

POLICY BRIEF

Sustaining Community-Funded Early Childhood Development

A Three-Year Viability Analysis for Informal Settlements in Kampala, 2023–2026

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood development (ECD) provision in informal settlements is critically underfunded. Community-funded centres have emerged as a primary response, yet their medium-term financial and operational viability remains unexamined, posing a significant policy challenge. This policy brief analyses the three-year sustainability of community-funded ECD centres in a major urban informal settlement. It aims to identify key viability thresholds and the primary mechanisms influencing their continuity. A longitudinal, mixed-methods viability analysis was conducted, integrating financial audits of centre accounts, repeated caregiver surveys on payment behaviours, and structured interviews with centre management committees. Centres relying solely on caregiver fees face a high risk of closure within 18 months, with a critical viability threshold identified at a minimum of 30% of operational costs being sourced from non-fee community assets or in-kind contributions. Financial instability was compounded by inconsistent fee collection, cited by 85% of managers as the principal threat to continuity. The current model of exclusively fee-dependent community ECD provision is not sustainable in the studied context. Without structured intervention to diversify revenue and build financial resilience, access to quality early learning will deteriorate. Policy must incentivise hybrid financing models. Specific interventions should include establishing micro-grant schemes matched to community contributions, training management committees in financial governance, and formalising partnerships with local businesses for resource support. This brief provides a novel, evidence-based viability framework for analysing the financial resilience of community-funded ECD centres, identifying specific non-fee revenue thresholds critical for their survival.

Keywords: *community-funded early childhood development, informal settlements, Sub-Saharan Africa, financial sustainability, viability analysis, Kampala, programme evaluation*

Article Highlights

- Critical viability threshold: 30% non-fee community contributions needed
- 85% of managers cite inconsistent fee collection as principal threat
- Exclusively fee-dependent ECD provision is unsustainable in

Policy Imperative

Without structured intervention to diversify revenue and build financial resilience, access to quality early learning will deteriorate in Kampala's informal settlements.

This analysis provides evidence-based thresholds for community ECD sustainability.

studied context • Hybrid financing models with micro-grants and partnerships recommended	
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ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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