

Giving Kenyan parents the option of quality affordable childcare

How Kidogo's franchise model benefits children, caregivers and "Mamapreneurs"

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Dinah used to wake up every morning with a difficult decision to make: where should she leave her twin baby daughters when she goes to work for the day as a cleaner? Dinah, in her early 30s, lives in Kangemi – one of the many informal settlements in Nairobi. Her choices for childcare were slim: she could leave the babies at home with her 7-year-old daughter, who would need to stay off school for the day, or pay to leave them in an informal daycare centre.

The daycare was Dinah's best option – but not a good one. In centres like this, one untrained worker can look after more than 20 babies and toddlers in a 3 metre by 3 metre corrugated metal shack. They typically do not engage with the children and focus on just keeping them quiet. Meanwhile mothers like Dinah struggle to be productive at work for fear of what state they will find their children in when they pick them up at the end of the day.

"I was really tired of the daycare," says Dinah. "My babies had lost weight, they were unhappy, they weren't being fed. I would pack food for them but when I picked them up in the evening, the food would be returned untouched. The

caregiver would claim that my babies had no appetite. They would also come home looking very dirty. It was terrible."

There are an estimated 6,000 centres like this in Nairobi's low-income communities. Children here miss out on the kind of nurturing, responsive care that builds brain development in the crucial early years of life. Many enter school with developmental delays, fail to get a solid education, and continue the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

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Kidogo emerged in response to demand from mothers like Dinah for childcare that is high quality yet affordable. Through a social franchising approach, it trains daycare operators and certifies them as Kidogo "Mamapreneurs". After the initial training, Kidogo provides continuous coaching,

mentoring and support to Mamapreneurs to ensure that they consistently meet the franchise's quality standards.

How Kidogo is changing the narrative

Lydia Awuor, a 34-year-old woman living in Kangemi, left her job as a teacher after her school did not pay her salary for months. She decided to set up her own daycare centre but encountered a range of challenges that she did not know how to deal with. Her friend Hellen, a Kidogo Mamapreneur, suggested she enrol in Kidogo's programme so that she could develop entrepreneurial skills in early childhood care and education.

When Dinah expressed to her friends her growing dissatisfaction with her existing daycare, one of them introduced her to Lydia's new centre. After being trained by Kidogo in how to engage with parents, Lydia was able to talk to Dinah about the importance of early childhood development and how she runs her centre to ensure the wellbeing of the children she cares for.

"You can't compare the two centres, honestly," Dinah says. "Lydia really takes good care of my children. I fully trust her. I don't have stress at all because I know my babies are in good hands. I would previously constantly worry about them, now I can call just once a day to check in because I know they are OK. My babies have improved, they are healthy, they can use the potty now, feed themselves and can walk all on their own. I couldn't ask for more."

Dinah is happy to pay the equivalent of around USD 1 per day. It's a small price to pay for peace of mind. With her babies not getting sick as often, Dinah is able to work more consistently and earn a better living.

For informal daycare operators, collecting fees tends to be a challenging and sometimes confrontational process. However, Lydia's Kidogo coaching includes how to manage her finances and approach conversations with parents about payments. The professional nature of her relationships with parents



Photo: Daniel Macharia, Kidogo

↑ Mamapreneur spending quality time with a toddler in her care

fosters a deeper bond with them, as they appreciate that they are receiving a service that is worth paying for. They also begin to see Mamapreneurs as professionals.

"Parents used to think all daycares did was 'toilet work' like changing diapers," Lydia says. "They see me engaging their children, playing with them and they can see their children develop. They are different from the other kids."

Kidogo, in partnership with an external researcher, conducted research on parent perceptions and found

that parents in Kidogo centres shifted their priorities from affordability, distance from home, and safety to:

- 1 physical environment (i.e. cleanliness, safety and security, and space for the children to play)
- 2 caregiving skills
- 3 diet and nutrition, and
- 4 play-based activities

as the most important factors in their decision-making. These were promising findings, as they show that exposure to quality care can focus parental demand on quality early childhood care and education.

Lydia's centre has flourished, attracting new families through referrals and becoming trusted in the community. She now runs a multi-classroom centre with 33 children, and has employed two additional caregivers. She is earning three times more as a Mamapreneur than she did as a teacher and feels more respected by her family and peers.

"My husband was unemployed for five months," Lydia says, "and it was my business that paid our rent and fed our family. My husband spread the news in our village that I had qualified as a Kidogo Mamapreneur, and some came to celebrate with us."

↓ Mamapreneur educating children through play



Photo: Daniel Macharia, Kidogo

→ Lydia Awuor (left) and Dinah

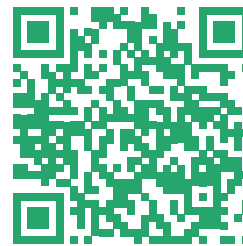
Kidogo has become the largest childcare network in Kenya, with more than 1,500 Mamapreneurs looking after over 38,000 children every day – a figure set to increase to 100,000 by 2027. Lydia and Dinah’s stories highlight the win-win-win of quality, affordable childcare: for parents, it can reduce stress and improve wellbeing; for caregivers and qualified providers alike, it can unlock earning potential; and for young children, it can ensure they receive the care, nutrition and stimulation they need to thrive¹.

¹ Watch these videos to meet a mamapreneur and father and son, who, like Lydia and Dinah, are experiencing quality, affordable childcare



Photo: Tabitha Susan Kidogo

“Lydia and Dinah’s stories highlight the win-win-win of quality, affordable childcare.”



← Scan the QR code to see Mamapreneur Eunice in action



← Scan the QR code to meet Eric and his son Justin, who attends Kidogo daycare

Videos: Daniel Macharia, Kidogo & Mathenge Nduhii, Kidogo

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