



www.africacarestogether.org

Caring for Caregivers: Developing A National Policy for Non-Communicable Diseases Caregivers in Kenya

Impact Story 3

KEY IMPACTS

Working across three counties in Kenya, this project strengthens recognition, support and inclusion of caregivers of persons living within non-communicable diseases (NCD). The project's main contribution is generating and embedding context specific evidence on unpaid NCD caregiving in Kenya within national policy dialogue. By documenting caregivers' economic, social, and emotional contributions and engaging policymakers directly, the project has helped reframe caregiving as a public health and social policy issue rather than solely a family responsibility.

August 20, 2026

Table of Contents

Project Overview	3
Project Activities	3
Project Achievements	4
Challenges & Lessons Learned	5
Care Sector Contributions & Next Steps	5



Project Overview

The [*Caring for Caregivers: Developing A National Policy for Non-Communicable Diseases Caregivers in Kenya*](#) project strengthens recognition, support and inclusion of caregivers of persons living within non-communicable diseases (NCD) in Kenya. The project focused on caregivers, predominantly women, who provide unpaid, long-term care to relatives with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and cancer.

Working across Murang'a, Vihiga and Makueni counties, the project aimed to make caregiving visible within the health system and to influence national and sub-national policy processes so that caregivers are recognised as essential actors in NCD care. It was conceived with a clear pathway from evidence generation to policy and system change, including alignment with Kenya's NCD Strategic Plan and Universal Health Coverage agenda.

The project also sought to document the scale of unpaid care to reframe caregiving from a private household responsibility to a recognised public health and social policy priority.

Project Activities

The project combined applied research with stakeholder and policy engagement. Quantitative surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews were conducted to document the realities of unpaid NCD caregiving, including time use, emotional labour, social, psychological and economic costs.

Findings were shared through county-level stakeholder forums, dissemination meetings, 2025 ARUA Biennial Conference in Makerere (Uganda), and national policy dialogue, enabling caregivers themselves to participate and share their lived experiences directly with policymakers, health practitioners and civil society actors.

At the national level, the project engaged the Ministry of Health through consultative meetings and a Project Data Review Meeting, helping position the evidence to inform policy development.

Strategic partnerships with organisations, such as Light a Candle Counselling Services (LACCS) and the NCD Alliance Kenya, strengthened advocacy and dissemination, while continuous engagement ensured that findings were aligned with national frameworks and informed discussions around practical policy instruments, including National NCD Caregiver Guidelines.

Project Achievements

A key outcome has been increased recognition among policymakers and health stakeholders that family caregivers are essential actors within Kenya's NCD care system. Research evidence highlighted the scale of unpaid care provided by caregivers and the significant personal costs involved, including reduced participation in paid work, financial strain and emotional burden. By combining quantitative data with qualitative testimonies, the project demonstrated how unpaid caregiving underpins the functioning of health systems.

The project also made the lived realities of caregiving visible within policy spaces. Through county stakeholder forums and dissemination meetings, caregivers articulated the emotional strain, financial pressures, and lack of formal support associated with long term care. One caregiver shared:

"When someone in the family has a long-term illness, the whole family's life changes. As caregivers we do everything we can, but often we feel alone and unsupported."

These testimonies helped humanise research findings and deepened stakeholders' understanding beyond statistics.

At the national level, policy dialogue was strengthened. During the Project Data Review meeting held in December 2025, the Ministry of Health emphasised the importance of focusing explicitly on unpaid family NCD caregivers and advised aligning project outputs with national frameworks, including the NCD Strategic Plan (2025–2030) and Kenya's Universal Health Coverage agenda. This engagement informed a strategic shift toward supporting the development of National NCD Caregiver Guidelines, signalling early institutional uptake of caregiver evidence within national health policy processes.

Another important outcome has been the empowerment of caregivers to participate in policy relevant conversations. For many, these forums provided a first opportunity to speak directly to decision makers. As one participant reflected:

"For the first time, we feel that our experiences matter. If policymakers understand what caregivers go through, maybe things can begin to change."

Emerging caregiver networks and support groups indicate growing confidence and collective voice beyond the project's immediate activities.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Policy change proved slower and more complex than initially planned. Engagement with the Ministry of Health clarified that developing a full national policy was unlikely within the project timeframe. Instead, guidelines offered a more practical and timelier route for institutional uptake. This required the project to adapt its strategy mid-course.

A key learning was the value of adaptive policy engagement. Treating this shift as strategic rather than a setback allowed the project to align more closely with existing policy processes while maintaining its core objective. The project also learned that combining evidence with caregiver voices is critical for sustaining policy attention in areas where unpaid care has historically been treated as a private issue.

Care Sector Contributions & Next Steps

The project's main contribution is generating context specific evidence on unpaid NCD caregiving in Kenya and embedding this evidence within national policy dialogue. By documenting caregivers' economic, social, and emotional contributions and engaging policymakers directly, the project has helped reframe caregiving as a public health and social policy issue rather than solely a family responsibility.

Next steps focus on supporting the development of National NCD Caregiver Guidelines, while working closely with the Ministry of Health, Division of Non-Communicable Diseases; strengthening caregiver engagement platforms, and continuing collaboration with national and county stakeholders. Key recommendations include integrating caregiver support into NCD strategies and strengthening peer support and advocacy spaces, so that caregivers remain visible and heard within Kenya's health system.

About the Africa Cares Together Community of Practice

The [Africa Cares Together Community of Practice \(ACT CoP\)](#) is a vibrant, inclusive network of diverse actors committed to amplifying care work across Africa. It is coordinated by ActionAid International (AAI) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and the Hewlett Foundation. The ACT CoP network is made up of members from the 19 projects of the [Scaling Care Innovations in Africa \(SCIA\)](#) initiative, a partnership between IDRC and GAC.

Acknowledgements

This Impact Story was compiled by the 'Caring for Caregivers: Developing A National Policy for Non-Communicable Diseases Caregivers in Kenya' project team and the ACT CoP. Project partners include ARUA Center of Excellence for Non-Communicable Diseases, University of Nairobi, Kenya; Light-a-Candle Counselling Services (LACCS); Non-communicable Diseases (NCD) Alliance of Kenya (NCDA-K); and Policy Expert, John Gachigi.

