

Early childhood development (ECD) is a critical period that continues to impact human health and productivity throughout the lifetime.



Clean water, a hygienic environment, love, safety and security are also some of the elements required for a child to grow up and develop into social, well-adapted, emotionally-balanced and productive citizens.

Services for infants, young children, parents, legal guardians and other caregivers must address the needs of the child in a holistic manner.

It is essential that all sectors of government and society work together to support the holistic development of young children, while supporting their parents and legal guardians in their role of primary caregivers.

At the event that attracted 3000 participants including government officials and development partners, the First Lady Jeannette Kagame requested districts and other institutions to include Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes in their activity plans so as to invest in children's education.

She was speaking in Gakenke District last week during the celebration of International Day of the African Child and the World Day against Child Labour that was marked under the theme 'Leave No Child Behind for Africa's Development.

The First lady said that the celebration of International Day of the African Child and the World Day against Child Labour should go along with fighting against all challenges that can hamper growth of a child.

"We should strive for the rights of children and fight anything that could deter them from good growth, this would help them being open minded and to have positive mindsets," she said.

Speaking at Nemba playground in Gakenke district, the First Lady said the Centres have contributed enormously to holistic growth of Children.



She thanked programme partners in ECD centres for the support in building havens of holistic growth to thousands of Rwandan children, and for giving them a chance

to prepare for the world.

Madam Jeannette Kagame called upon districts and other institutions to include ECD programmes activities when doing their development planning saying that it is necessary because it is a good investment which will facilitate Rwanda to have a stable economy based on her children skills.

Emphasising on the government efforts to ensure no Child is left out of access to education, Mrs. Kagame said that 8,383 Children were rescued from hard labour and taken back to school since 2016.

The Minister of Gender and Family Promotion, Esperance Nyirasafari condemned people who engage teenagers in labour.



“We strongly condemn whoever employs teenagers and other kind of Child Labour because it affects not only Children’s education but also their development and well-being at large,” she said.

The celebrations came after the second ECD symposium themed “*Integrated ECD interventions for optimum child development (starting from conception)*” which took place on 14 June 2018 at Kigali Convention Center.

A series of activities bringing awareness to the importance of adopting Early Child Development practices within the families and enabling access to ECD interventions at decentralized level, were also carried out from May to June 2018.

The emphasizing on sensitizing stakeholders, parents and the community at large, on the importance of increasing ECD services for the 0-6 year olds, for higher impact on the child’s health and future well-being.

According to Dr. Anita Asimwe – who heads the National Early Child Development Programme, “Scaling up of integrated ECD services to all villages of Rwanda is our overall goal.



“Fighting stunting among children requires everyone’s efforts if the country’s target to reduce stunting from the current 38 per cent to 15 per cent by 2020 is to be

achieved” noted Anita.

Without more concerted efforts from parents, the campaign against stunting will be in vain. No parent should allow their child to become stunted. It is the primary responsibility of every parent to ensure that their child grows up normally and healthy.



Participants at second ECD symposium which took place on 14 June 2018 at Kigali Convention Center.

In recent years, nutrition has increasingly gained attention as a powerful foot in the battle against malnutrition. In the face of global threats such as economic challenges and human diseases- strategies to eliminate malnutrition are frequently being adopted to enable populations better adapt the shocks and stresses these global challenges bring.



Kids having porridge for breakfast at Mageragere ECD center

Sun Alliance an umbrella of NGO’s engaged in health programs in Rwanda and the Nationally Early Childhood Development program directors have noted that challenges that still underlay the fight to end stunting and improving nutrition show need for more budget and parental engagement.

According to Venuste Muhamyankaka the Executive Director of Sun alliance, the primary purpose of the SUN Alliance is to strengthen the coordination between nutrition actors, through tracking results and aligning strategies, programs and resources of its members with country plans to eliminate all forms of Malnutrition.



Venuste Muhamyankaka the Executive Director of Sun alliance

“There is need for more intervention especially when it comes to commitment in the fight against malnutrition. There are more than 700,000 stunted children in Rwanda because of poor feeding and because parents cannot afford the accepted diets. The

budget for nutritional programs is still low and there is need to train more people on nutrition to end stunting in the country” said Muhamyankaka

In 2014, 79 Civil Society Organizations in the fight against malnutrition in Rwanda endorsed the establishment of the Alliance, and was legally registered in June 2016.