



kizazi kijacho

Research for the next generation

State-of-the-art research in Tanzania to inform innovative Early Childhood Development Programming for the next generation.

While important progress has been made in reducing under-five mortality in recent years, poor developmental outcomes for children under five can last a lifetime and perpetuate an inter-generational cycle of poverty and marginalization. The need for action is widely recognized, but it is not yet matched by a requisite understanding of the process of and barriers to improving child development at scale in low-and middle-income country (LMIC) settings.

the challenge

There is a need for more frequent and precise measurement of all inputs and outcomes in the child development process, starting in-utero, so that we can better understand what interventions are most effective, when, and why. Even the best available longitudinal cohort datasets from LMICs contain virtually no information on child development before the age of five, which is likely the most sensitive period, and many of the “gold-standard” measurements of child development outcomes that originated in wealthier countries take a long time to administer and require highly skilled and trained assessors, all of which is not cost-effective in LMICs. Moreover, a lack of knowledge and evidence on how to effectively design and deliver scalable and contextually appropriate early child development (ECD) interventions in LMICs has hindered investment and scale-up in this critical area of development. Gathering rigorous evidence on the impact of innovative service delivery solutions, such as digital tools, to support frontline workers in delivering high-quality, respectful and standardized household ECD services and comparing cost-effectiveness relative to that of an unconditional cash transfer (UCT) program would therefore be extremely valuable, especially when considering how to take these programs to scale.

the objective

To address these challenges and fill the existing knowledge gaps, the Institute for International Economic Studies (IIES, Stockholm University), Ifakara Health Institute (IHI), Yale University,

FAIR (NHH Norwegian School of Economics), and University of Chile in collaboration with implementing partners D-tree International, Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) and EDI Global, in April 2022 will launch a groundbreaking six-year ECD research program in Tanzania entitled “Kizazi Kijacho” (The Next Generation). This program will use novel longitudinal and experimental data from a nationally-representative sample of 4,620 pregnant women to yield actionable evidence for policy makers, donors and practitioners about the design of cost-effective, scalable, sustainable, integrated ECD parenting programs, from the prenatal period until the child’s 3rd year of life – the “first 1,000 days.”

Specifically, this ambitious research program aims to make a major scientific contribution by establishing and analyzing a large and exceptionally rich nationally-representative longitudinal cohort dataset using state-of-the art methods to measure child development and its multi-dimensional inputs from in-utero until the age of 3 - the first research of its kind in an LMIC setting. Moreover, the program will also carry out a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in the Dodoma region to test the cost-effectiveness of a parenting intervention in which Community Health Workers (CHWs) will be guided by an innovative digital application to help provide caregivers with continuous support in all aspects of nurturing care (i.e., health, sanitation, nutrition and early stimulation), relative to the cost-effectiveness of an unconditional cash transfer program.

anticipated impact

The rich longitudinal cohort dataset we will generate through this program will help us develop a detailed picture of how children across Tanzania are developing from in-utero until age 3 in this era of massive economic change. The resulting findings on the human development process will enable us to identify critical points in the child’s early life when specific domains develop, when specific inputs (such as nutrition and stimulation) are most impactful, and when their influence wanes. By analyzing material versus non-material inducements to ECD and determining those with highest impact and cost-effectiveness, our findings will form a blueprint for ECD programs in Tanzania at a national scale.

Supplemented by sizable efforts to disseminate our research findings to ECD stakeholders worldwide, this research has the potential to strengthen ECD policy and programming in LMICs more broadly, thereby helping to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

contact

email:
kizazi.kijacho@iies.su.se

website:
www.iies.su.se/research/kizazi-kijacho



IIES



Yale



FACULTY OF PHYSICAL AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF CHILE



EDI Global

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