EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

“Are Children ready to learn? Are schools ready for children?
Integration of Care and Education

Sri Lanka

Bandula Gunawardhana
Hon. Minister of Education
National Plans and Goals

Goals
• To create a quantitative & qualitative improvement in the fields with the assistance of NGOs under the leadership of Government through National Policy on ECCD
• Universal ECCE to ensure easy transition to primary education with a foundation necessary for personality development

Plans
• Reduce incidence of Low Birth Weight
• Reduce number of underweight children
• Provide better Early Child Care and Education experience to children
• Access to quality primary education for all by 2015
• Establish Child Friendly ECCE Centres and Primary Schools to ensure 100% retention rate at compulsory education period
• Ensure and maintain of quality of ECC teachers, caregivers and teachers
Country Situation

- Number of children under 9 years – 3.6 million
- Infant mortality rate – 8.5/1000
- Under 5 mortality rate – 12/1000
- Immunization rate of 1 year olds for measles – 97.1%
- Prevalence of underweight children under 5 years – 21.6%
- Net enrolment ratio in Primary Education – 97.5%
- Grade 1 new admissions (2012) – 339,142
- Percentage of children entering Grade 1 with ECC experience – 96.1
- Retention rate till Grade 5 – 99.6%
- Number of Children engaged in Child Labour (5-11 years) – 30,111
Key Policies, Guidelines and Strategies

1. National Policy on Early Childhood Care & Development

- To ensure every child has access to adequate health and nutrition services along with opportunities for responsive psychological stimulation.
- To develop standards and guidelines to regulate development & implementation of ECCD programmes (home based programmes, Child Development Centres).
- To clarify roles and responsibilities of different layers and stakeholders in the care and development of a young child.
- To synchronize and coordinate the services provided by the different stakeholders in ECCD to maximize availability and use by all sectors.
Key Policies, Guidelines and Strategies

1. National Policy on Early Childhood Care & Development
   - To mobilize and allocate increasing financial resources for ECCD Programmes
   - To promote the importance of the roles of parents/caregivers and the community in development of children
   - To enhance the capacity of parents/caregivers and communities to be able to adequately support their children’s development

2. Guidelines
   - Develop Child Friendly Child Development & Education Centres
   - Provide and maintain basic health & sanitation services
   - Encourage parent participation in ECCE activities
   - Provide appropriate and continuous training to teachers
3. Main Strategies

- Introduction of National, Provincial, District and Divisional ECCD Coordinating Committees
- Adhering to Minimum Standards for Child Friendly ECCE Centres to provide conducive Learning and Psycho-social Environment
- Optimum budgetary provisions to ensure acceptable nutritional levels
- Provide and maintain basic health & sanitation services
- Encourage parent participation in ECCE activities
- Follow more play, more activity and less desk work approach to ECC & primary education
- Let the entire class including the teacher remain as a team for the first two years of schooling
Examples of Policy Implementation/ Good Practices

• Provision of Nutritional food package for expectant mothers – Government provides Rs. 494 million for this programme

• Granting maternity leave of 84 working days fully paid, 3 months half paid & 3 months no pay for mothers and 3 days of paternity leave to ensure the infant gets proper care and security

• Immunization programmes for expectant mothers, infants and children to prevent a range of communicable diseases

• Triposha (a nutritional cereal) programme for expectant & lactating mothers, infants and children from 12 – 59 months – Government expenditure is Rs. 1,189 million
Examples of Policy Implementation/ Good Practices

- Infant milk food subsidy and fresh milk for children under 5 years – Government commitment Rs. 205 million
- Provision of mid day meal to grades 1–5 in 7,625 schools island wide
- Provision of 150ml of fresh milk daily to all school children in 1,176 schools – Government investment in the above two projects is Rs. 3 billion
- Introduction of standards for ECCD teachers & their capacity building – Minimum qualifications and standards have been introduced to ensure quality service provision
- Establish Child Friendly Primary schools to ensure smooth transition – 5,000 such schools are being established
1. Lessons Learnt

- Importance of continuation of conducive Learning and Psycho-social Environment throughout the early years of a child (from 0 – 8)
- Importance of involvement of all stakeholders in implementation of ECCE programmes
- Necessity of a national level Resource Centre which is accessible to all stakeholders
Significant Lessons Learnt and Challenges

2. Challenges

- Due to the many stakeholders involved, the priority setting, maintenance of linkages are complicated.
- Being a devolved subject, provincial councils tend to formulate their own statutes which might have conflicts.
- Regulation of ECCE Service Providers.
- Inadequacy of trained teachers for ECCE.
- Lack of adequate child care facilities to cater to the number of families where both parents are employed.
- Mothers going abroad at their children’s tender age.
- Establishment of an effective monitoring and regulation system.
- Information gaps for decision making.
Potential Areas for International Cooperation

- Capacity Building of ECC Centres
  - Infrastructure facilities
  - Material support

- Capacity Building of ECC and Primary Teachers
  - Infrastructure support for Teacher Training Centres
  - International Experts for our training programmes
  - Peer Exchange Programmes

- Support for Nutrition Programme for pre and primary schools

- Develop Sanitation facilities of pre and primary schools

- Research & data collection and establishment of a National Resource Centre on ECCE
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Thank You