

## **An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Community Support Grant (CSG) In Early Childhood Development & Education (ECDE) Centers in Embu West District, Kenya**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper discusses findings of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Community Support Grant (CSG) in Embu West District. The evaluation was done to evaluate the impact of Early Childhood Development & Education (ECDE) services on child outcome. The main objectives of (CSG) were; To increase access to ECDE, to improve child health and nutrition status, and to improve qualified personnel and reduce drop outs and repetition at lower primary schools. This was to be done by having CSG funding support translated into; Teaching and learning materials, new classrooms, new furniture, repaired classrooms, repaired furniture, new toilets, basic construction tools and materials for volunteer community labor and augmentation of one or two full time ECDE teacher(s) salary. The findings showed that; the qualities of ECDE services have improved as majority of teachers are motivated by the top up of their salaries, due to the procurement of furniture by most of the ECDE centers the children were now comfortable hence more alert and active learning. The chairs were also child-size, hence supporting child development unlike desks used, instructional materials were also previously improved quality of teaching and learning as well as the classroom environment, and construction of toilets and buying of water tanks is bound to have positive impact on the health of the children. However, there were challenges that were seen to strain the expected positive consistence in the efforts of providing quality education to the children. Therefore prequalification was not done, there was Poor record keeping in most of the schools, most of the head teachers though trained on CSG were not keen on record keeping and there was Lack of community support on the program. To conclude it was very true to say that Community Support Grant had met a desirable effect in the education of Embu West District Early Childhood Education and Development children. Thus, the paper calls for concerted efforts by the stakeholders to address the challenges experienced in Kenyan early childhood centers. "It takes the whole village to educate a child".*

**Keywords:** Embu West District; Community Support Grants; Early Childhood Development, Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

The right of the child to education is provided in article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) as well as article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 12 December 1989. To this effect and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, Kenya became a signatory of the world declaration on Education for All in Jomtien (1990). There Kenya re-affirmed its commitment on the realization of Universal Primary Education (UPE) for its children. After the Kenya general election held in (2002), the government declared primary education free. This resulted to boom enrolment in primary schools, but the pre-school enrolment was low because parents started holding their children at home until they

reach seven years and enroll them direct to standard one. The Ministry of Education's annual budget allocation to ECDE programs had been exclusively targeted to fund NACECE and DICECE establishment which was only about 01%. It also targeted primary education that is (EFA) in Kenya (national handbook on EFA (2001) and beyond).

The good EFA gesture did not include ECDE services; they continued to be provided for on partnership basis between the parents and local communities; which brought up many challenges. However, according to Sessional Paper Number 1 of 2005 and KESSP document, the government had planned to incorporate ECDE as part of basic education by year 2010. In 2006-2007 financial years, the Ministry of Education disbursed a total of 300 million as Community Support Grants (CSG). The following year 2007/2008 Kshs 294 million as CSG was disbursed in support of ECDE. A total of 3460 ECDE centers in urban slums benefited. The overall program's role for the ECDE investment program was to expand, access and enhance the quality of ECDE services for children aged between 4-5 years especially living in difficult circumstances like Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, urban slums, and other pockets of poverty in Kenya.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of (CSG) were:

1. To increase access, equity and quality to Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE),
2. To improve child health and nutrition status of Early Childhood Development and Education children,
3. To improve qualified Early Childhood Development and Education personnel and reduce Early Childhood Development and Education children's rate of drop out and repetition at lower primary schools.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study evaluated the effectiveness of the community support grant (CSG) in Early Childhood Development & Education (ECDE) centers in Embu West District, Kenya.

### **Samples Collection**

The sample was collected from the list of Provision of CSG that was done to selected ECDE centers across the district. This was meant to be handled by the ECDE centers' management committees to improve access, equity and quality of ECDE services for children aged 4-5 years. From the Ministry of Education, the funds were channeled to the ECDE centers through the District Education Office (DEO). The training would be done by the DEO's staff (District Centers of Early Childhood Education officers (DICECE Officers) to the ECDE centers' committees. These were the ones to implement the expected projects for development. Where other stakeholders would be needed to support, they are the ones to convince and involve them.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Statistical analyses of the findings were carried out using descriptive statistical analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Impact of the CSG on access, equity, and quality of ECDE services**

**Table 1. Access & Equity: Enrolment of ECDE centers before and after implementation of CSG**

<i>Enrolment</i>	<i>Before Start of CSG</i>	<i>After the Start CSG</i>	<i>% Increase</i>
No of Boys	345	354	3
No of Girls	262	292	11
Total	607	646	6.4

(Embu West District Education Office, 2013)

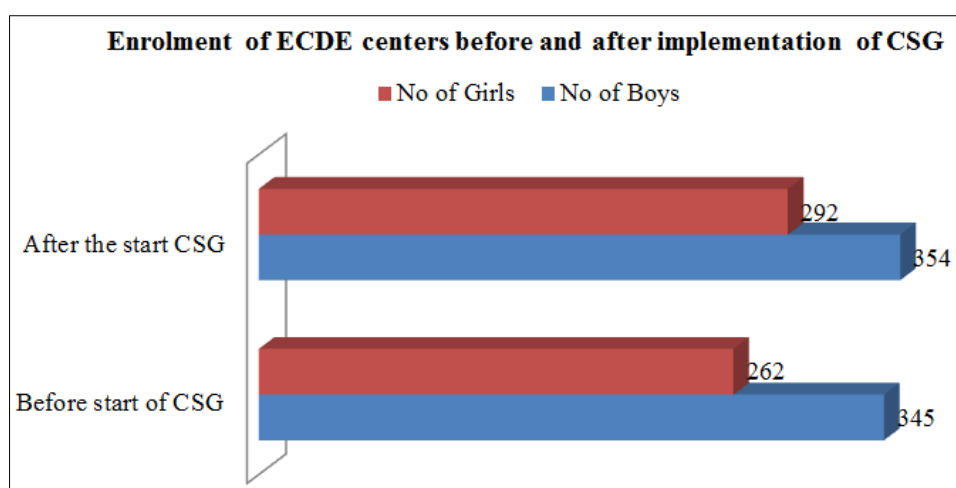


Figure 1

From the findings it's evident that the CSG has contributed to increased enrolment by 6.4% in the ECDE centers. On the gender equity there was still a big disparity between number of boys and girls enrolled. However, it's noted that girls had a bigger enrolment increase after the start of the CSG at 11% whereas boys increased by 3%. This is attributed to better sitting facilities and attractive classroom enrolments. Boy child should be encouraged and affirmed to enroll for ECDE learning. Otherwise, this trend is likely to see boy child lag behind in their future learning development. If anything, it's clear that even before CSG, the boy child enrollment was still comparably lower than that of girl child.

**Table 2(Part-I) . CSG allocation and utilization per ECD center**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Amount Allocated (kshs)</i>	<i>Amount Used (kshs)</i>	<i>Balance</i>
1	Mbukori	39,529.50	38,757	772.50
2	Nembure	55,133.25	45,000	10,133.25
3	St Andrew	57,213.75	.....	57,213.75
4	Keruri	57,213.75	55,630	1,583
5	St Joseph Kevote	26,000.25	25,000	1000.25
6	Temnde	18,724.50	18,000	724.50
7	Makengi	31,207.50	25,325	5,882.50

**Table 2 (Part-II). CSG allocation and utilization per ECD center**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Amount Allocated (kshs)</i>	<i>Amount Used (kshs)</i>	<i>Balance</i>
8	CCM Kevote	66,576	66,575	1.00
9	Ngoire	39,529.50	39,529	0.50
10	Rukira	47,851	45,000	2,851
11	Kihumbu	72,817.50	71,000	1,817.50
12	Kithegi	50,972.25	48,997	1,975.50
13	Kithimu	62,415.00	59,000	3,415
14	Gatondo	67,616.25	61,180	6,436
	<i>Total</i>	<i>692,806</i>	<i>598,993</i>	<i>93,813.25</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>86.5</i>	<i>13.5</i>

(Embu West District Education Office, 2013)

All the 14 ECDE centers followed guidelines on the development of the Centers' Improvement Plans (CIPs). In all the centers there was evidence in terms of minutes of parents' meetings to discuss centers' needs/prioritization and approval of CIPs. This suggests that most of the amount disbursed was utilized in the expected projects. However, the ECDE Centers' committees should ensure that the balance remaining in the accounts should be put into appropriate use in order to avoid inefficiency. Other stakeholders plus parents should be engaged to supplement that remaining balance so that adequate development projects can be realized.

**Table 3(Part-I). The status of the CSG projects**

<i>School</i>	<i>Furniture</i>	<i>Learning Materials</i>	<i>Toilets</i>	<i>Classrooms Renovation</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Local Travel</i>	<i>Top Up</i>	<i>Status</i>
Mbukori	10,000	16,757	-	-	-	-	1200	Delivered
Nembure	15,300	-	-	-	8,975	-	1,200	Delivered
St Andrew	34,500	-	-	-	-	-	1,200	Delivered
Keruri	21,000	-	-	900	-	-	18,000	Delivered
St Joseph Kevote	-	-	20,000	-	-	-	5,000	Delivered
Tende	10,000	2,000	-	-	-	-	6,000	Delivered
Makengi	6,300	1,545	-	-	12,080	-	2,000	Delivered
CCM Kevote	56,565	-	-	-	-	-	10,000	Delivered
Ngoire	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Delivered
Rukira	39,000	-	-	-	-	-	6,000	Delivered
Kihumbu	42,000	-	-	13,680	-	1,851	5,000	Delivered
Kithegi	32,000	-	-	15,000	-	-	5,000	Delivered

**Table 3(Part-II). The status of the CSG projects**

<i>School</i>	<i>Furniture</i>	<i>Learning Materials</i>	<i>Toilets</i>	<i>Classrooms Renovation</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Local Travel</i>	<i>Top Up</i>	<i>Status</i>
Kithimu	46,000	-	-	-	-	3,000	6,000	Delivered
Gatondo	30,300	3,350	-	-	2,530	3,400	25,000	Delivered
<i>Total</i>	<i>343,975</i>	<i>23,652</i>	<i>59,529</i>	<i>37,680</i>	<i>23,585</i>	<i>8,251</i>	<i>108,000</i>	<i>604,672</i>
<i>%</i>	<i>56.9</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>9.8</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>17.9</i>	<i>100</i>

(Embu West District Education Office, 2013)

The largest chunk of the CSG seemed to have gone to furniture procurement, followed by teachers' salaries top up. Local travelling took the least amount; something that is commendable. Most important was that all the projects were complete and in use. The qualities of ECDE services were reported to have improved as majority of teachers were motivated by the top up of their salaries. Due to the procurement of furniture by most of the ECDE centers the children were comfortable; hence they were more alert and active during learning. The chairs were child-size; hence supporting children's physical development unlike the ordinary desks used in the normal primary school classes. Instructional materials were also qualitatively and quantitatively improved. Quality of teaching and learning was much facilitated by establishment of conducive classroom learning environment. Construction of toilets and buying of water tanks was bound to have positive impact on the health of the children.

**Table 4. Quality of documentation and records**

<i>School</i>	<i>Document Procurement</i>	<i>Payment Vouchers</i>	<i>ECD Committee Minutes Book</i>	<i>CSG File</i>	<i>CSG Notice Board</i>
Mbukori	×	√	√	√	×
Nembure	√	√	√	√	×
St Andrew	×	×	×	√	×
Keruri	√	√	√	√	×
St Joseph Kevote	×	√	√	√	×
Tende	×	×	√	√	×
Makengi	√	√	√	√	×
CCM Kevote	√	√	√	√	×
Ngoire	√	×	×	×	×
Rukira	×	√	√	√	×
Kihumbu	√	√	√	√	×
Kithegi	√	√	√	√	×
Kithimu	√	√	√	√	×
Gatondo	×	√	×	√	×
<i>%</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>0</i>

(Embu West District Education Office, 2013)

Key: √ Available × Not Available

Majority of the ECD centers, 57%, had prepared the procurement document i.e. list of prequalified artisans, description of work contracts, quotations, work supervision report, etc. as required. A few of the centers, 43%, however, had not prepared the documents, though work had been contracted. Most of the ECDE centers had payment vouchers and receipts of procured goods except 2 schools i.e. St Andrews, Tende, which work was in progress but not paid for. A number of ECDE centers didn't have a separate committees minutes book and CSG file. None of the schools visited had CSG notice board.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

Whereas there was increment in terms of enrolment in the ECDE Centers, the rate of boys was considerably low compared to that one of the girls. This differs with some regions where enrollment has always been higher for boys than for girls'. This has prompted those regions to campaign a lot for girl-child education as an affirmative action. Still, many parents have not recognized the impact of CSG. This is because they feel they should not be asked for anything (resources or labour) as it should be the work of the government.

Instructional materials were also qualitatively and quantitatively improved. Quality teaching and learning, as a result of rich-learning environment was the expected results. This agrees with most of other regions where the rate of retention and transition is high as a result of CSG, especially in ECDE centers where feeding programs are in place. Construction of toilets and buying of water tanks was bound to have positive impact on the health of the children.

Due to the procurement of furniture by most of the ECDE centers the children are now comfortable hence more alert and active during learning. The chairs were also child-size, hence supporting child development unlike other ordinary desks used. The quality of ECDE services had improved as majority of teachers were motivated by the top up of their salaries. As much as this may agree with many other regions, it's not the case with some; since even the teachers' commitment in the delivery of ECDE services is still very low.

However, there were challenges that were seen to strain the expected positive consistence in the efforts of providing quality education to the children that includes; in some schools parents resolved to use artisans that were involved in other work elsewhere. Therefore prequalification was not done, there was poor record keeping in most of the schools, most of the head teachers, though trained on CSG, were not keen on record keeping and there was Lack of community support on the program; its only one school where parents agreed to contribute some money to supplement the CSG. In others the ECDE parents felt they had a big burden of paying fees for the children. The findings compares with a study on the impact of community support grant on access to early childhood education and development in Tharaka District (Mukwamugao, 2010).

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude it was very true to say that Community Support Grant had met a desirable effect in the education of Embu West District Early Childhood Education and Development children. Community Support Grant program should be expanded and rations get increased in order to enhance transition from pre-school to primary school. It should accurately be aimed at assisting the poorest community to improve services provided in their ECDE centers where various indicators are showing in terms of:

1. Low access to ECEDE services

2. Poor health and malnutrition symptoms among children whereby high stunting and wasting levels are very common.
3. A high infant mortality rate is also a common phenomenon in our country.
4. There is high micronutrient deficiencies and low immunization among our children.
5. High poverty incidence where majority of the population lives under one dollar per day (below poverty line).
6. The rate of orphan and vulnerable children is very high in Kenya.
7. Poor infrastructure in ECDE centers in general is very common.
8. There is ignorance on the part of parents on what CSG is and what it should do in their ECDE centers.
9. There was some laxity by the head teachers on proper documentation and record keeping.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. All stakeholders should concert their efforts to support Early Childhood Development and Education in Kenya in their respective regions. Infrastructure should be a major target of improvement in most of ECDE centers in the country.
2. Prequalification of artisans should always be done with the enthusiasm it deserves.
3. Artisans engaged in any work under CSG program should not involve themselves in other works that delays and or interferes/negatively affects the project's quality delivery.
4. Proper record keeping in schools under CSG program should be done and all relevant education and Ministry of Education officers should reinforce that.
5. Community should be sensitized on the meaning of CSG as it should supplement their efforts already seen in place.
6. The ECDE Centers' committees should ensure that the balance remaining in the accounts should be put into appropriate use in order to avoid inefficiency and wastage.
7. A survey should be done in order to establish how CSG has reduced the rate of drop out and repetition at lower primary schools in the district, as well as whether the quality of ECDE services has improved as a result of CSG.
8. Some amount of CSG should be allocated to feeding program in order to improve child health and nutrition status as this is an intended outcome of the CSG facility.
9. Boy child should be encouraged to enroll in ECDE learning centers. This will enhance the realization of equity in Early Childhood Development and Education.
10. More evaluation on the impact of CSG should be carried out in all districts in Kenya.

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