

The Role of Female Childcare Workers in Quality, Affordable Childcare in Africa

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In Africa, the quest for quality, affordable childcare is heavily reliant on the contributions of female childcare workers. These women are not just caregivers; they are the backbone of early childhood development, playing a crucial role in enhancing the well-being of children and families. This article delves into their indispensable contributions and the challenges they face, highlighting the importance of their role in this sector.

Female childcare workers often bring natural empathy and nurturing instincts to their roles. These qualities help create a supportive and comforting environment, fostering children's emotional and social development. Their ability to connect personally with young minds ensures that children grow up with a strong sense of identity and belonging.

Uthabiti's [Status of Female Childcare Workers Report 2023](#) analyzed data from 7,000 childcare micro-enterprises in Kenya. The data reveals that 92% are female and only 8% are male. In the analyzed data, 60% operate Home-Based Childcare (HBCC) facilities and have never been reached with services 1. Because they are invisible and operate in their private spaces 2. Because they fear coming out, they are the most preferred by families (according to this data).

These women are also uniquely positioned to advocate for policy changes supporting quality, affordable childcare. Their firsthand experiences provide powerful insights for influencing decision-makers and shaping policies that address the specific needs of children, families, and caregivers. For instance, Uthabiti's recent report reveals that in Kenya, 92% of childcare micro-enterprises are run by women, with many operating Home-Based Childcare (HBCC) facilities which are often preferred by families due to their accessibility and trust ([Uthabiti Africa](#)) ([ECDAN](#)).

Having female role models in childcare is vital for challenging gender stereotypes. When young boys and girls see women in leadership roles within childcare facilities, they learn that caregiving is an important and

respected skill for everyone. This exposure helps foster a more inclusive and equitable society.

Female childcare workers are often deeply embedded in their communities, building trust and rapport with families. This community engagement is crucial for the success of childcare initiatives. It fosters a collaborative approach where families and caregivers work together to nurture children's holistic development.

Despite their critical role, female childcare workers face significant challenges such as low wages, inadequate training, and limited career advancement opportunities. Addressing these issues is essential for sustaining quality childcare. Investing in training programs, fair compensation, and career growth pathways are crucial steps in recognizing and valuing their contributions ([Uthabiti Africa](#)).

Employing female childcare workers also boosts economic development by creating job opportunities for women. This empowerment has a positive ripple effect on the economic well-being of communities. Investing in the childcare workforce is thus a strategic move toward building a more resilient and prosperous society.

The journey to quality, affordable childcare for all in Africa hinges on the invaluable contributions of female childcare workers. Their unique qualities, community engagement, and advocacy efforts lay the foundation for future generations. Recognizing, supporting, and empowering these women is essential for the continent to achieve its childcare goals. With concerted efforts, Africa can indeed provide quality, affordable childcare for all.

In the same vein, having male champions for childcare is essential for advancing the childcare agenda, and addressing the social and gender norms that place a heavy burden of (child)care on women. Ultimately, a truly gender-transformative childcare agenda must see an increase in men providing paid childcare from the current 8% to higher figure in the years to come.