 6 objectives which includes provision of essential health services including access to comprehensive maternal, neonatal, and reproductive health services, integrating nutritional interventions in all disease management and quality diagnostic services to improve children's health

2015: The National Plan of Action for Children in Kenya, 2015-2022 provides an operational framework to guide stakeholders and partners in coordinating, planning, implementing and monitoring programmes for the child.

2015

Overview of Kenyan ECD legislation and policies

2016: Baby Friendly Community Initiative implementation guidelines are designed to help the government and development partners to improve maternal infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN) practices through the implementation of activities at a community level. This include; promotion, protection, and support of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, care, support and follow up for pregnant and lactating women, defining the roles and responsibilities of partners in promoting appropriate MIYCN practices, and providing guidance on how to sustain baby-friendly supportive environment at a community level.

2016

2016: The Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Investment Framework proposes effective, efficient, and innovative strategies to achieve sustainable, equitable, and accelerated improvements in RMNCAH outcomes and thus meet key indicators on the SDGs. The RMNCAH framework seeks to improve nutrition for healthy brain development in the early years and child development.

2017

2017: The National Pre-primary Education Policy, 2017 provides a frame of reference to the 47 County Governments to ensure quality and relevant provision of pre-primary education services in line with the Constitution of Kenya. The policy focuses on children aged 4 and 5 years.

2017: Kenya's Community Health Strategy is for Community Health Workers to promote integrated Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Services (MNCH) services, and community-based educational campaigns to improve coverage of immunization, malaria prevention, and Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services. The strategy focuses on children ages 0–23 months.

2017

Overview of Kenyan ECD legislation and policies



2017

2017: Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (NCAH) Policy is a comprehensive healthcare policy from birth to adolescence. It provides a unified approach to planning, prioritizing, and implementing newborn, child, and adolescent health programs at national and county level across the continuum of care. Nurturing care interventions are included in this policy through integrated programming with child health, WASH, and other social determinants, as well as special needs and disabilities, as crosscutting themes for all age groups.

2018

2018: National Pre-Primary Education Policy identifies strategies to increase access, equity and inclusion, quality and relevance, governance and accountability, as well as research, monitoring, and evaluation of pre-primary education in Kenya. Pre-primary education in Kenya targets children ages 4–5 years. Integration with child protection, health, and nutrition is emphasized. Call for improving standardized training of pre-primary teachers to strengthen the workforce, including specific training on the identification of and referral of children with developmental delays.

2021

2021: County Early Childhood Education Act provides a framework for the establishment of systems for the administration of early childhood education within counties. Following the gazettment of this Act, ECDE is expected to be free and compulsory in all public centres with an emphasis on equality, equity, and non-discrimination in the provision of education and the recognition of children with disabilities. ECDE teachers will be paid according to their qualifications and the establishment of learning centres will follow set protocol and law.

4. Current status of ECE in Kenya

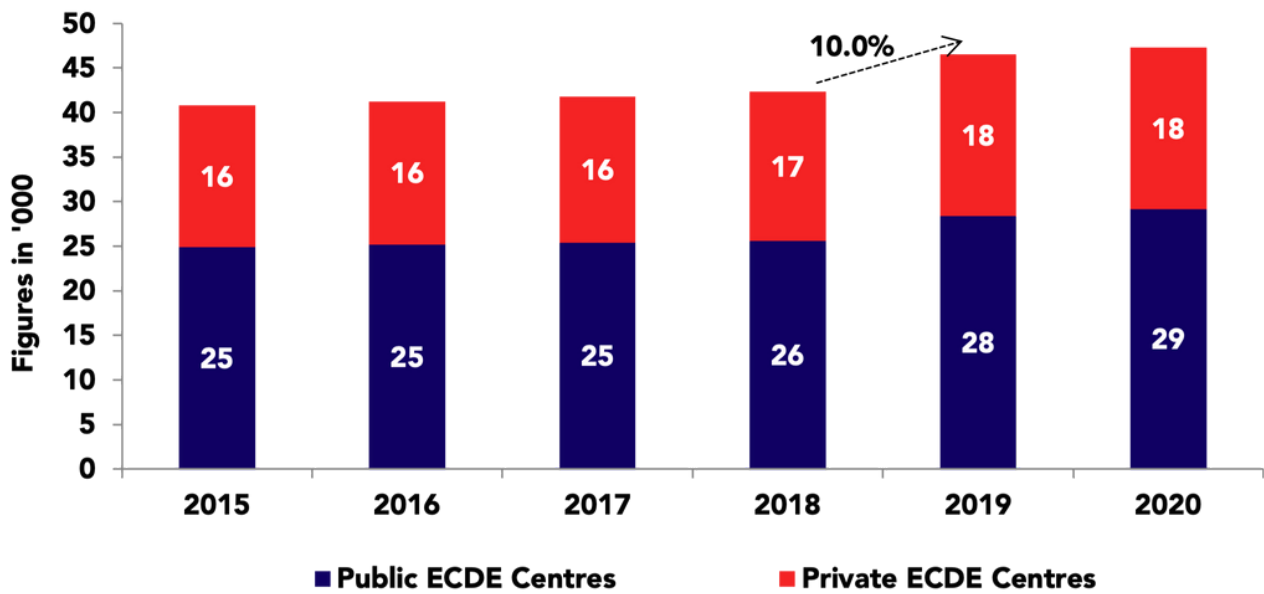
In 2017, the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) under the 2-6-3-3 system of education in Kenya was launched to replace the 8-4-4 system of education. The system is designed to comprise two years of pre-primary education, six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education, and three years of university. CBC places emphasis on competence development rather than on the acquisition of content knowledge.

The curriculum starts at pre-primary school, which consists of two levels; Pre Primary 1 (PP1) and Pre Primary 2 (PP2) replacing the nursery and kindergarten classes under the 8-4-4 system. Children enrol in PP1 at age 4 and leave after completing Grade 12 when they are about 18 years old. There have been concerns from different stakeholders over a lack of adequate preparation to implement the curriculum and that the responsibility of learning now shifts heavily to the parents.

4.1. Number of ECDE centres in the last 6 years

The total number of ECDE centres increased by 16.0% from 2015 to 47,295 centres in 2020. 61.0% of these centres are public. Within this period, public centres grew by 17.2% to 29,148 with a significant increase in 2019 (10.0% year-on-year growth) attributable to increased investment in new ECDE centres following a guideline from the Ministry of Education that required pre-primary schools to be established within a 2-kilometer radius of residential areas and in the vicinity of primary schools. The growth was relatively flat at 1.6% year on year in 2020 with data provided as of March 2020 as schools were abruptly closed nationwide in response to the Covid-19 pandemic; learning for pre-primary students resumed in January 2021.

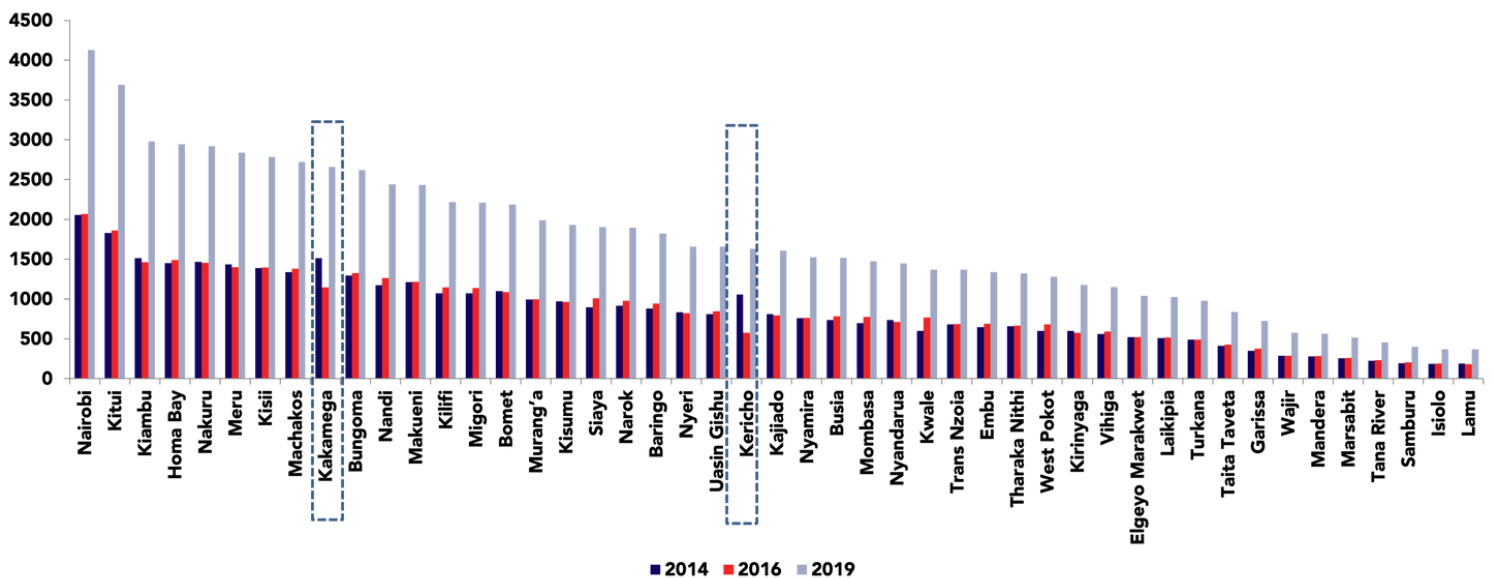
Figure 6: ECDE Centres in Kenya from 2015 to 2020



Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklets 2014, 2016 & 2019 and Economic Survey 2021

An analysis of the number of centres at the county level best demonstrates the growth in centres in 2019.

Figure 7: Growth in ECDE Centres between 2014 and 2019



Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklets 2014, 2016 & 2019

Nairobi County has registered the highest number of ECDE centres over the years. On the other hand, Lamu County has had the lowest number of centres registering a total of 191 centres, 71% of these being public centres. Interestingly, there were fewer ECDE centres in Kakamega and Kericho counties in 2016 as compared to 2014.

ECDE centres can be stand-alone where the county is responsible for supporting investment in human resources, infrastructure, and learning resources. Under the stand-alone structure, teachers are hired, paid, and managed by the county. On the other hand, the centres (preschools) can be attached to primary schools and are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education with the hiring, payment, and administrative needs of teachers falling under the responsibility of the Teacher Service Commission, an independent commission of the National Government. However, the land and physical infrastructure belong to the County Government. There is no information available publicly on the number of centres that are stand-alone or attached to primary schools.

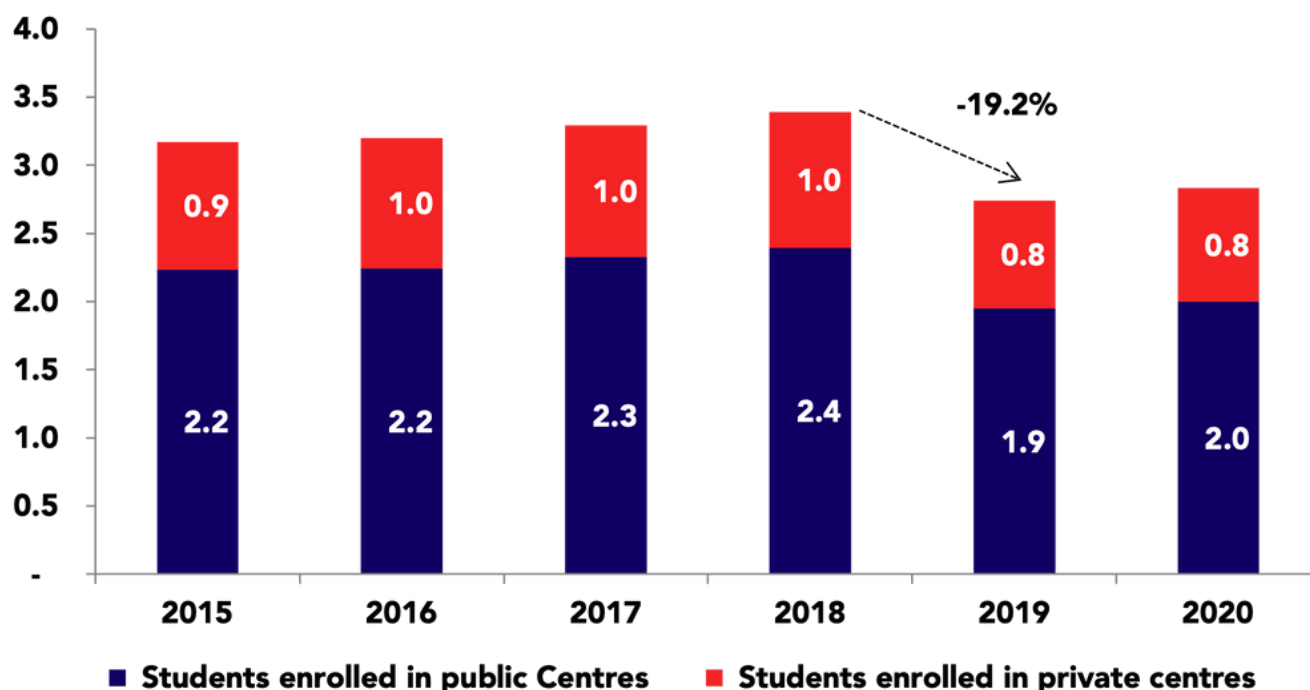
4.2. Number of pre-primary students in Kenya

The number of students enrolled in ECDE centres increased by 7.0% from 2015 to 3.4 million in 2018. The increase is attributable to several factors; expansion of ECDE centres, demand for pre-primary education before joining the primary school, and hiring of more pre-primary teachers by county governments. However, there was a 19% annual decline to 2.7 million in 2019 following the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in 2019 that required that only students between the ages of 4 and 5 years be enrolled in Pre-Primary I and II classes respectively. Prior to this, pre-primary classes enrolled students between the ages of 3 to 5 years. Year on year enrolment in 2020 compared to 2019 improved by 3.4% to 2.8 million.



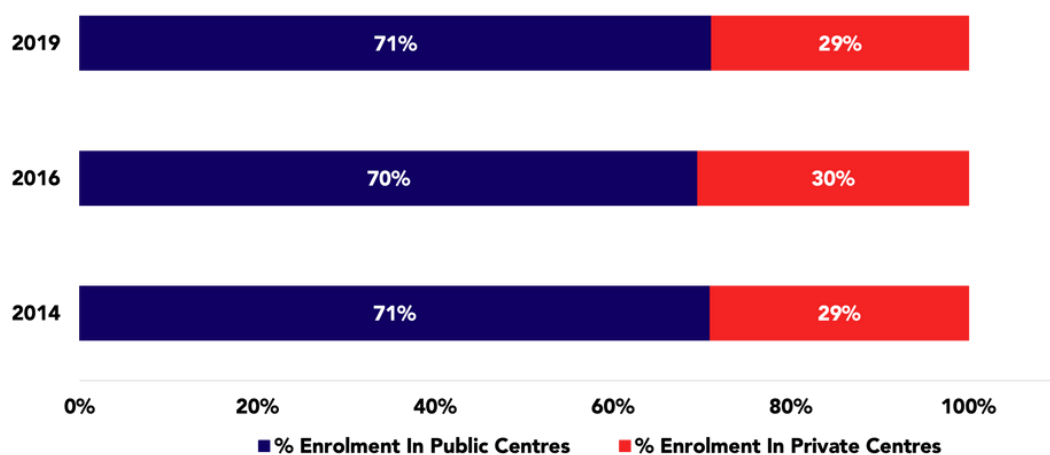
Insight: Implementation of CBC in 2019 and effect of Covid-19 in 2020 has affected the way data is collected. Any comparisons made with these 2 years may be distorted.

Figure 8: Pre-primary student enrolment in Kenya



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Economic Survey

Figure 9: Enrolment between private and public centres between 2014 and 2019

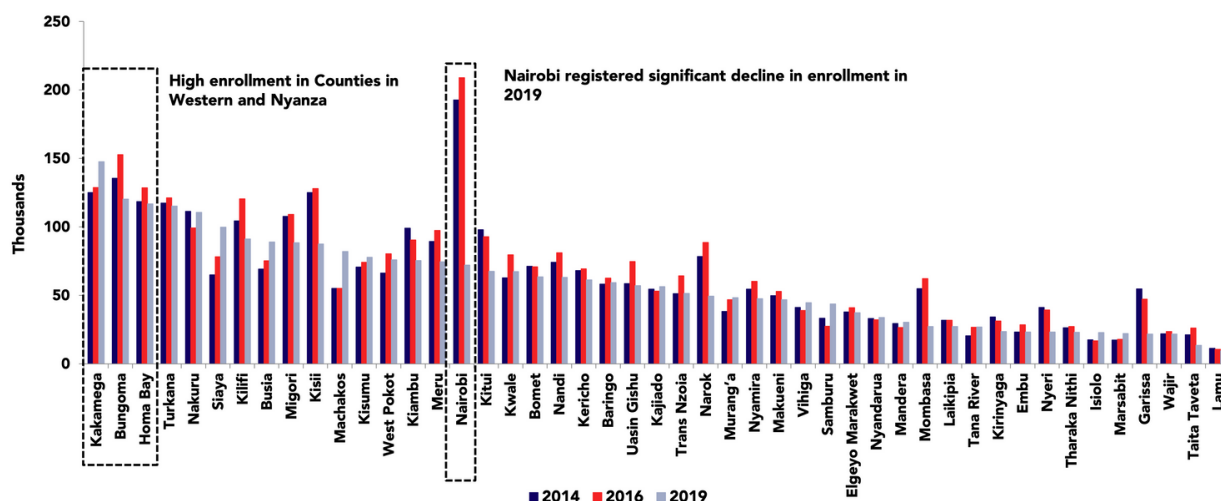


Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklets 2014, 2016 and 2019



Insight: On average, 70% of early education is delivered in public schools that account for 61% of total learning institutions.

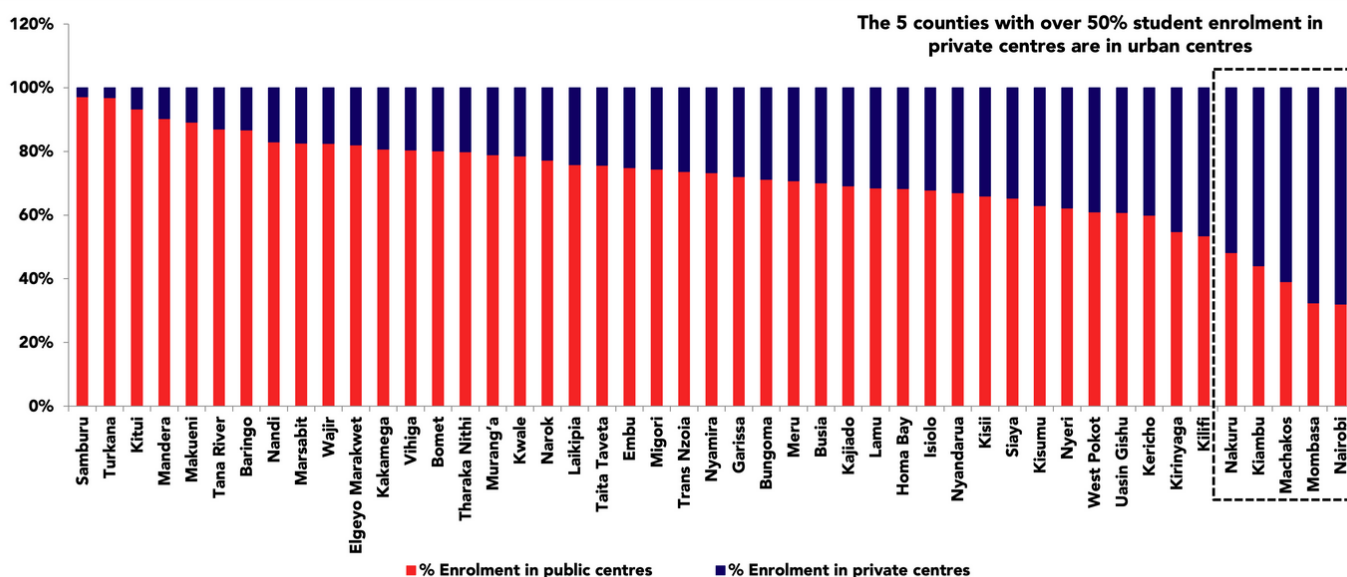
Figure 10: Pre-primary enrolment at the county level for 3 years



Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklet 2014, 2016 and 2019

Kakamega, Bungoma, and Homa Bay Counties registered the highest student enrolment in 2019 while counties in North Eastern and Coastal counties; Wajir, Taita Taveta, and Lamu registered the lowest enrolment rates. Nairobi County registered a 65% decline in total enrolment in 2019.

Figure 11: Enrolment in public and private centres in 2019



Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklet 2019

In 2019, counties in semi-arid areas registered high enrolment rates in public centres with Turkana and Samburu leading at 97% followed closely by Kitui at 93%. On the end of the spectrum, counties with major cities, namely Nairobi, Mombasa, Machakos, and Nakuru registered the highest enrolment in private centres at 68%, 68%, 61%, and 52% respectively.

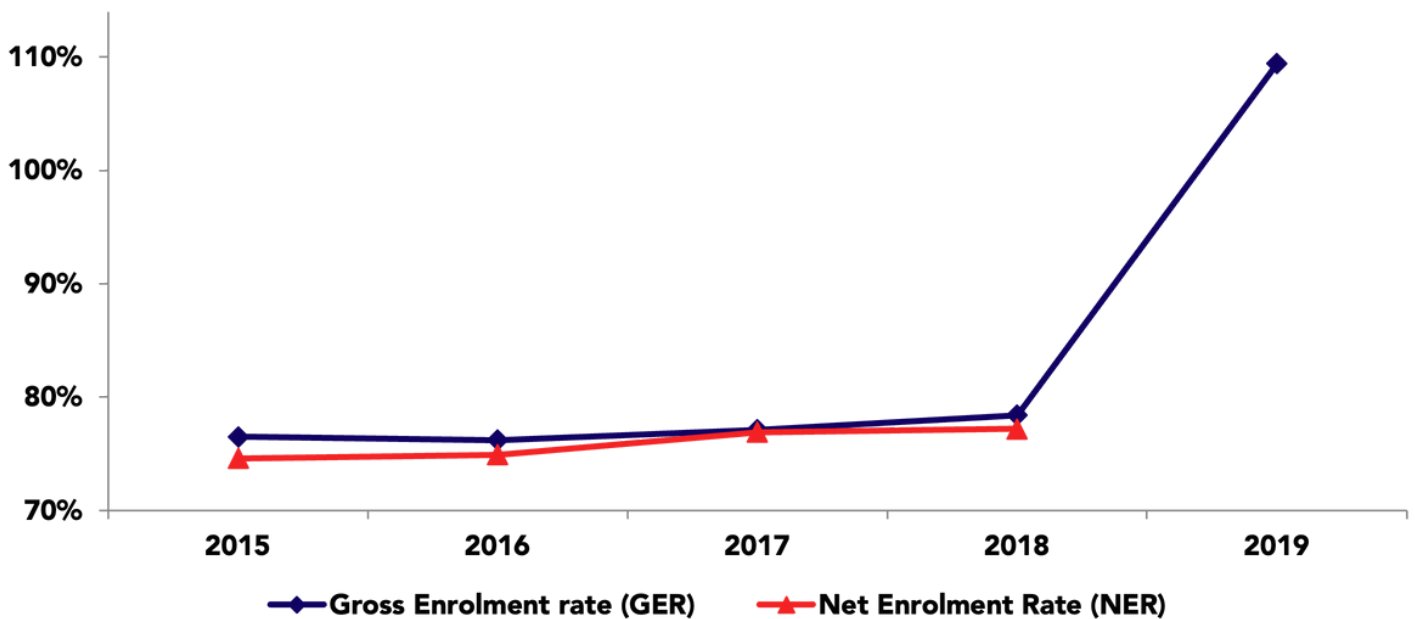


Insight: Rate of privatisation of ECDE centres increases with urbanisation with Nairobi County registering the highest student enrolment of 68%

4.3. Gross and Net Enrolment Rates

Gross Enrolment Rate remained relatively unchanged from 2015 to 2018 at 77% but registered a significant spike to 109% in 2019. As over and under-aged students are included the Gross Enrolment Ratio it can exceed 100%. The significant spike in 2019 is attributed to the inconsistency in the pre-primary level data following the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum that saw the official school-age population changed to children between 4 and 5 years from 3 to 5 years in the previous year.

Figure 12: Pre-primary Gross and Net Enrolment Rates

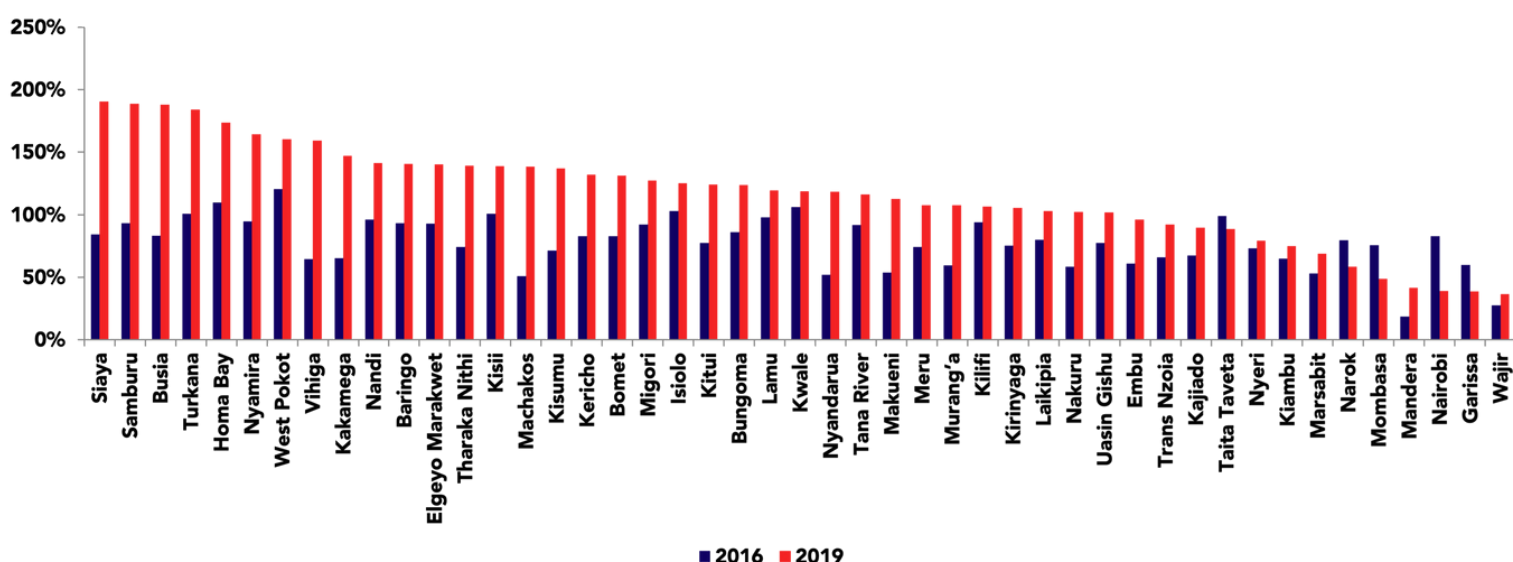


Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklet 2019

Between 2015 and 2018, the Net Enrolment Rate was relatively unchanged at 76%. However, there was no figure provided in 2019, following the transition from the use of manual questionnaires in the previous years to NEMIS (National Education Management Information System) which resulted in counties not being able to adequately capture data during the pilot phase.

NEMIS is a web-based data management solution that collects data and information from educational institutions to track the performance mobility of learners and teachers to ensure effective and efficient use of education resources.

Figure 13: Gross Enrolment Rates in 2016 and 2019 at the county level

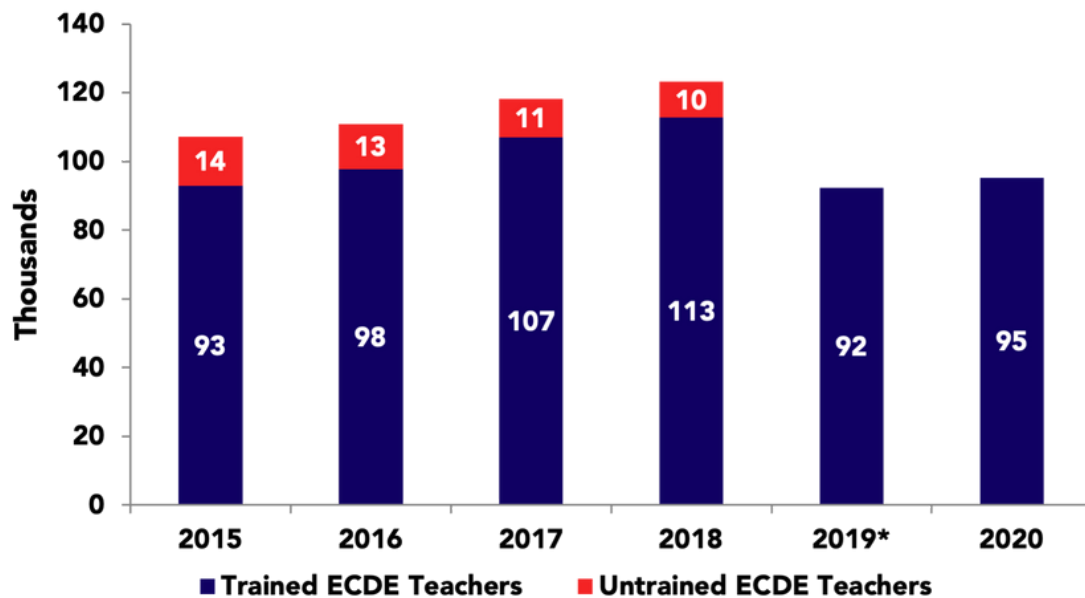


Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklet 2016 and 2019

Counties in the North-Eastern region namely Mandera, Garissa, and Wajir posted the lowest enrolment rates over the review period while counties in Nyanza and Western Regions posted higher enrolment rates.

4.4. Number of ECDE Teachers

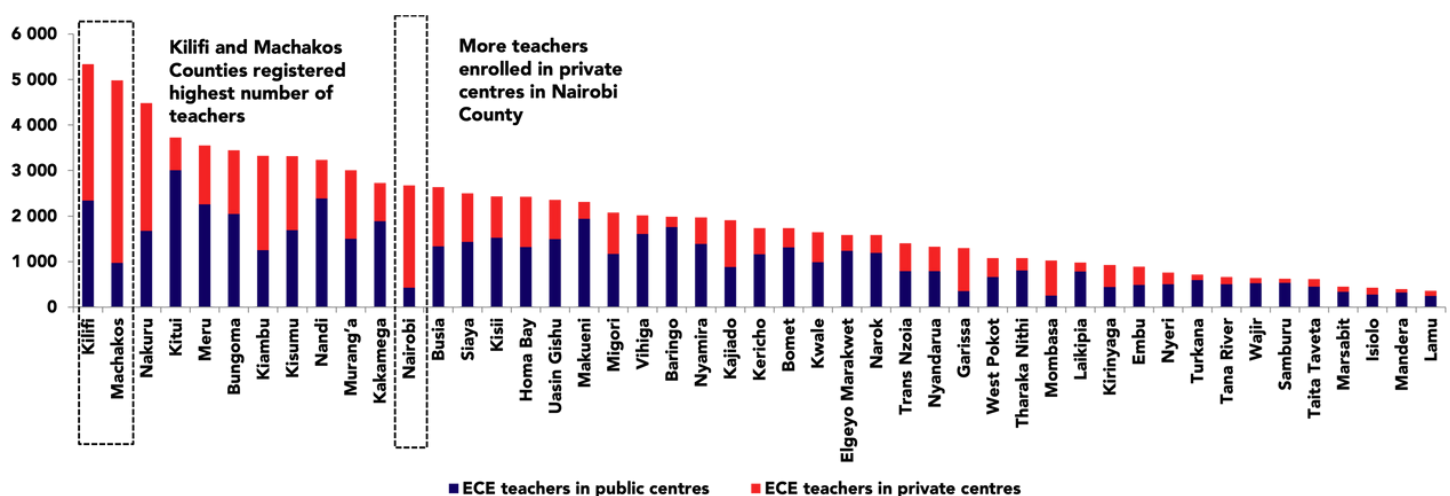
Figure 14: ECDE teachers in Kenya from 2015 to 2019



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

The number of ECDE Teachers both trained and untrained, increased by 15% from 107,187 in 2015 to 123,155 in 2018. However, there was a 25% decline to 92,359 teachers in 2019 attributable to the implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum that required teachers to be certified. Consequently, there were no untrained teachers from 2019 onwards. A positive trend was observed in 2020 with the number of trained teachers increasing by 3% year on year to 95,241

Figure 15: Distribution of ECDE teachers in public and private centres in 2019

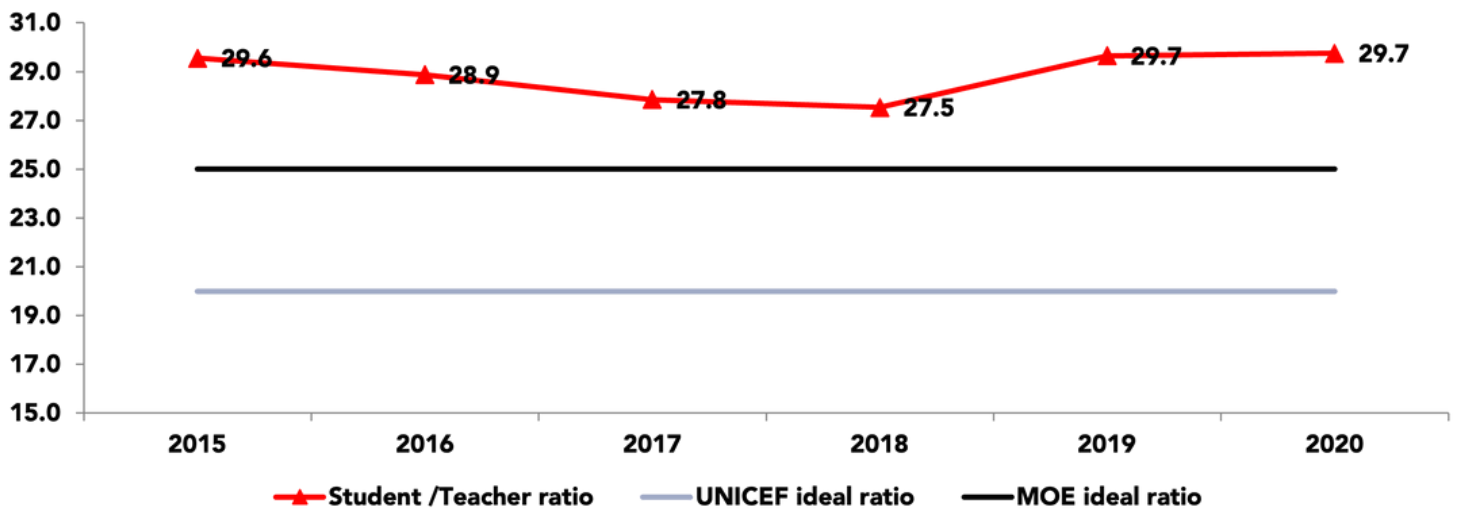


Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklet 2019

Kilifi and Machakos counties registered the highest number of teachers at 5,340 and 4,980 respectively in 2019. These counties are also among those with the highest number of ECDE centres; 3,425 for Machakos and 1,562 for Kilifi. On the other hand, Mandera and Lamu recorded the lowest number of teachers at 424 and 361 in line with the few centres at 249 and 191 respectively. 84% of the 2,674 teachers in Nairobi worked in private ECDE centres.

4.5. Pre-primary student to teacher ratio

Figure 16: Pre-primary student to teacher ratio in the last 5 years

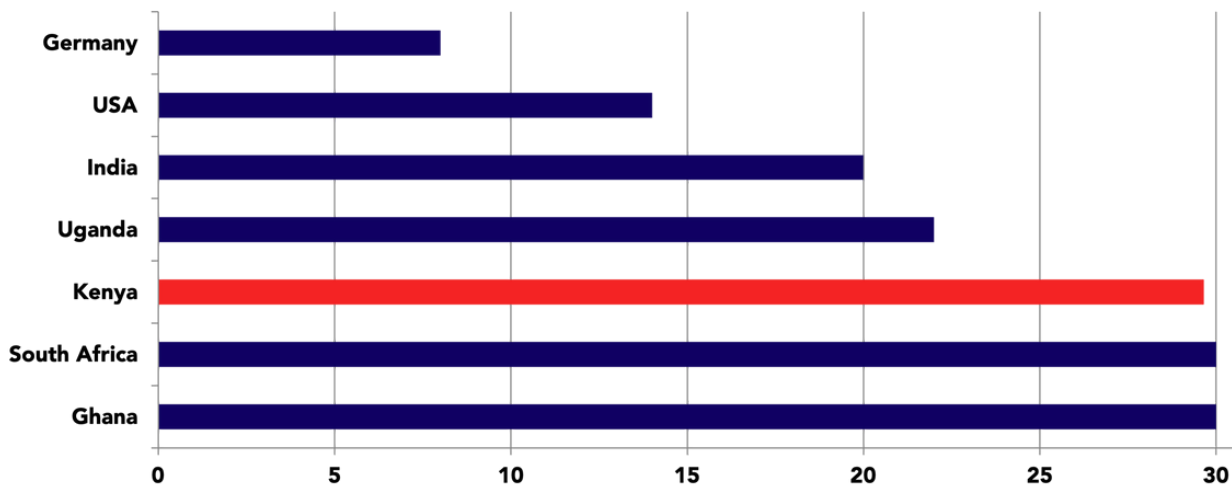


Source: Ministry of Education (MOE), Economic Survey

Since 2015 the student-teacher ratio has improved slightly from 30 students per teacher to 28 students per teacher in 2018 but still below the recommended Ministry of Education and UNICEF target of 25 students and 20 students per teacher respectively.

The ratio worsened in 2019 to 30 due to a 25% decline in the ECDE teachers following the implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum that emphasized the hiring of trained teachers.

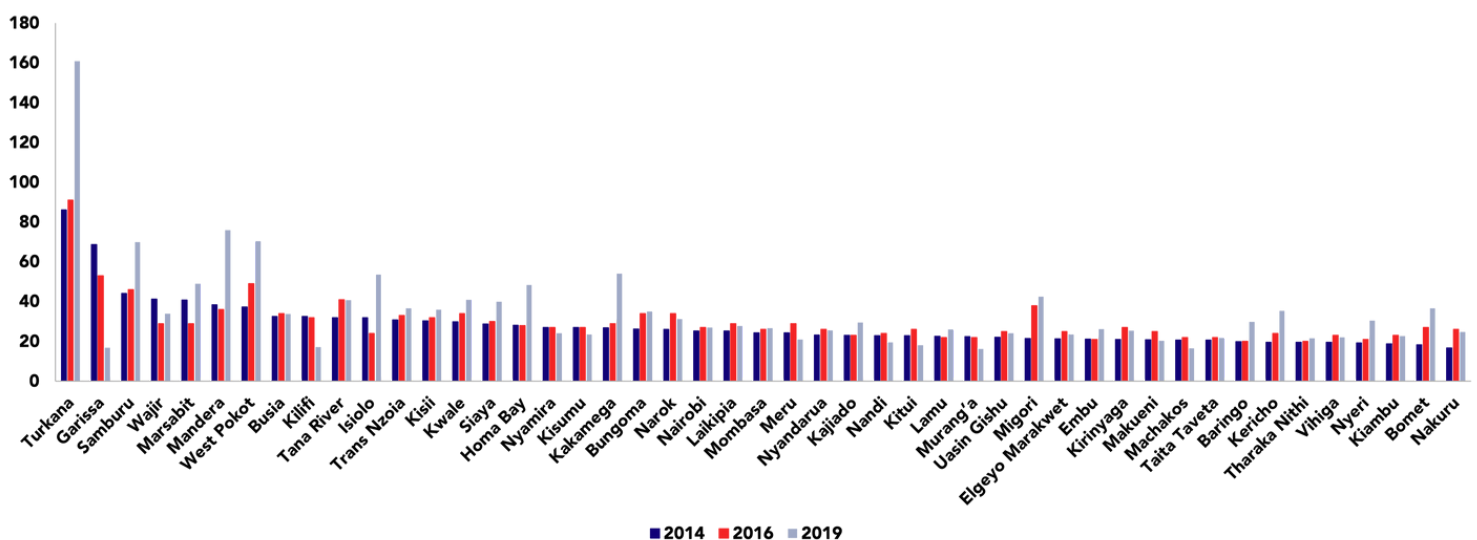
Figure 17: Global comparison of student to teacher ratios in pre-primary schools between 2017 and 2019



Source: Ministry of Education, World Bank

In comparison to several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya’s student to teacher ratio is almost similar to Ghana at 30 but slightly higher than Uganda's at 28. On the other hand, USA and Germany registered lower ratios of 8 and 14 respectively. Most recent data shows that India's ratio stood at 20 while South Africa at 30 in 2015 and 2014 respectively. Global and sub-Saharan Africa ratios stand at 18 and 30 students per teacher respectively.¹¹

Figure 18: Pre-primary student to teacher ratio at the county level across 3 years

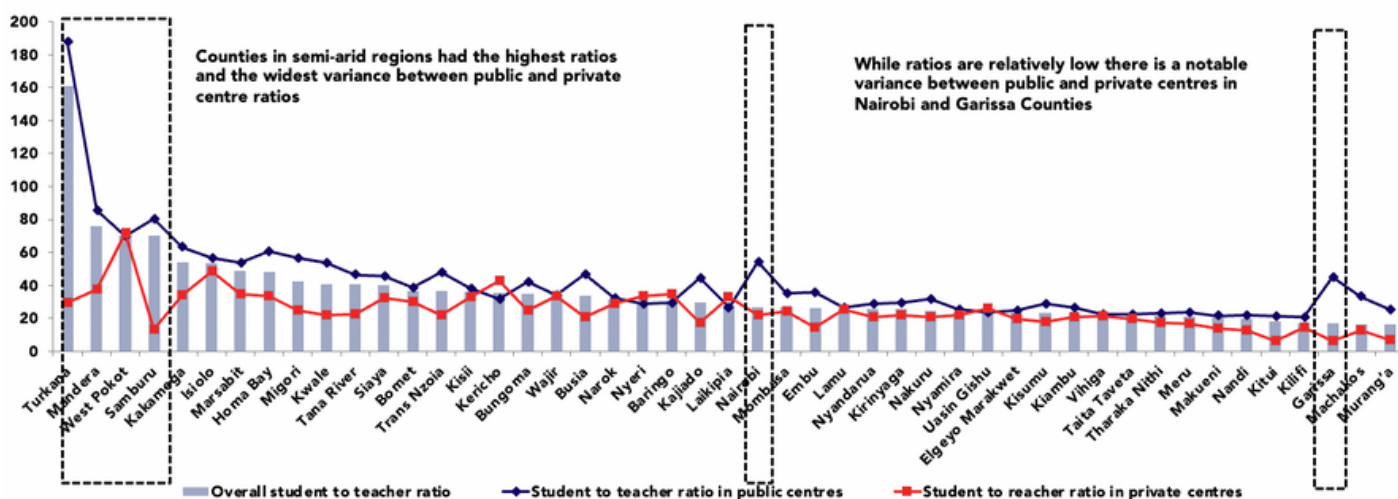


Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklet 2014, 2016 and 2019

[11] <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRE.ENRL.TC.ZS> . Student to teacher ratios obtained between 2017 and 2019 with the exception of South Africa (2014), India (2015). These are the most recent ratios provided.

In 2019, Turkana registered the highest ratio of 1 teacher to 161 students followed by Mandera, West Pokot, and Samburu Counties at 76, 70, and 70 respectively. Notably, Garissa County recorded an improvement with the ratio at 1 teacher serving 17 students from 53 students in 2016. The higher student-to-teacher ratios in 2019 as compared to 2016 data could be partly attributed to the implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum that required certification of teachers. Consequently, there were no untrained teachers in 2019.

Figure 19: Pre-primary student to teacher ratio in public and private centres in 2019



Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical Booklet 2019

In 2019, Turkana registered the highest ratio of 161 students per teacher followed by Mandera, West Pokot, and Samburu Counties at 76, 70, and 70 respectively. These counties have significant variances in student to teacher ratios in public versus private centres with exception of West Pokot County with a high ratio in both private and public counties. A similar trend can be seen in Nairobi (54 vs 22) and Garissa (45 vs 6) as highlighted in the chart above. Overall, the student-to-teacher ratio was lower in private centres at 25 students per teacher against an average ratio of 41 students per teacher in public centres in 2019.

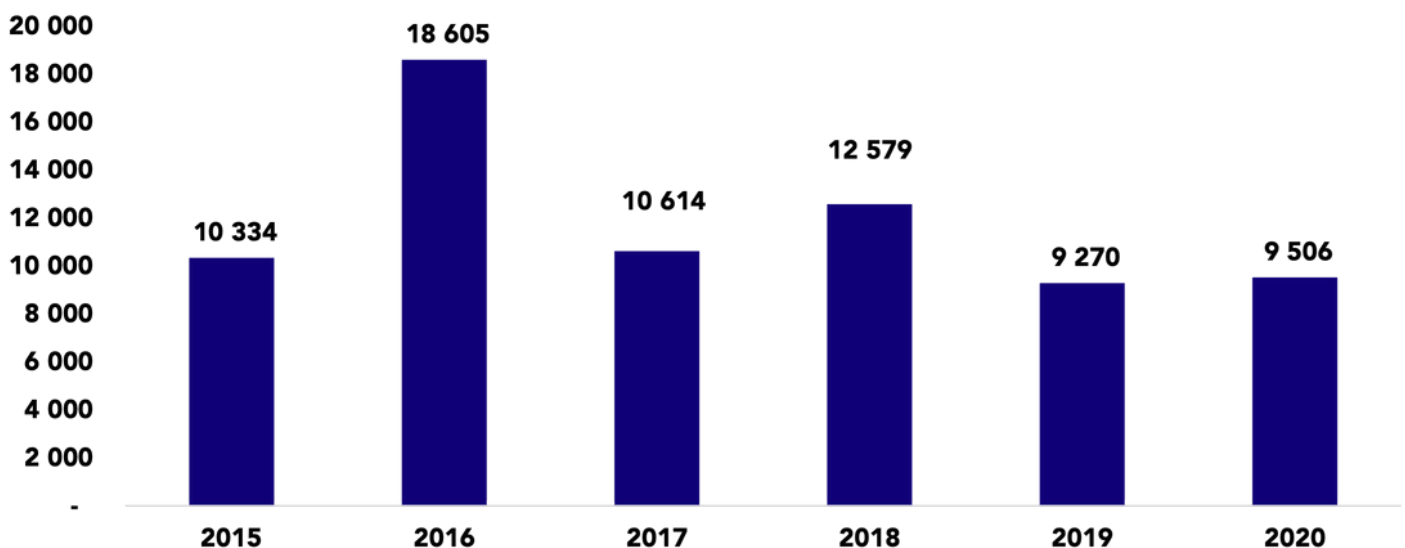


Insight: Student-teacher ratios are highest in arid and semi-arid counties recording the highest variance between private and public centres. There is however a gap in student-teacher ratios outside of these regions in several counties that can be addressed.

4.6. County expenditure per pre-primary student

Counties have on average spent KES 11,818 per child in pre-primary between 2015 and 2020. However this figure is best viewed as a proxy due to several reasons; the ECD expenditure provided includes other sectors at the county level such as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)- another devolved function, secondly there is a time mismatch with the fiscal year commencing in June while the school year commences in January and ends in September, lastly we have estimated enrollment in public ECDE centres at 71% of total enrolment as there is no breakdown provided for the years 2015, 2017 and 2018.

Figure 20: Average expenditure per pre-primary student in KES from 2015 to 2020

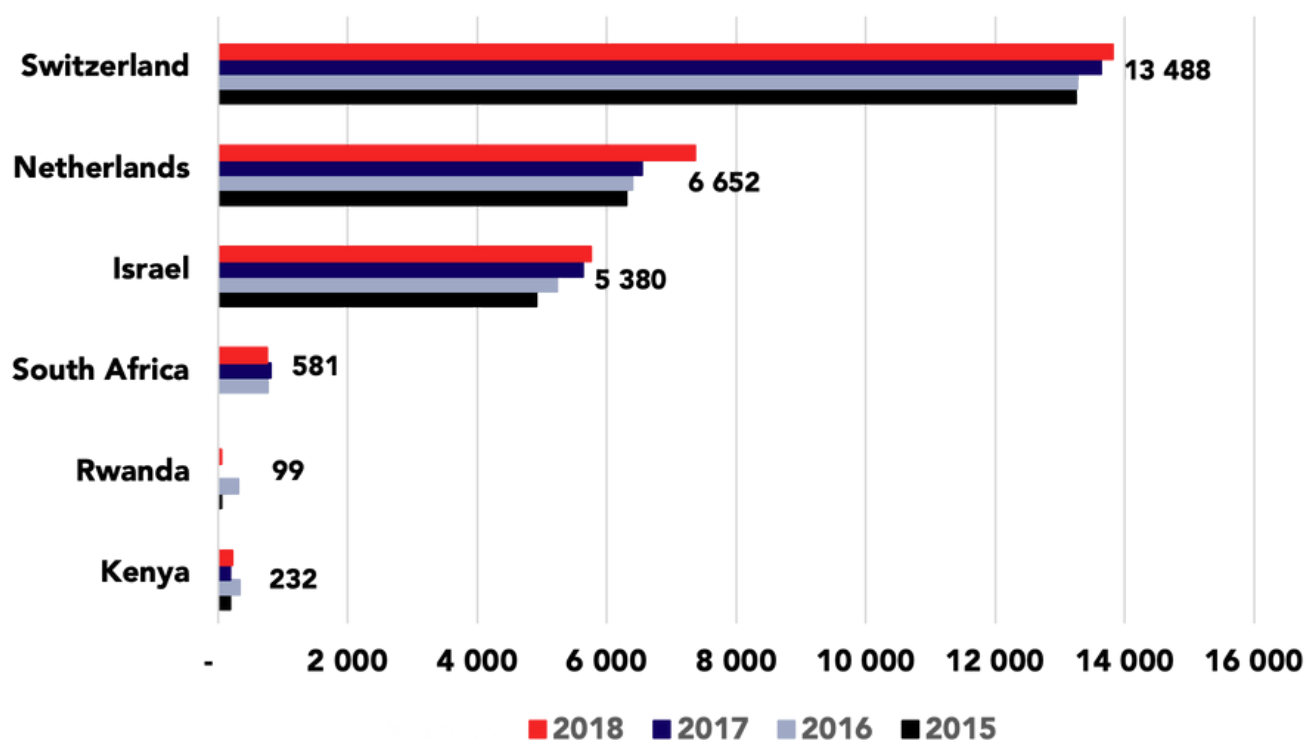


Source: Office of the Controller of Budget- Annual County Governments Budget Implementation Review Reports from 2014/2015 to 2020/2021, GDI estimates

There was a significant increase in spending per child in 2016 at KES 18,605 per child from KES 10,334 in 2015 due to an increased budget allocation of funds to the education sector to cover hiring of contract teachers and infrastructure development.¹²


4.7. Comparison with other countries

Figure 21: Spending per pre-primary student in USD for different countries



Source: World Bank, MOE, UNESCO, GDI estimates

Globally, Kenya trails its closest peer South Africa; spending an average of USD 232 (purchasing power adjusted) compared to South Africa's USD 581 between 2015 and 2018. This is still lower than the spending in OECD countries with Switzerland, Netherlands, and Israel spending over USD 5,000 per child in pre-primary. The huge disparity is partly attributable to higher population growth in the lower and middle-income countries, without a corresponding increase in budgetary funds towards ECE.



**Adequate and sustained public funding
in line with quality standards and
regulation are crucial in achieving
quality Early Childhood Education in
Kenya**

5. ECD budget process and allocation

5.1 Major stages of the budget process

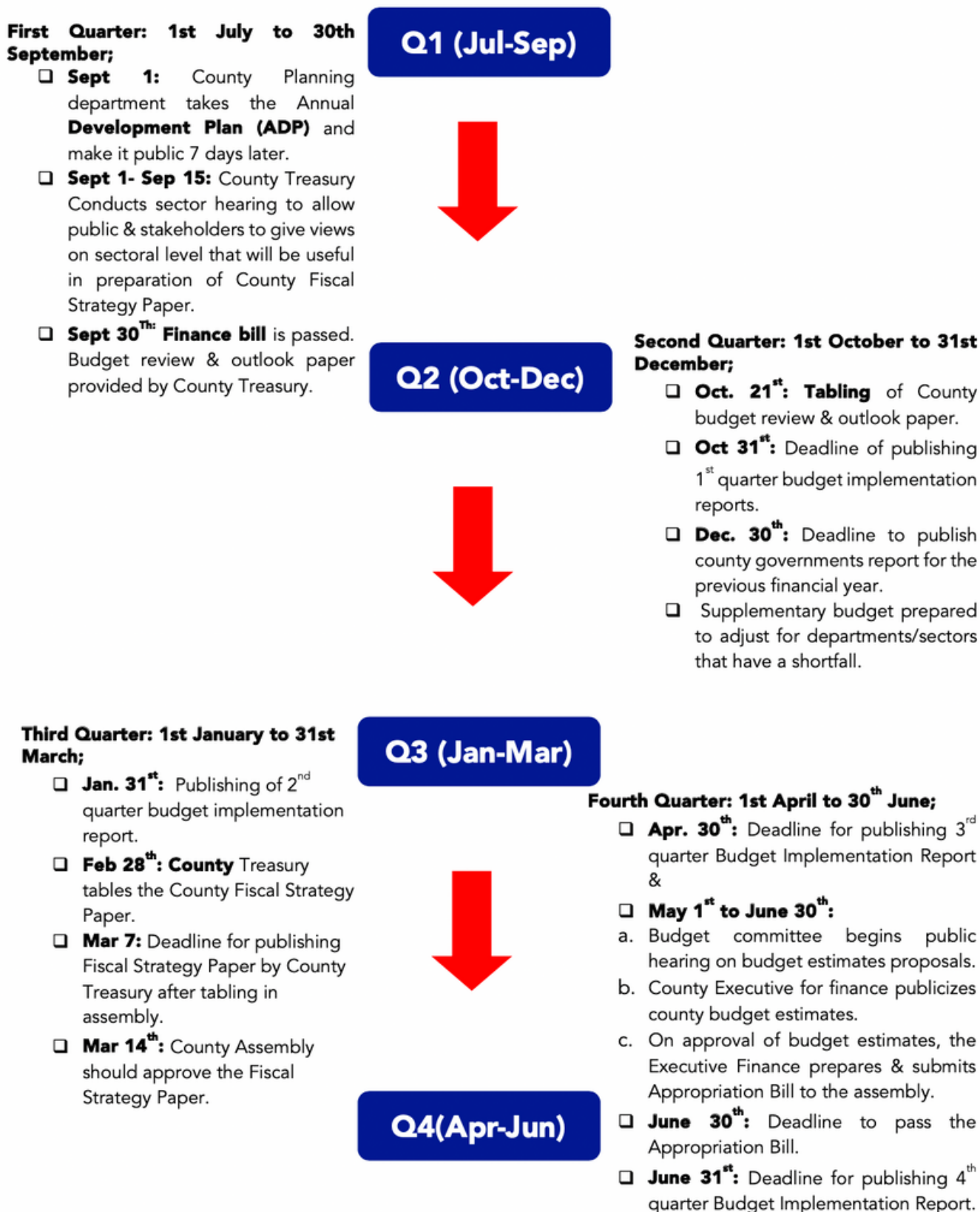
There are 4 stages of the budget process namely formulation, approval, implementation, and audit which are led by different arms of the government and independent offices.

Table 5: Stages of the budgeting process in Kenya

Stage	Description	Lead Actor
Formulation	The Executive at both national and county level formulate the draft budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Ministries • County Departments • National and County Treasuries
Approval	Legislature reviews and amends and approves the proposed budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and County Assemblies • National and County Budget and Appropriations (BAC) committees
Implementation	Executive collects revenue and spends money as per the allocation made in the budget law with oversight from the Assembly. The Controller of Budget ensures that release of funds is as per the budget and released quarterly implementation review reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • National and County Assemblies • Controller of Budget
Audit and Evaluation	Budget accounts are audited, and findings are reviewed for further action by Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditor General • Parliament

The financial year in Kenya starts on 1st July and ends on 30th June every year. The 1st and 2nd quarters are crucial as this is when the annual and supplementary budgets are prepared.

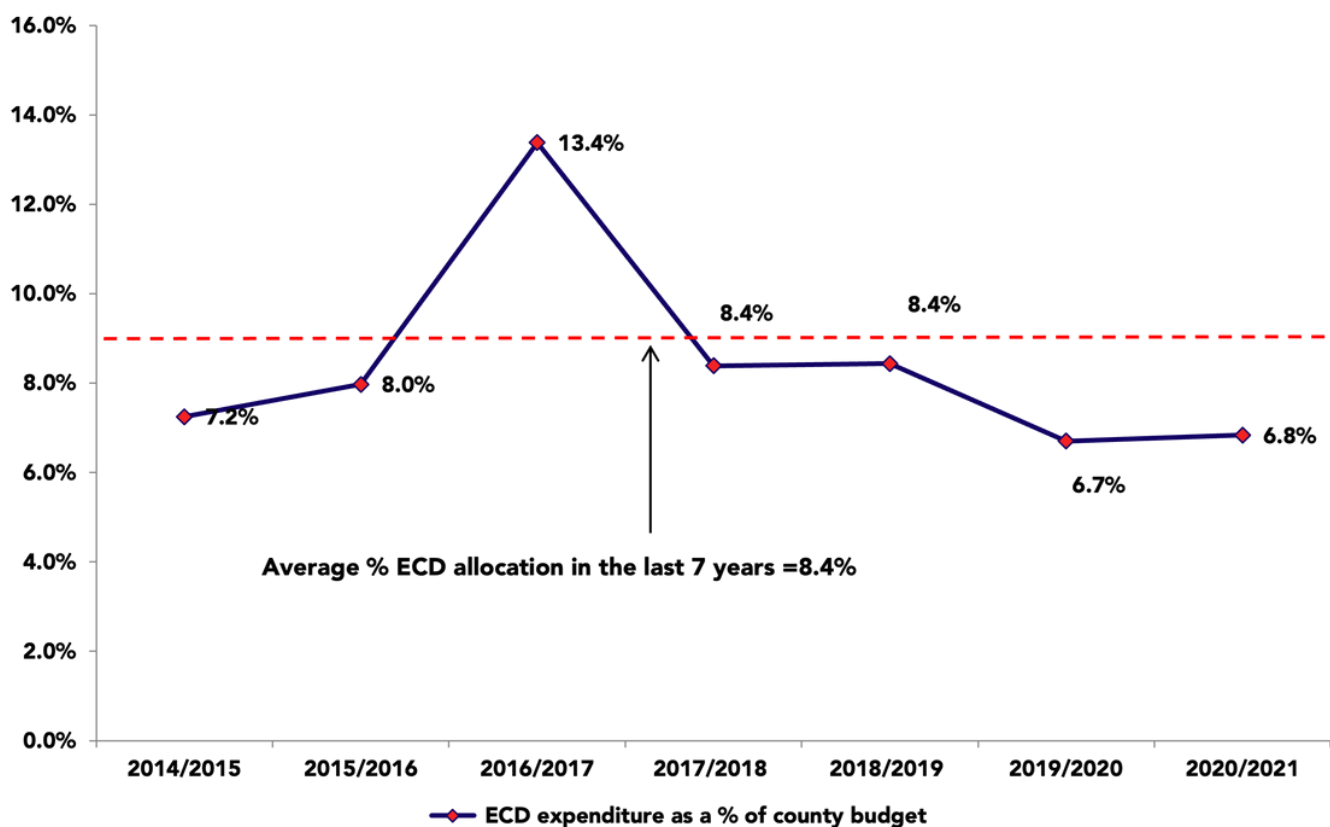
Figure 22: Budget Period in Kenya



5.2 Allocation and expenditure towards ECD

The commitment of county governments to education spending was evaluated by comparing education expenditure against county budgets from June 2014 to June 2020 obtaining data from Office of the Controller of Budget and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. In the last 6 fiscal years, counties have on average allocated 8.4% of their county budgets towards the education sector. However, this figure is inconclusive as ECD expenditure is combined with several other sectors: ICT, Youth Affairs and Sports & Social Services making it difficult to ascertain exact expenditure on ECD alone. With no clear budget lines on how to allocate resources to ECD appropriately, there is variation in the standards and implementation of ECD policy across different Kenyan counties.

Figure 23: ECD spending as a percentage of total county budgets



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Controller of Budget

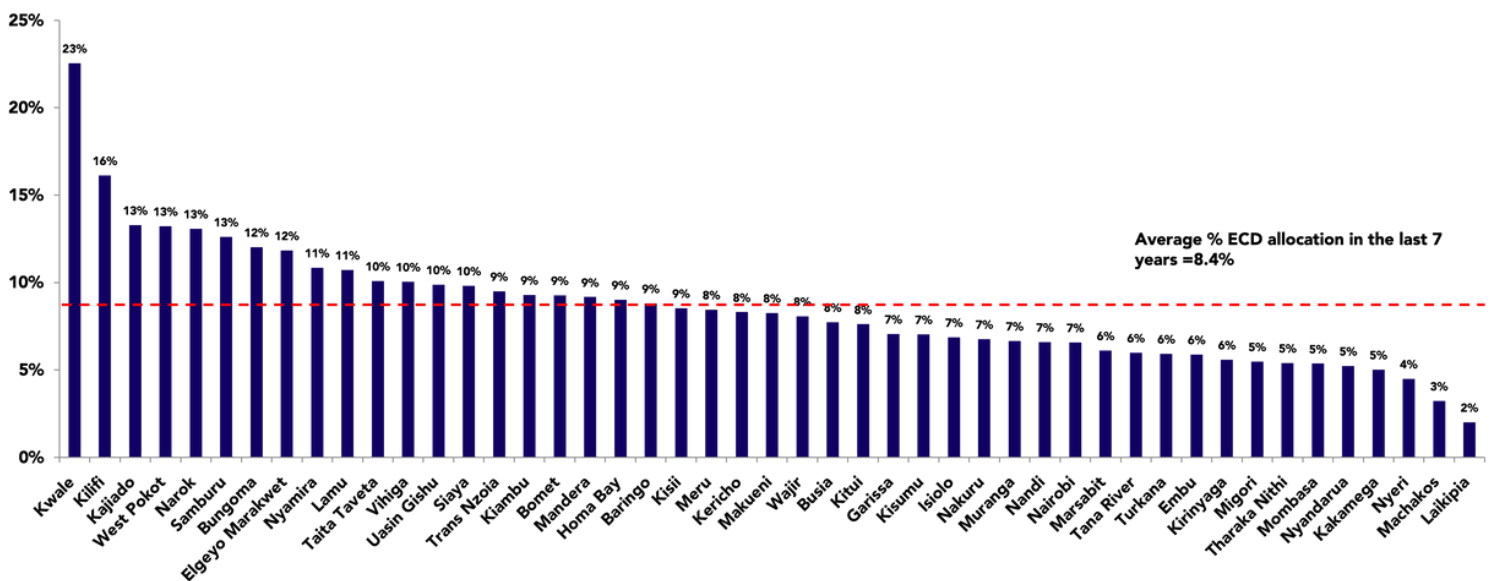
The limited available data shows that public spending on ECD is still lower than the 10% target recommended by UNICEF which is a good measure for assessing the commitment of national and regional governments to education spending. Further, 66% of the expenditure is spent on recurrent expenditure which entails remuneration for teachers and other administrative expenses.

The remainder which is spent on development expenditure tends to be biased towards capital expenditure items including physical infrastructure and neglects other operating expenditure items such as teacher training and quality assurance. Counties do not have comprehensive guidelines for budgeting for equitable quality preprimary education.¹³



Insight: The average allocation of 8.4% is at best a proxy which would imply that counties spend lower than this on ECD. Further, there are no comprehensive guidelines for budgeting to enable proper planning and costing for ECD needs.

Figure 24: Average ECD expenditure as a percentage of county budget between 2014/2015 and 2020/2021

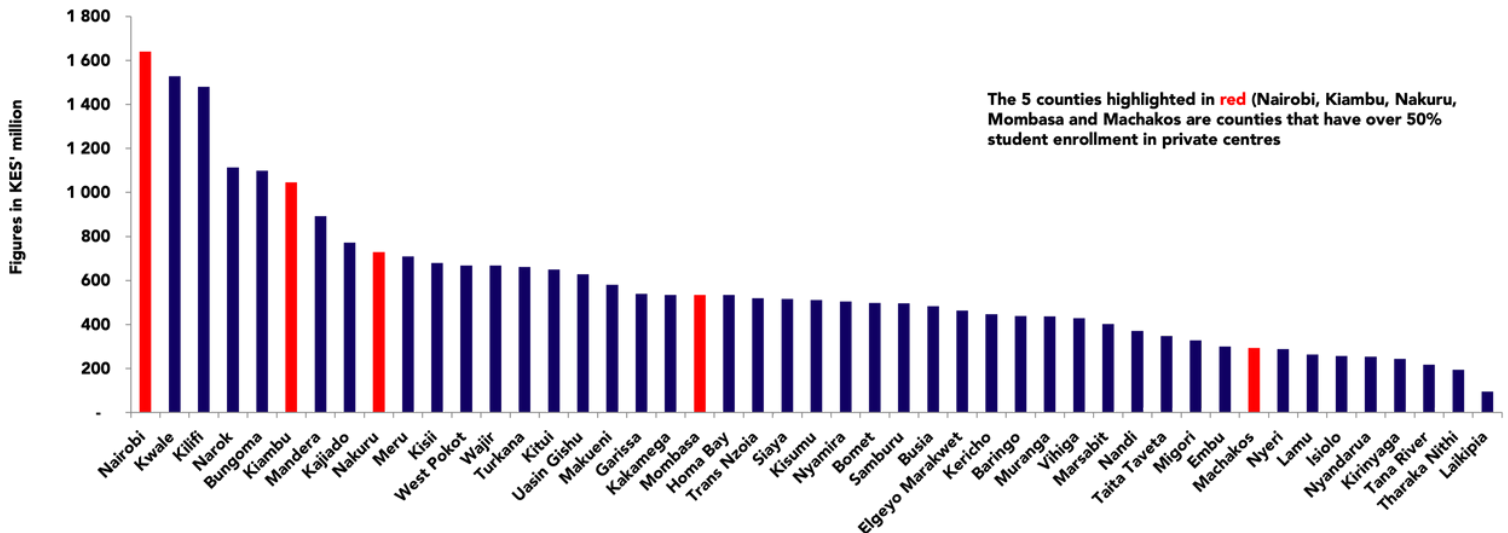


Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Controller of Budget

Less than half the counties (21) have spent more than 8.4% of their total expenditure towards ECD in the last 7 years with Kwale County registering the highest allocation at 23%. On the other end, Laikipia County had the least allocation at 2% of total expenditure.

[13] Basic Education Sector-Evidence Brief, March 2021 by Joining Forces for Children in Kenya

Figure 25: Average ECD expenditure in KES (millions) for the last 7 years



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Controller of Budget

In absolute terms, Nairobi County registered the highest average allocation between June 2014 and June 2021 of KES 1.6bn followed closely by Kwale County at KES 1.5bn. On the other end, Laikipia County allocated the least funds towards ECD during the review period of KES 95 million. Notably, Nairobi, Kiambu, Nakuru, Mombasa, and Machakos Counties (marked in red in the chart above) had less than 50% enrolment of students in public centres. In particular, while Nairobi had the highest allocation towards ECD, these funds are earmarked for public centres that only cater to 32% of students in the county.



Insight: There is a need to track counties with high expenditure allocation with ECD outcomes to determine where funds should be directed to improve outcomes for children.

6. Key recommendations from our analysis

Insights



Due to limited disaggregation of data in county implementation reports, it is not possible to establish how much of the county government budget is being spent on ECD at the county level. The figures provided are at best at proxy which would imply that counties spend lower than the figures provided in this report.



70% of early education is delivered in public schools that account for 61% of total learning institutions.

Recommendations



By having standalone budget lines for ECD and ECE in the implementation reports, it becomes easier to track allocation towards this sector and also identify gaps that need to be addressed. Additional information that could be provided within the public domain includes, ECD expenditure at the county level, detailed breakdown of the items under both recurrent and development expenditure.



ECD interventions need to target the public sector, this is much more so than in other areas of social service delivery e.g. Higher education, health, sector which are marked by privatisation.



Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum and Covid-19 affected the way the education data is collected: Following implementation of CBC in 2019, enrolment at pre-primary level includes children aged 4 and 5 years making it difficult to compare to prior years. In addition, there is no data on untrained teachers as teachers need to be certified under the new system.



Student-teacher ratios are highest in arid and semi-arid counties recording the highest variance between private and public centres. There is however a gap in student-teacher ratios outside of these regions in several counties that can be addressed.



Semi-arid and arid regions lag behind other regions in Kenya in ECD outcomes. The regions have the highest student to teacher ratios, low enrolment rates and spending patterns.



Any comparisons made prior to 2019 may be distorted over several indicators such as enrolment rates and number of teachers.



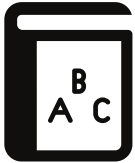
Special attention needs to be given to Arid and Semi-Arid regions regarding student-teacher ratio as well as select counties (Nairobi and Garissa) that have lower ratios on average but wide variation between public and private centres.



Semi-arid and arid regions have several outcome challenges and require a more systemic solution to address key gaps.



Data is only collected on two of the five pillars of the Nurturing Care Framework. No data is available on adequate nutrition, safety and security and good health at the county level.



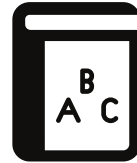
Following implementation of NEMIS in 2019, there is no data available on the Net Enrolment Rate in 2019. In addition, given challenges the country experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, pre-primary schools were closed for 9 months and reopened in January 2021, any comparisons made in 2020 may be inaccurate.



Some of the counties with high expenditure levels have low education outcomes.



There is a need for coordinated efforts at the county level to implement the Nurturing Care Framework.



Policymakers may have to rely on 2018 data as a baseline for setting policy going forward as it is the cleanest benchmark.



There is a need support counties to not only prioritise and increase ECD expenditure but utilise these funds in a manner that improves outcomes for children.

This report assesses ECE performance indicators such as enrolment rates, student to teacher ratios in line with initial public funding towards pre-primary education with an aim of highlighting areas where development partners and capital allocators require putting in more resources and making more informed and appropriate decisions that reflect the context on the ground.

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