The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has introduced an innovative tool designed to improve the operations of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers throughout Rwanda. This cutting-edge technology, known as the 'ECD Mapping Tool,' was officially launched on Tuesday, November 19, 2024, during a meeting with key stakeholders, including ECD partners and Deputy Mayors responsible for social affairs.

Created through a partnership between the National Child Development and Protection Agency (NCDA), UNICEF, and CRS Rwanda, the tool is part of the Gikuriro Kuri Bose project. It aims to collect and analyze data on the performance of ECD centers, offering valuable insights into their operations, services, beneficiaries, and infrastructure.

At the launch event, Juliana Lindsey, the UNICEF Representative in Rwanda, expressed her pride in the project's achievements:

"We commend NCDA for developing this tool to gather data on ECD centers. With accurate information, everything runs smoothly, and I'm confident that Rwanda will meet its objectives for Early Childhood Development centers as outlined in the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2)," she stated.

The ECD Mapping Tool is designed to collect comprehensive data on each center's operations, including the services offered, the beneficiaries they assist, and the overall performance of the centers. This information is crucial for enhancing the quality and accessibility of ECD services nationwide, ensuring that all children have equal access to high-quality care and education.

Ingabire Assoumpta, Director General of NCDA, expressed her gratitude for the collaboration that enabled the tool's development. She highlighted the significance of accurate data in shaping effective policies and strategies for the nation's young population.

"We are thankful to all the partners who have contributed to the creation of this tool," stated Madam Assoumpta. "Having access to reliable data on Early Childhood Development (ECD) is vital for crafting policies and programs that will enhance the well-being of our children. This tool will enable us to make informed decisions to improve the quality of services and ensure they reach every child in need."

Batamuriza Mireille, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Gender and Family

Promotion (MIGEPROF), also commended the new system. She emphasized its potential to set a standard for ECD services, concentrating on quality and measurable outcomes.

“Delivering high-quality services in ECD centers is crucial for our children’s future,” remarked Batamuriza. “This new tool will provide us with the necessary data to assess and enhance services, guaranteeing that every child receives the best possible start in life.”

ECD centers are essential in promoting the health and education of Rwandan children, focusing on their intellectual, physical, and social growth. These centers offer nutritious meals, emphasize hygiene, and provide care aimed at stimulating children’s minds while shielding them from challenges that could impact their future well-being.

This initiative is part of the Rwandan government’s ongoing commitment to combat child malnutrition, with NST2 targeting a reduction in the national stunting rate from 33% to 15% by 2029.

By delivering valuable data and insights, the ECD Mapping Tool is anticipated to significantly improve the effectiveness of Early Childhood Development services throughout Rwanda, ensuring that every child has the best possible start in life.