



Enhancing Evidence-Informed Decision-Making
for **Improved Childcare Ecosystem in Kenya**



Why this work matters

Across Kenya and much of sub-Saharan Africa, families rely on a patchwork of largely informal childcare services that are often low-quality, under-resourced, and operate with limited oversight. Yet, these services remain indispensable for women's participation in paid work and for children's well-being. In Kenya, where over 84% of women work in the informal sector (KNBS & UN Women, 2020), inadequate childcare limits women's productivity and income while increasing the strain of balancing paid and unpaid work. Available literature show that quality childcare improves child development, female labour force participation, and poverty alleviation, with investments yielding up to three times the return in GDP growth through job creation in the care economy and increased labor participation (ILO, 2018; World Bank & IFC, 2021,). ICRW's recent synthesis of two decades of research in Africa indicates that systemic challenges including weak government support and supervision, unclear policies, inadequate infrastructure, and large numbers of poorly trained providers characterize the region's childcare services landscape (ICRW, 2024). The Women in Childcare (WiC) Project seeks to generate and disseminate contextually relevant evidence to enhance the responsiveness of childcare ecosystems to the needs and challenges of women and marginalized households.

What we're doing

ICRW is implementing a participatory research and policy-engagement initiative in Kenya to generate high-quality evidence and translate it into system-level change. The objectives of the initiative are to:

- 1** Map women-owned childcare enterprises and document their characteristics, types, services, and operational challenges in Nairobi City County, Kisumu and Vihiga Counties.
- 2** Document the unmet childcare needs of poor and marginalized households and identify practical options and strategies to meet those needs.
- 3** Identify policy and programmatic options that policy actors can use to strengthen women-owned childcare services in Nairobi city county, Kisumu, and Vihiga counties.
- 4** Foster a learning ecosystem and build multi-stakeholder capacity for sustained systems-level change through participatory research, embedded learning, and community-led action.

→ Our approach

- Participatory, multi-method research with households, women-owned childcare providers, and decision-makers to surface operational realities, quality gaps, and feasible improvement pathways.
- Systems mapping & measurement of provider quality, infrastructure, safety and hygiene, workforce skills, and provider-government interactions, to identify bottlenecks and quick-win opportunities.
- Co-creation with policymakers and practitioners throughout the project cycle.
- Targeted advocacy, influencing, and engagement to translate insights into action

? What's different about ICRW's model

01

Evidence with clear user pathways:

provider-first pragmatism with a focus on women-owned enterprises prevalent in underserved areas.

02

Research to policy action involving stakeholder roundtables, policy briefs, budget markers, and other actions that move insight quickly into implementation.

03

Grounding in Kenya's policy landscape, particularly issues of devolution reforms, social protection, ECDE, and childcare quality and accessibility

Core Deliverables



Evidence-based county and national evidence briefs.



Childcare Quality & Support Toolkit



Policy and budget integration models

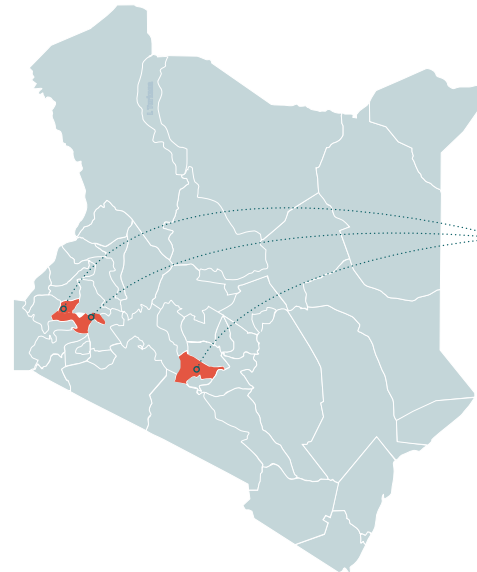


Advocacy and public engagement resources



Who we work with

This action research project activates a broad coalition including ministries and county governments, labour unions, private sector, academia, and global partners. The project's Technical Advisory Group also convenes and engages a cross-section of champions from governmental, non-governmental and multilateral institutions.



Where we are currently working:

Nairobi,
Kisumu,
and Vihiga
Counties

Anticipated outcomes

Improved quality of services in women-owned childcare enterprises

01

More sustainable childcare businesses (stronger operations, stability, and viability)

02

Higher patronage and profits for women-owned childcare enterprises

03

Greater national and county government support and investment in women-owned childcare

04

Improved access to affordable childcare for marginalized households and women

05

Increased participation of women and caregivers in paid economic activities

06

Improved gender equality within vulnerable households

07

Better educational, health, and overall wellbeing outcomes for children in vulnerable households

08

Reduced school dropout among girls from poor households

09



Intermediate Results:

- Stronger evidence base,
- More evidence-informed policymaking,
- Enhanced capacity of policy actors to use data on childcare.

Contact

**International Center for Research on Women
w(ICRW) – Africa Hub, Nairobi**

For partnerships, press, or technical inquiries,
please write to: DirectorAfrica@icrw.org

✕ **twitter:** @ICRWAfrica

f **Facebook:** ICRW Africa

@ **Instagram:** icrw_africa

in **Linkedin:** ICRW Africa

🎵 **Tiktok:** icrwafrica



Financial Support provided by:

