



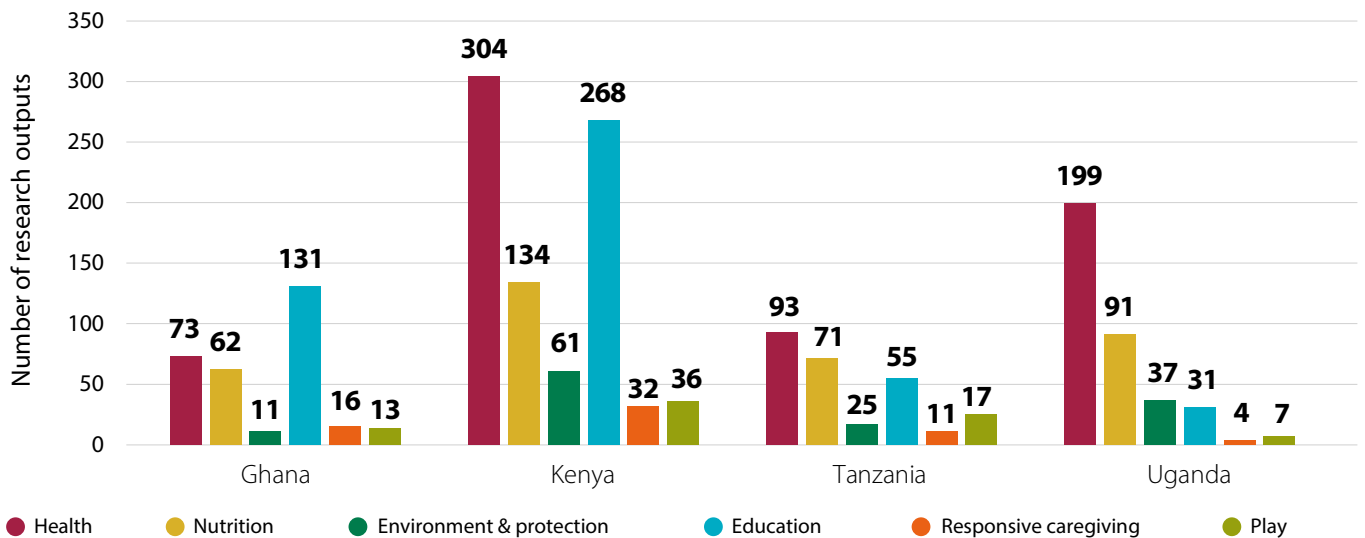
Mapping early childhood development research in sub-Saharan Africa: Cross-country mapping **Summary**

This summary covers the findings from an analysis of Early Childhood Development (ECD) research outputs written by authors based in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) spanning the period 2010 to 2022. Research outputs were mapped in four countries: Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. These findings were compared with searches of publications identified through international databases for the period 2020 to 2022. For the purposes of the analysis, ECD components include: education, play, health, nutrition, environment and protection, and responsive caregiving. The methodology used to conduct the searches can be found in the full report.

The importance of ECD to ensure all young children, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential is widely recognised. The education Sustainable Development Goals include a target (4.2) on ‘access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for education.’ Similarly, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 under the Continental Education Strategy emphasised ECD as the foundation for quality education and training.

In total, 1,208 research outputs were identified through the country-level searches. Almost half of these were identified in Kenya (576). Ghana (222), Uganda (221) and Tanzania (189) had similar numbers. Comparing the trend in research outputs from country-level searches to those published in journals identified through searches of international databases for the period 2020 to 2022, we see more than twice as many from international sources (with a total of 907 compared with 296 for the same period). Health outputs featured most strongly across the countries, with the lowest proportion for environment and protection, responsive caregiving, and play (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Research outputs by ECD component from country-level searches (2010-2022)

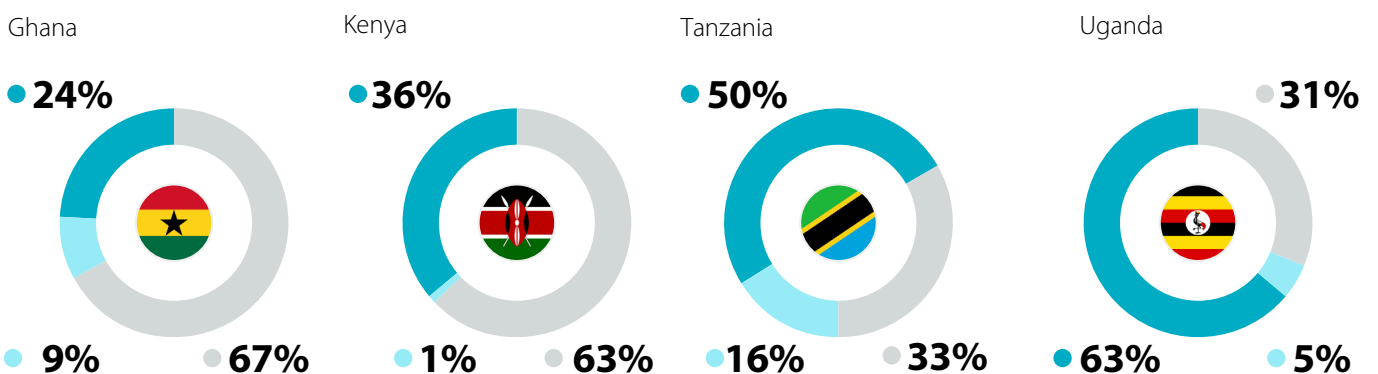


In all four countries, ECD research was mostly siloed. Where interconnections were evident, research outputs on health were more likely to connect with nutrition, while research outputs on education mainly interconnected with play. In Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, only one study focused on all six ECD components, while there were none that did so in Tanzania.

The proportion of research outputs that were funded ranged from 24 percent in Ghana to 63 percent in Uganda (Figure 2). Health and nutrition recorded a higher proportion of research outputs that were funded across the four countries. Articles in internationally recognised journals were more likely to receive funding across all four countries, ranging from 44 percent in Ghana to 71 percent in Kenya.

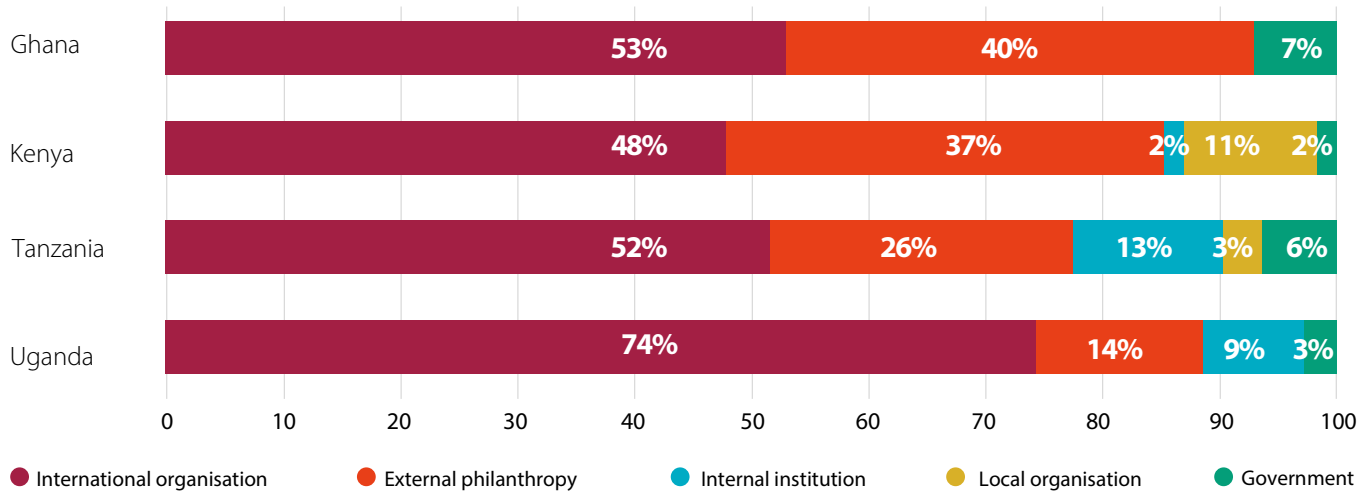
Figure 2: Funding status based on country-level searches (2010-2022)

Funded Non funded No information



Funding across the four countries came primarily from international organisations, followed by external philanthropic organisations. By contrast, government funding represents an extremely small proportion of funding for all countries (Figure 3). A similar pattern was identified for publications found in international databases, for which international organisations were even more prominent.

Figure 3: Funding type based on country-level searches (2020-2022)

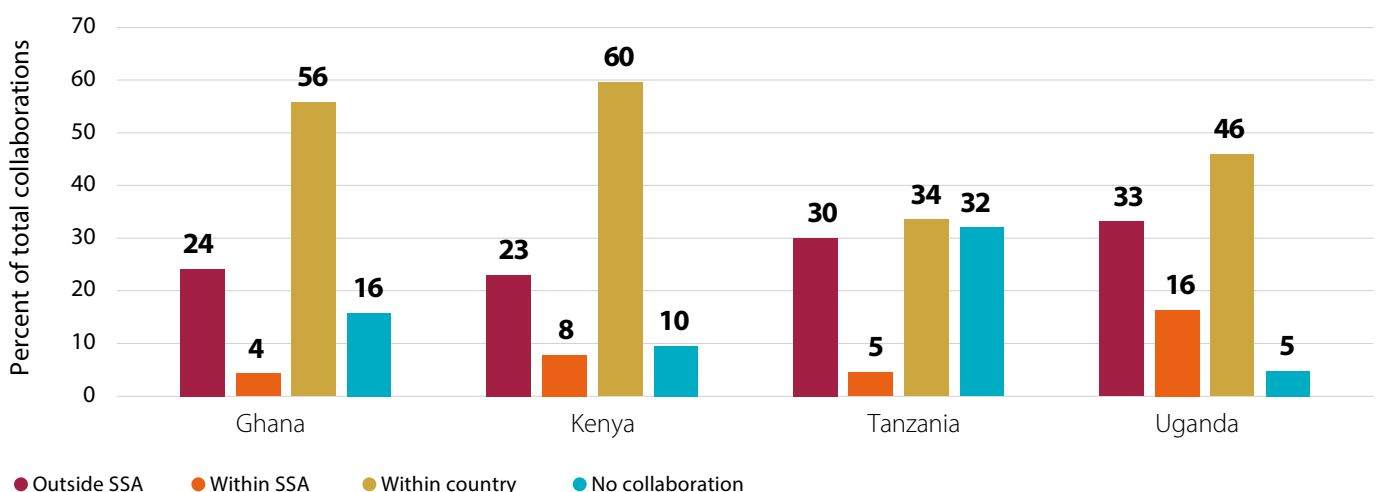


To explore how inequality was addressed in research outputs, we assessed whether they included analysis by poverty, gender, disability, ethnicity and religion of participants. Just over one quarter of the research outputs in Ghana included an assessment of inequality, while 72 percent included inequality in the analysis in Uganda. Around 90 percent of publications from international databases included assessment for inequality. Gender inequality was the most included in country-level searches, ranging from 34 percent in Ghana to 65 percent in Tanzania. In international databases, poverty was the most common with minimal variation across countries, accounting for at least 40 percent. Religion and ethnicity were included the least across all four countries. Apart from Ghana (29 percent), disability was rarely addressed in the outputs analysed. In addition, more than one in four research outputs were conducted in rural areas across the four countries, even though they are often the most deprived locations.

Gender disparities among authors were evident, with more male authors than female in three of the four countries. Kenya was an exception, where there was a slightly higher proportion of female authors (52 percent). There was generally a lower proportion of female authors publishing in international journals than in country-level searches, ranging from equal distribution in Kenya to one woman for every four men in Ghana.

Collaboration within each of the countries was most common for research outputs in the country-level searches (Figure 4). By contrast, the most common type of collaboration in publications identified from international database searches were with authors outside SSA.

Figure 4: Collaboration between researchers within and outside SSA based on country-level searches (2010-2022)



Based on the above analysis, our recommendations include:

- ◆ **Increase funding for ECD research:** Allocate more funding particularly on components with the highest funding gaps, including responsive caregiving, education and play. Funding should be coordinated across ECD components.
- ◆ **Develop collaborative research communities:** Foster strong collaboration between research communities across countries to share lessons, knowledge, and mentorship opportunities.
- ◆ **Support full participation of women:** Increase opportunities for women to publish in international journals.
- ◆ **Increase research visibility and data availability:** Develop functional online repositories to facilitate the dissemination of evidence, including working papers, and research and evaluation reports.

This summary is based on:

Williams, E.M., and Rose, P. (2024). *Mapping early childhood development research in sub-Saharan Africa: Cross-country mapping report*. REAL Centre, University of Cambridge and ESSA

The evidence from international database searches draws on:

Iddrisu, D.H., Adrupio, S., and Rose, P. (2024). *Mapping early childhood development publications in sub-Saharan Africa: Report on analysis from international databases*. REAL Centre, University of Cambridge and ESSA

This work on mapping ECD publications is undertaken with funding from Conrad N. Hilton Foundation (grant number 28192).

REAL Centre

Faculty of Education

University of Cambridge

184 Hills Road, Cambridge

CB2 8PQ, UK

Email: REALCentre@educ.cam.ac.uk

✕ @REAL_Centre

in @real-centre

www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real

ESSA

3rd Floor, Chancery House

St Nicholas Way

Sutton SM1 1JB, UK

Email: info@essa-africa.org

✕ @ESSA_Africa

in @essa1

www.essa-africa.org