**Kidogo​** - The Nairobi, Kenya-headquartered registered charity was set up to tackle Kenya’s childcare crisis, which has a lifelong impact on children’s physical and mental health, educational performance in school and subsequent employment prospects. In Kenya’s informal settlements where over 60% of the urban population lives, mothers make a difficult decision about where to leave their children aged up to five years when they go to work. Either to pull older siblings (adolescent girls) out of school and have them look after younger siblings, or leave the younger child in an informal daycare where an untrained caregiver provides basic supervision. These unlicensed and unsanitary centres do more harm than good, subjecting children to poor nutrition / hygiene, neglect and even abuse, that reduces their lifelong developmental potential during their most important early years.

As a result, children in Kenya’s informal settlements are among the unhealthiest nationwide, with nearly half (46 percent) suffering from stunting, limited stimulation, and various diseases that prevent children’s brains from developing fully. Ninety percent of a child’s brain develops before age five. If a child spends those essential years in an unsafe, unhealthy environment, they enter primary school with cognitive, emotional and physical deficits. They often perform poorly and without a solid education, they resort to menial jobs as adults, and continue the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

Globally, 350 million children find themselves in this situation - it’s a childcare crisis. Kidogo exists to solve this problem and uses an innovative social franchising approach to identify, train and support female entrepreneurs (Mamapreneurs) to grow their own early childhood education micro-businesses. Kidogo’s network of Mamapreneurs provide quality childcare and early childhood services in their local communities for an affordable fee - each daycare is profitable and self-sustaining. This enables children to receive quality early childhood education during their essential first five years of life when 90 percent of brain development occurs.

Over eight years Kidogo has become the largest childcare network in Kenya with 538 Franchised Kidogo Mamapreneurs serving around 11,000 children - each direct impact on a child has an indirect multiplier effect of three (improved household impact on mothers and older siblings). Kidogo’s holistic approach, including nutrition interventions, has led to a 32 percent reduction in wasting and 23 percent reduction in stunting in one year, 80 percent of children in Kidogo’s centres being developmentally on track and Kidogo has shifted the conversation: parents and early childhood workers now believe children begin learning at birth, not when they enter formal schooling.

Kidogo has also influenced policy - advocacy work with partners that led to the Government of Kenya passing the Early Childhood Education Bill. Kidogo has also been featured by the World Bank, International Labour Organization, Stanford Social Innovation Review, IFC UN Women and Harvard.

In a sector where providers are seen as second class workers, Kidogo builds the confidence of its Mamapreneurs and seeks to elevate the early childhood profession through community engagement and advocacy. In these ways, it considers itself a disrupter of the early childhood education sector.

In 2021 it increased tenfold its scale and plans to continue to replicate its social franchising model through evidence-based scaling, policy influence, partnerships and systems change to ultimately reach 100,000 children across East Africa by 2027 and transform the childcare ecosystem.

<https://www.kidogo.co/>