

ECD MEASUREMENT CONFERENCE

Venue: Ubumwe Grande Hotel

Date: 27th October 2023

CLOSING REMARKS

Greetings:

- Government officials from Eastern and Southern Africa
 - Representatives of UNICEF
 - Representatives of the WHO
 - Representatives of the World Bank Group
 - Representatives of the Africa Early Childhood Network
 - Representatives of the Early Childhood Development Action Network
 - Representatives of developmental partners, civil society, funders, academia
 - All protocols observed
1. On behalf of the Government of Rwanda, we were honored to host this important Regional Meeting on measures to assess early childhood Development and it is clear that you enjoyed the conference and staying in Rwanda.
 2. We were all here because we believe that Investment in early childhood pays off through better health, enhanced learning capacity, increased adult earnings, poverty reduction, fewer inequalities, and a more peaceful society.
 3. In the Opening session we were reminded that the ECD is part of the transformative agenda for 2030, making it an international priority for the 21st century. Global targets in education (SDG 4.2); health (SDG 3.2); nutrition (SDG 2.2); and protection (SDG

16.2) address key outcomes to realize young children's developmental potential.

4. We recognized that we had an opportunity to take stock of the available measurement tools and indicators that are important for ECD; exchange experiences streamline efforts, and agree on how to ensure relevant data is captured and utilized to strengthen policies and services.
5. The lessons learned here have been enhanced by the market space whereby different countries showcased their best practices, and this was the best moment for peer learning.
6. The evidence is clear: Early childhood development must be a national priority. We already have pledged to achieve the early childhood development targets in the Sustainable Development Goals. To back up this pledge with action and to make the shift from surviving to thriving, we need to:
 - Ensure that Early childhood development policies and programmes, that cut across all social sectors, are a national priority. Policies, programs, and other support that enable parents and caregivers to provide the best start in life for their children pay off in healthier, better-educated children, a better-equipped workforce, and more sustainable growth.
 - Invest urgently in services that give young children, especially the most deprived, the best start in life. We need to spend more on children and spend it earlier in the life course. A commitment to early investment means that children and families are protected through the vulnerable – and critical – preschool years, and will be better positioned to thrive throughout the life course. Governments and societies also benefit, since when designed properly, investments in the early childhood period can optimize subsequent spending.

- Provide dedicated leadership for early childhood development programs and coordinate efforts more effectively across sectors.
 - Collect data on essential indicators of early childhood development and track progress, supported by strong scientific research, sound implementation, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation.
 - We have the science, knowledge, and experience. Now, it is up to us to invest in early childhood development. What we do now to foster early childhood development will determine the future of young children, our own, and our respective countries.
7. As I conclude, I acknowledge the invaluable contribution of everyone in organizing this regional meeting namely WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank, the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfEC), and the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN). Your job was amazing. My sincere gratitude also goes to all participants from different countries for representing them well and sharing experiences.
 8. We wish a good stay for those who are going to stay here in Kigali and a Safe flight for those who are soon flying back to their respective country and we are planning the field visit for ECD facilities in Kigali you are kindly all invited to join us.
 9. I therefore declare this meeting officially Closed
 10. Murakoze Cyane.
 11. “Umwana wanjye Ishema ryanjye,” “My Child, My Pride”