

Writing A Thesis:

A review of policy documents on Early Childhood Care and Education of Bangladesh and Nepal for comparative analysis of their policies and interventions strategies.

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Executive Summary:

The history of comprehensive Early Childhood Development in Bangladesh and Nepal does not date back to a long time. Both the countries recognize the importance of 'Whole Child' development. It is relatively a new area combining health, nutrition, security, early childhood education, stimulation, social, emotional and physical development. The pre-natal care of the child is also related to mother and post-natal care including related comprehensive interventions. Good quality early childhood programs have positive impact on survival, growth, development and further learning in primary education and beyond. Governments have the primary responsibility to formulate early childhood policies and guidelines. Through these policy documents, the vision, goals, objectives, interventions and expected results of the government are expressed. The ECCE documents also contain the program contents, modalities of organization, operation, coordination, monitoring and institutional arrangements to implement policies.

Methodology Applied & Design of the Study:

This document reviews the ECD provisions of Bangladesh and Nepal with interventions in the area of health, nutrition, pre-primary education, physical and social development. The target group is all children from conception till age eight including children of poor families, disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities. The review examines whether comprehensive or single system program interventions are implemented. It focuses on different domains of child development which are implemented by cross sectoral people. Community involvement in identifying needs and solutions is discussed. The environment and services made available at the centers or baby classes is taken to consideration. Besides, key implementation strategies, budgetary provisions and access issues have been discussed in this review document. Issues and challenges in achieving the vision of both the countries are also highlighted in the report. This report analyzes the constitutional provision of Bangladesh and Nepal regarding children right. It also describes that how national policies regarding early childhood development influences the interventions of service providers both at the government and non government sectors. It also reviews the current status of ECCE provisions of both the countries. The gap between policy and

implementation strategy is focused in the report. The collaboration between different sectors is discussed. The documents of ECCE activities regarding implementation mechanism, local and national level initiatives and monitoring and supervision strategies of Bangladesh and Nepal are reviewed.

We know that effective national policies supported by good strategies, adequate financing and pragmatic interventions contributes to high quality services. There is no benchmarking tools for policy formulation and ECD outcomes. So, this review has also tried to identify the policy gaps and functionality of the policy directions. There is lack of systemic knowledge management and communication between the formal and non formal sectors. This issue is critically examined as both the sectors have important roles to play in achieving holistic development. ECD programme is the most important intervention in meeting the overall quality and efficiency goal of the primary education system. Therefore, ECD programme is the best way for learning opportunities for most children. For effective and optimum delivery of ECD, all sectors should be involved to share a common vision and understanding of the comprehensive nature of ECD. It requires acceptable standards and policy guidelines for comprehensive services to children.

Targeted Outcomes:

The outcomes by reviewing the policies are expected that we will have knowledge of ECD related policies in Bangladesh and Nepal. A capacity in preparing a policy framework to enhance early childhood services will be developed. A critical understanding on many issues related to children can be gained. The policy makers and planners will be benefited by having knowledge with adequate justification and synergy. We will have ideas of ECD programs linked with the national strategies and goals. A motivation for institutional arrangement and adequate financing on ECD is expected. The policy makers will be encouraged to include the community people in planning process of ECD programme. They will also include the poor and vulnerable children in the process.

Key Findings:

The major issues covered in this report are critical analysis of constitutional, legal and policy frameworks related to early childhood support. The interventions of the governments, NGO's and the international organizations are also analyzed in the context of Bangladesh and

Nepal. The financing of ECD and institutional arrangements are discussed. The monitoring and evaluation with established sectoral and cross-sectoral roles are also included in the report. The major policy gaps, duplication and overlapping of services are discussed in this report. The key concepts, arguments and developments in ECCE of the respective countries are considered. Sustainable policy framing is a critical issue. Only knowledge and experience is not enough to have good policy developed. It requires the participation of both GO, NGO and community collaboration to develop good ECD programs. Respecting the needs and wants of poor and disadvantaged community will help to formulate sustainable ECD programs.

Bangladesh and Nepal have ECD policies with clear goals and vision. They have identified many interventions related to child's health Care, nutrition, education and social protection. They are signatories to major international commitments related to the rights and security of the children. Both the countries have reduced the rate of child mortality and the maternal death in the last ten years. They have some common issues and challenges. These are:

- (1) ECD services are not provided in a comprehensive way. Both the countries implement activities in fragmented ways. Different government agencies have stand alone programs. As a result, there are huge wastage of resources including overlapping and duplication. At the same time, developmental needs of individual child is not mitigated resulting to physical, social and cognitive loses.
- (2) Bangladesh and Nepal have common institutional arrangements to implement activities. There are government offices, national and international NGO's, UN agencies and private sectors dealing with the ECCE provisions. There is serious lack of coordination and absence of effective monitoring system among different organizations both at the level of government and non government sectors.
- (3) Pre-primary centers or 'baby classes' are not properly structured in both the countries. They don't have full fledged curriculum and quality learning materials. The teachers are not specially trained on ECCE and on age appropriate interventions. There are extremely poor infrastructures and a very high teacher-child ratio.

- (4) The budget allocations for ECCE activities in both the countries are indistinct. These allocations are not dedicated for the Young Children. There are common allocations which crosscuts service expenditure, infrastructure cost, wages of service providers and administrative and contingency cost. As a result, the actual expenditures on ECD activities can not be determined.
- (5) The issue of sustainability is a great challenge for Bangladesh and Nepal. Dependency on foreign aid, lack of ownership by the policy makers, inappropriate and irregular budget allocation and sector based isolated programs may disrupt the continuity of ECD services

Both the countries should have comprehensive ECFCE programs to ensure overall child development. Children and Society as a whole can be benefited through maximizing development opportunities. The policy makers should be made well aware of the early childhood development. Ensuring proper coordination among the service providers can help better delivery of services. Adequate budget allocation, teachers training, bottom-up planning, improvement of governance, community participation, health and nutritional support, proper monitoring and supervisions are very important areas to improve better service delivery for the children.

Table of Contents

Description	Page No.
Executive Summary	02-05
Table of Contents	06-07
Acronyms	08-09
1: INTRODUCTION	10-11
1.1 ECCE Perspectives.....	11-12
1.2 Context of the Review	12-16
2: BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS	17
2.1 Legal & Policy Documents: Bangladesh	17-19
2.2 Legal & Policy Documents in Nepal	19-20
2.3 International Regulations/Commitments	21-22
2.4 Application of International principles in National Policies	22-23
3. RATIONALE	23-24
4: OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	25-26
5: OBJECTIVES	27-28
6: METHODOLOGY	28
6.1 Study Design	28-29
6.2 Sample	29
6.3 Process of Review	29
6.4 Outcome of Review	29-30
6.5 Scope of Review	31
6.6 Issued Covered	31-32
6.7 Limitations	32
7: FINDINGS	32-33
7.1 Enrolment in ECCE and Primary Schools: Bangladesh	33-35
7.2 Bangladesh Experience	35
7.3 ECCE Goals and Guiding Principles	36-39
7.4 Health Nutrition and Sanitation	39-40
7.5 Participation in Education	40-42
7.6 Management of pre-primary and primary Education	42-43

Description	Page No.
7.7 Age of Segregation	43-44
7.8 Public Financing in ECCE programs	44-45
7.9 Partnership	45-46
7.10 Experience of Nepal in ECCE	46-48
7.11 Health, Education and ECCE Centers	48-49
7.12 Institutional Arrangement	49-50
7.13 Partnership	51-52
7.14 Implementation Strategy	52-53
7.15 Gender Parity and Diversity	54
8: DISCUSSION	54
8.1 Issues & Challenges	54-57
8.2 International and Capacity Issues	57-59
8.3 Sustainability	59
8.4 Decentralization and Networking	59-60
8.5 Monitoring	61
8.6 Accountability	61
9. Conclusion	61-62
REFERENCE	63-64

Acronyms

ADP	=	Annual Development Program
ALR	=	Adult Literacy Rate
BANBEIS	=	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	=	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BNFE	=	Bureau of Non-Formal Education
BPEP	=	Basic and Primary Education Program
BRAC	=	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BU-IED	=	BRAC- Institute of Educational Development
CAMPE	=	Campaign for Popular Education
CBEP	=	Community Based ECCE program
CBOs	=	Community Based Organizations
CCC	=	Child Care Center
CPEIMU	=	Compulsory Primary Education Implementation and Monitoring Unit
CRC	=	Convention on the Rights of the Child
C-in-Ed	=	Certificate-in-Education
DFA	=	Dakar Framework for Action
DNFE	=	Directorate of Non-Formal education
DOE	=	Department of Education
ECCE	=	Early Childhood Care Education and Development
ECCED	=	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECDRC	=	Early Childhood Development Center
EFA	=	Education for All
EMIS	=	Education Management Information System
GER	=	Gross Enrollment Rate
GIR	=	Gross Intake Rate
MDG	=	Millennium Development Goal
MIS	=	Management Information System
MoCHT	=	Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts
MoE	=	Ministry of Education

MoHFW	=	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoPME	=	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoWCA	=	Ministry of Woman and Children Affairs
NCTB	=	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NGO	=	Non Government Organization
PCRW	=	Production Credit for Rural Women
PE	=	Pre-Primary Education
PEDP-II	=	Second Primary Education Development Program-II
PRS	=	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	=	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
VDCs	=	Village Development Committees

1. Introduction: The main aim of this study is to identify and evaluate Government policies of Bangladesh and Nepal on Early Childhood care and Education. This includes investigation of the policy goals, implementation strategies, sustainability of ECD programs, inter-sectoral coordination, constraints on implementing policies, gaps between the policy objectives and practices. It will also make a comparative statement on relevant external and internal activities.

Policy is the most important part of a good quality ECCE program. So, understanding policy of each country will provide the government's strategic direction and mandatory Statements of principle, which is essentially a framework for decision-making. The issue of ECCE is gaining considerable momentum in Bangladesh, Nepal and in the Asia Pacific region. Integrated policies for governance and financing of early childhood Care and education are mostly absent in countries. Early childhood programs are not often comprehensive and adequately funded. Multiple ministries/Organizations are involved with the implementation process and delivery of services. There are duplication of services, fragmentation, overlapping and lack of integration between government and non-government policies and responsibilities. The main objective of this review is to look into how governmental policies of these two countries influence the ECCE activities. The Case of Bangladesh in terms of its access, resources, curriculum, teachers training, and teaching-learning practices appears to be addressed not in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Bangladesh Government has 'Framework for Pre Primary education'. A draft comprehensive ECCD policy is awaiting government's approval. Few countries have developed national frameworks, which addresses the multiple needs of children. Research findings show short term and long-term benefit of investment in early childhood programmes for children. Effective national policies, good strategies and high quality services with adequate financing are most important in this regard. This Analysis considers whether all extent of developmental index is evident in policies and strategies of the government. ECCE services include much more than child Care and education. It includes health, nutrition, and physical, social, cognitive and emotional development. In addition, support to families, maternal health and food supplementation are also encompassed in it. Parenting and national level interventions for children below three, and school readiness programmes (pre-primary education) are important issues to be discussed. Coordination, governance, funding mechanisms are major components in policies. There is a growing demand for government backed ECCE

programmes. Given the situation, there will be a review and analysis of policies of Nepal and Bangladesh on Early Childhood Care and Education. Early childhood services, age ranges, and strategies are different across countries and regions.

1.1 ECCE Perspectives:

The government's intervention in this area has to be understood in the context of macro state policies and strategies of a respective country. In fact, Government's policies influence the ECCE activities. Some of the countries have comprehensive policies and others have national frameworks, which addresses the multiple needs of children. Effective national policies supported by good strategies and adequate financing contributes to high quality services. This review identifies and evaluates the key ECD provisions and interventions adopted by the governments of Bangladesh and Nepal. It also examines that how the programs are implemented and managed in respective countries. Research has shown that investing early leads to high returns and high quality programs and have a lasting impact on children's over all development (Engle, Black, Bachman) et al, 2007; Irwin, siddqui ly hertzwan, 2007). Despite evidential base, the majority policy makers are not coming up with sustainable national policies for ECD.

Now a days, governments are recognizing the critical importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as fundamental part for lifelong learning and development. There has been discriminatory provision in this sector for long. The issue was not included in government's policy earlier. Earlier, there were only informal provisions of early childhood care and education. But now the governments' formalizes ECD activities and at the same time parallel non-formals activities are also evident. Quality ECCE program depends on a good quality policy. The issue of ECCE is gaining considerable momentum in Bangladesh, Nepal and some other countries of this region. In most of the countries, ECCE is not holistic and are not adequately funded. There are fragmentation and lack of coordination in delivering services. Often programmes are overlapped. Multiple agencies/ ministries are rendering services on their own way, which does not ensure comprehensive development. In fact, ECD programmes includes a variety of strategies and wide range of services directed at helping children, families and communities to address diverse needs of children. Earlier, it was viewed that early childhood development is the responsibility of parents and families and not that of the state. In the absence of state policy, only limited number of government and non-governmental agencies would carry out the services. With the adoption

of 'Millennium Development Goals' and the 'Education For All' by 2015, the issue comes up with greater focus and in comparatively organized form.

The Jomtien Declaration acknowledges 'Learning begins at birth' and the basic education begins much earlier than the primary school entrance. So, bringing early childhood care and education under the mainstreams education is very important. ECCE includes much more than childcare and education. It includes health, nutrition, and hygiene, social, physical and emotional development. In country like Bangladesh and Nepal, the role of the state is very critical because most of the children are poor and their parents are not educated.

1.2 Context of the Review:

Bangladesh: The Bangladesh government is committed to achieve the EFA goals by 2015 as set in the Dakar Framework for Action. The strategic planning document of the government the 'National Plan of action for EFA' underscores the need for early childhood development and based on that the Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Framework has been developed. The government has formulated early learning development standards for early learning,

The government of Bangladesh has a vision that all children of 3-5 years attend pre-school programmes and has access to programs related to health, nutrition, physical, social and intellectual development. The short-term vision includes children of five to below six attends in any form of pre-school education.

The Annual sector performance Report 2009 of the Directorate of Primary Education shows that children are enrolled in Government Primary Schools at the age of 5 to 6 group. Non Government Organizations are providing ECCE to 60,510 children. Another report shows that there are 1,426,986 children having non-formal Pre-Primary education ('Mapping of Non-Formal Education activities in Bangladesh, 2009' by Bureau of Non-Formal Education).

The PEDP II, Baseline survey of Directorate of Primary Education has taken 2001 as benchmark year for coverage of the early childhood education and estimated that 10.38 million children to be provided with education. The age group ranges from 3 to 5 year. It has been estimated to raise to 11.02 million in 2005 and 11.68 million by 2015.

Table 1: ECCE Population Eligible for Coverage during 2001-2015

(In Thousand)

Age Group 3-5 year	2001	2005	2010	2015
Total	10377	11022	10753	11682
Male	5295	5614	5477	5950
Female	5082	5408	5276	5732
5-years old only				
Total		3179	3150	3293
Male		1613	1600	1674
Female		1566	1550	1619
Source: NPA-II (2003-2015)				

The report also suggests that gross enrollment rate in all institutions of formal stream has been estimated at 1.1 million of while 0.56 million are male and 0.54 million females. The percentage shown 11.26% are male and 11.55% are females

Child education and Literacy survey of the Directorate of Primary Education shows that only 10.32% of the children of age group 3-5 participates in any kind of Early Childhood Development Program and only 22.7% of the children enrolled in grade 1 has received pre-primary education.

In Bangladesh, there are formal and non-formal primary education institutions: There are ten types of primary schools. These schools cover 6⁺ to 10⁺ children from grade 1 to 5. At the same time, Baby classes are introduced in all govt. primary schools and in most of the non-formal schools. Following is the overall distribution of schools, teacher and students.

Table 2: Schools, Teachers and Students at a glance

From the school census	Schools	Teachers	Students
1. Government primary schools (GPS)	37,672	203,081*	9,755,362
2. Registered non-government primary schools (RNGPS)	20,061	76,628	3,525,832
3. Experimental schools	55	280	11,073
4. Community schools	2,991	9,307	398,079
5. Non-registered non-government primary schools	819	2,086	123,056
6. Kindergarten	2,744	19,243	360,939
7. NGO schools	230	925	36,655
From BANBEIS			
8. Primary sections of secondary schools	959	10,256	338,552
9. Ebtedayee madrasahs	6,744	28,231	636,984
10. Primary sections of dakhil,alim,fazil and kamil madrasahs	9,233	31,691	1,352,831
Total	81,508	381,728*	16,539,363

Source: Bangladesh Primary Education: Annual sector performance Report 2010.

The government's program on 'Expanded program on Immunization' is a great success against the six killer diseases. The government hospitals provide treatment for diseases like diarrhea, acute respiratory illness (ARI), malnutrition, neonatal tetanus and birth related complication. Though all the children do not have access to the government hospitals due to various reasons. NGO's are also encouraged to support for the severely malnourished children and mothers. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in its 'National Low Birth Weight Survey of Bangladesh' shows that 36% of infants are of low birth and 77% of them suffer growth retardation. Children with low birth weight due to intra intensive growth retardation are more susceptible to illness and less likely to begin school on time. They perform poorly in school and are more likely to be low-achievers in life. The government has made extensive campaign to promote breast feeding practices. All the health Polices have suggested breastfeeding right after delivery. Several Public awareness programs on the issue was organized by MOHFW and Unicef. The 'Demographic and Health survey, Bangladesh 2007' reports that the rate of exclusive breast feeding among children under six months of age is only 43%. The government has a policy to provide vitamin A, iron, iodine and zinc tablet to children ranging from 1 year to 5 years. The 'Child and mother Nutrition Survey of Bangladesh', 2007 refers that food consumed

by most children and adults is not sufficient to promote healthy intake of multiple micronutrients.

NEPAL:

In Nepal, Primary education is free but not compulsory. Children enter primary education at age 5. The Government's National Policy (EFA National Plan of Action) states that there are two kinds of Early Childhood Development Education: (a) school-based pre-primary classes, and (b) community-based ECD centers. There are lots of private kindergartens—although they are not covered by the plans and strategies of the Department of Education in Nepal. Normative age group is 3-4 years (ECD centers for 3 years old and pre primary classes for 4 years old).

Table 3: Coverage of Enrolment, Nepal.

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio (GER)	42.7	2008-09
Net enrolment ratio	<i>Not available</i>	
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	10.59	11

Source: UIS. For 2009.

There is no rights based educational provision in place. Basic and primary education is free. Early childhood education and care is considered in basic education. It is not free in all cases. Children below six years of age are more than 18 percent of the total population. 9.37% of total population (among them) fall under the age group of 3-6 years.

Early Childhood education is available only to a small minority of children exclusively in urban settings. The 'Basic and Primary Education Project' is working to broaden the network of pre-primary educational institutions. Schools are free to raise donation from the parents and community to bear the cost of development and maintenance. A very limited percentage of children have access to private, fee-paying pre-school establishments exclusively in urban areas. Almost all of the 4,004 private schools in Nepal have pre-primary nursery and kindergarten

classes. Most of these private schools have three sections: nursery, lower KG and upper KG. (Source: UNESCO Study Report, Early Childhood Policy Review in Nepal).

There are 30,000 community-based ECD centers in operation across the country. They are receiving technical support from the Department of Education and District Education Offices through Resource Centers. These centers are not enough to accommodate all children between 3 to 5 years of age. The Government is providing support to community based ECD centers for facilitator's salary, establishment costs, basic material costs and a matching fund collected by the community through project support. The Government also bears the cost of basic and refresher training for facilitators and orientation Programmes for the management committee members. However, many centers have not yet been able to raise the fund to match the entire amount provided to them by the Government. In Nepal, the national literacy rate is 54 percent. The female literacy rate is only 43 percent. Special incentives and scholarship programs are introduced for the children belonging to backward and disadvantaged communities and family backgrounds including ethnic minorities, Dalits and girls. In Nepal, since 1975 the primary education has been made free for all children. Textbooks have been provided free of cost to all children in primary grades since 1979. The net enrolment of primary school children reached to 87.4 percent in 2006 (Source: Report on Early Childhood Development: From Policy Idea to Implementation in Nepal).

In Nepal, the child mortality rate under 5 is as high as 61 per 1000 live births (Ministry of Health and Population, New Era, and Macro International Inc., 2007). On the top of this, those who survive also suffer from various ailments, diseases and deformities. Morbidity incidence is very high in Nepal and it directly affects the psycho-social and physical development of children. It is estimated that 50 percent of under-five children suffer from severe or moderate level of malnutrition. Among them, the rate of the proportion of protein energy malnutrition (PEM) is very high. A large number of children suffer from Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD) and Iron Deficiency Anemia. It is no wonder, therefore, that during the critical growing phase, majority of the children in Nepal suffer from either lack of food or inappropriate feeding, unhygienic state of the physical environment, and lack of basic services including early childhood care and education (ECCE).

(Source: Journal of Early Childhood Development, ECD Resource Centre, Nepal).

2. Background and Review of Documents:

The Governments of Bangladesh and Nepal have undertaken Early Childhood Care and Education on a major complement of pre-primary education. Policies and programs related to ECCE are implemented by several agencies in both the countries. ECCE Services are required for every child and these cares are very crucial for the vulnerable and disadvantaged children. There are increasing inequalities in services provided at urban and remote rural areas. The special needs children are not often taken in to account. About 200 million children in the world do not develop with full potentials because of poverty, malnutrition, lack of health services and care (Grantham-Mc Gregor, et al. 2007). A good number of these children live in Bangladesh and Nepal. They are developed lately, demonstrates poor performance at school and poor physical, cognitive and social development.

Early childhood is a time when human beings need the utmost attention and care. “Learning begins at birth” – and even before. The foundation for all later learning is laid down in the early years. If we want to invest in our future, we need to invest in our children’s foundation; this is the period when children learn and develop at the greatest speed. During this period of their lives children have not yet entered the formal education system, but they need care and the kinds of activities that will prepare them to succeed in school life.

The documents available on ECCE demonstrate that the interventions adopted in Bangladesh and Nepal is not long lasting, intensive or high quality. Most of these are planned on an adhoc bearing. Data on access to services are not available

2.1 Legal & Policy Documents: Bangladesh

Following national and International regulations provide policy directions and guidelines relating to young children’s of Bangladesh.

- 1 The Constitution of Bangladesh.
- 2 Compulsory Primary education Act, 1990 announces the five year primary education compulsory and free in all government schools.
- 3 National Children’s policy 1994 provides guidelines for protection, upbringing, development and welfare of children and the ‘National Child Policy 2010 (draft).

- 4 EFA NPA I and II (1991-2000, 2001-2005) gives importance to Early Childhood Care and education as a critical key for overall development and places strategic direction to ensure basic education.
- 5 Birth Registration Act 2004, aims having rights to all kinds of service.
- 6 National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II (2009-II) gives importance to rights of children and pro-poor led growth and sustainable economic development. It suggests measure to reduce gender based violence, empowerment of women and interventions on Early Children development for children below five year of age.
- 7 NPA III (2005-10)- includes interventions in the areas of children's health, nutrition and food, education, empowerment of the girl child, protection from all forms of abuse, exploitation and violence and supports positive physical environment.
- 8 National Education Policy 2010 has provision for pre primary education and early childhood care. It emphasizes on children's emotional and mental health including social development.
- 9 National Health Policy 2009 (draft) provides comprehensive health care, early screening programs, health links and referral system.
- 10 Special Regulations: Maternity leave is extended to Six months to enable mother to spend more quality time with their babies. This will also help providing more care and stimulation during the early month.

Use of Policy Documents by the government: The Government conducts its business according to the "Rules of Business, 1996 (Revised upto 2010) and the 'Allocation of Business'. Every ministry has its responsibility defined for transaction of its business. The major activities related to children are vested with the MOWCA and MOPME. There is a provision for inter- ministerial consultation when any business relates to different agencies of the government. The concerned ministries are responsible for policy formulation, planning, evaluation of execution of plans and legislative measures.

The MOPME looks after the formulation of sectoral plan relating to pre-primary and mass education. The projects preparation regarding primary education, informal and non formal education, ECD curriculum development, determination of policies and guidelines about early childhood is looked after by the MOPME. The MOWCA has the responsibility to formulate national policy regarding children. It also deals with programs for welfare of

children, legal and social rights of children, attending to the problems and affairs relating to children and coordination of all matters relating to children.

The Finance Division allocates budget for the ministries under the mid term budgetary framework. All the annual projects/program regarding development activities of childhood and women development are prepared by the Planning Division with in the framework of national plan. They review the development plan periodically and conducts study on implications and impacts on the economy. All the other policies, guidelines and official circulars are being implemented by the respective ministries.

2.2 Legal & Policy Documents in Nepal:

The Ministry of Education and Sports in Nepal looks after the early childhood education and reforms in education. The school sector Reforms Plan (2009-15) includes long term strategic plan to achieve the goals and objectives of Basic and Secondary Education. The Department of Education (DOE) is implementing the Early Childhood Education and Development Programme in collaboration with NGOs and community based organizations. DOE provides lump sum grant to the ECED centers on an annual basis. The ECED operational guidelines is used by the ministry of Education which defines the roles and responsibilities of different agencies and institutions including partnership arrangement at the local level

The main responsibility for creating demand, identifying needs, planning, implementation and ensuring quality standard for the ECED programme lies with the local government. Civil Society organization play a critical role to engage the local community and in monitoring at local level. The states responsibility is to ensure free quality basic education for all children of age 5-12 years and there is provision for equitable participation in basic education. The free basic education provision includes cost free services for admission, text books, tuition and examination. An integrated regulatory framework is developed to empower the role of local governments in governing and managing education services. The Ministry of Education takes initiatives to harmonize with line ministries and intuitions governing basic services and amenities at the local level through different Acts and regulations (School Sector Reform Plan 2009-15).

In Nepal, the Government's ECD related plans and policies are reflected in the

- (1) *The Constitution – Article 18*
- (2) *Education for All National Plan of Action (EFA/NPA-2001-2015),*
- (3) *ECD Strategic Plan (2004),*
- (4) *Basic and Primary Education Master Plan (1997-2002),*
- (5) *Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07),*
- (6) *Ninth Five Year Plan (1998-2002),*
- (7) *Ten Year National Program of Action (POA) for Children and Development (1992) and Local Self-Governance Act (1999).*
- (8) *ECD in EFA: Core Document (2004-09)*
- (9) *Education Sector program, sub-program-3(2010-12)*
- (10) *School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2015)*

In Nepal, different agencies are involved with the process of implementation of ECD. The ECD activities are carried under some legal frameworks. The Local Self-governance Act 1999 has given the authority to the local bodies – Village Development Committees and Municipalities – to establish pre-primary schools/centers with their own resources, and grant permissions to establish, and run such schools/ centers.

The Education Act, 2008 includes two forms of early childhood development (ECD): pre-primary classes and child development centers. Pre-primary classes are school based and are principally aimed at children between the age of four and five. There are community based Child Development Center and are aimed at children below four years of age. However, there are disparities between the principles and practices. Many programmes, for instance, are not running as per the definition given in the Education Act and Regulations.

Article 18 of the constitution of Nepal on Cultural and Educational Rights ensures the "right of every citizen to development and promote the language, script and culture". The government has recognized 12 ethnic dialects and national languages, many of which are used in the national broadcast media. It also provides the right to acquire education up to the primary level in their own mother tongue to the children of the ethnic people.

2.3 International Regulations/Commitment:

Both Nepal and Bangladesh are signatories to major international pledges. These commitments are reflected in their state policies about ECD. Following are the major international commitments made by both the countries.

1. Convention of the Child Rights (CRC,1989) ensures rights and protection of children and the issues of children are given priority.
2. Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW 1999) is ratified by the government of Bangladesh which provides commitment for protection girl child and women.
3. EFA 1990 and the Dakar Frame work for Action 2000 underscores the importance of expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, specially for the most vulnerable and the disadvantaged children. It also reiterates that all young children must be nurtured in safe and caring environment that allow them to become healthy, alert, secure and be able to learn.
4. Millennium Development Goals: MDG focuses on poverty reduction, primary education for all, reduction of infant and child mortality, malnutrition and promotion of gender equity.
5. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1998): Article - 30 states that in a country with peoples of ethnic, religious or lingual minorities or indigenous origin, their children shall not be deprived of the right to use and exercise their language and culture, and profess their religion.
6. UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples: Article 14, Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.
Article-15, All indigenous peoples have the rights to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching learning. Indigenous children living outside their communities have the right to be provided access to education in their own language and culture.

7. ILO Convention: ILO convention 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries (1989). Stipulates that the children of indigenous peoples/nationalities shall have the right to education in their mother-tongues.

2.4 Application of International principles in National Policies:

The CRC is the legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights. The 54 articles and two optional protocols spells out the basic right of children and includes the right to survival, to develop to the fullest, protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. Children's rights are protected in the Convention by settings standards in health care, education and legal, civil and social services. Bangladesh and Nepal have agreed to undertake the obligations of the Convention by introducing Act and policies regarding child care, education and protection. The states are committed to four core principles of the convention which includes non discrimination, devotion to the best interests of the child, right to survival and development and respect for the views of the child. After ratification of the CRC, both countries report to 'UN committee on the Rights of the child' periodically with regards to the advancement and implementation of child's rights in their respective country. The National Children's Policy, 1994 and the Education policy of Bangladesh have provisions for non discrimination and promoting the issue of girl child and protecting children from all forms of abuse. The draft National Child Policy 2010 aims to stop use of children in politics, rehabilitate ultra poor and homeless children and gradually eradicate child labour. Issues of child welfare during and after natural disaster, sanitation and health care are included in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Dakar Framework for Action mentions that the governments through relevant ministries have the primary responsibility of formulating early childhood care and education policies within the context of national EFA plans. The states are supposed to mobilize political, popular support and promote flexible and adaptable programs for young children that are appropriate to their age. The governments of Bangladesh and Nepal have formulated NPA in light of the Dakar Framework of Action.

The Dakar Framework enunciates that Governments would make provision of sufficient resource, well trained teachers, innovative use of technologies and healthy and safe environment for children. To achieve child's right, it also focuses on engagement and participation of civil

society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies. These principles are also enshrined in the 'Framework for pre-primary Education, the comprehensive framework for ECCD and the draft prog 3(Follow up program of PEDP II) of Bangladesh and in the school sector Reforms project and ECD in EFA. Core Documents of Nepal.

3. Rationale:

This Review will examines the early childhood policies of two nations of Asian region, viz Bangladesh and Nepal. This include concrete options and strategies for delivery of services, coordination mechanisms and this will help to investigate that how national commitment is reflected on the ECCE policies, integrated approaches achieving EFA objectives for early childhood care and education. It also finds out important variables relevant to ECCE.

A coordinated and integrated multi-service delivery approach is a serious gap in policy adoption and implementations. Policy makers, service providers and communities must ensure access to human resources, organizational resources and financial resources to sufficiently address the policy development process and the gap between policy and implementation (Dr. Festo kavishe, Deputy Regional Director for the East-Asia-Pacific region of Unicef). There are a serious need to consider all aspects of the policy process. The ECD Policy design requires needs assessment of health, education, development, family, protection, cost estimates, financing and governance. At the same time, Policy adoption involves national and local policy support and partnership with community and NGO. There are no benchmarking tools for policy formulation and ECD outcomes. So, best practices of others and functional system can provide experience for a well-furnished ECD policy and implementation mechanism. This research provides the policy makers with ideas of planning ECD programs, making implementation strategy, building partnership and identify the gaps in ECD policy and practices.

The ECD interventions in Bangladesh and Nepal does not demonstrate collaboration and coordination. Low priority is given on ECD services. Though, limited formal and informal preschool education exists but adequate importance is not laid on the overall cross cutting issues like health, nutrition and other social and behavioral matters. Sectoral agencies have different sectoral policies limited to their respective mandates and thus results to un-coordinated services. Bangladesh and Nepal have limited capacity and expertise in ECD along with very poor quality of services and learning outcome. There are extremely poor infrastructures and a very high

teacher-child ratio. Most of the programs are not well resourced. The poor and disadvantaged children have very minimum access to programs. In Nepal, less number of girls are availing the ECD services. Data is very limited regarding poor, geographically remote and marginalized groups who have less access to ECD services. Both in Bangladesh and Nepal, there is no regular mechanism to identify the special needs in to the ECD programs. Children in rural areas are receiving less ECD services than the urban children. There is no clear-cut budget indication for ECD in the Annual Development Program of the government. It is a gross estimation that less than 1- 2% of education budget is allocated to ECD activities. Yet, there has been marked improvement in the under five mortality rates in the last three years.

It is noted that there are major differences in the quality and operation of ECD programs being run by GO's, international organizations, NGOs and private schools. There are differences in community-based and school-based programs within the government launched programs. The community-based centers are found adopting child-centered approaches, using some learning materials and play-way methods. The NGO run programs have included health and nutrition services, which are important for the holistic development of children. But programs run by the GOs lack such provisions. There is no regular supervision and monitoring.

The report synthesizes and gains a new perspective on the issue. It helps to identify relationships between ideas and practices. This study will help the researchers, policy makers and planners of ECCE to formulate new ideas in respective local contexts. The innovations and best practices of one country will influence the others to review their policy documents. Though, conditions between countries and regions inside countries vary, yet there are common agenda for children. The issue of diversity can be examined through this research. Survival and development of young children develop not only in services but strong policies and resources are required to provide these services.

4. Operational Definitions:

Policy: A policy is a principle or rule to guide decisions and achieve outcomes. It is considered as a statement of intent or commitment.

Disadvantaged Children refers to various groups of children who may suffer from disadvantages due to geographical location of habitat, age, sex, mother's education, ethnicity, language, income quintile, and disabilities.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) means providing all the supports necessary for every child, within family and outside, to realize his/ her right to survival, to protection, to care and to education that will ensure optimal development from birth to age six.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs offer a structured and purposeful set of learning activities either in a formal institution (pre-school) or as part of a non-formal childcare program. ECO programs generally focus on children from three years of age.

Grade is a stage of instruction usually covered in one school year (January-December).

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is the total enrolment of pupils in a grade or cycle or level of education, regardless of age, expressed as percentage of the corresponding eligible official age-group population in a given school-year.

Inclusive Education means that all students (disabled and non-disabled children and young people) in a school study together, regardless of their strength or weakness in any area and become part of the school community.

Infants with low birth weight refers to children born with a birth weight less than 2500 g. Low birth weight children suffer increased morbidity and mortality and have associated cognitive defects. Low birth weight is often a reflection of poor maternal health and nutrition which implies constants to maternal care and nurturing.

Non-formal education refers to any organized and sustained educational activity that does not correspond exactly to the definition of formal education. Non-formal education may take place both within and outside educational institutions, and may cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programs to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-

of-school children, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture. Non- formal education programs do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' system, may have varying duration, and may or may not confer certification of the learning achieved.

Parenting Education means education of parents in parenting, that is, instructions that educates parents about requirements of early childhood care and education of their children.

Pre-primary Education refers to programs at the initial stage of organized instruction, which are designed mainly to introduce groups of very young children, usually 3-5 years age-group, to a school-type environment, i.e. to provide a bridge between the home and the school. Such programs are variously referred to as infant education, nursery education, pre-school education, early childhood education, or early childhood care and education.

Primary Education (formal) refers to education, as determined by the government, for the children of age group 6+ to 10+ years in grades 1 to 5 having prescribed national curriculum, textbook and school hours and the school year which begins in January and ends in December.

Stunting is a measurement of whether a child has achieved his/ her potential for height growth. Deficits in height growth are usually an indication of multi-faceted deprivations. The process that leads to stunting is thought to occur pre-natally and post-natally during the first 2 or 3 years of life.

5. Objectives: Early Childhood Development (ECD) has traditionally been viewed as a preparation for primary schooling equated with "preprimary" and "preschool" education. This is now broadly understood as an integrated and holistic approach to ensure a child's all-round development as well as laying the foundation for later sub-sequential growth and development. The potential of ECD programming is a vehicle for the integrated promotion of young Children's rights. Programs in Child's Rights framework is now realized by all Child-focused organizations worldwide. In other words, an early childhood program is an entry point for human resource development thus ensures fulfillment of developmental needs of young children, such as child care, safety, protection, health care, nutritional and psycho social needs in a stimulating environment.

Government's policy emphasizes the need to make optimal use of expertise, resources and institutional capacity to expand ECD provisions with a focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. The Government requests other development partners and NGOs to provide minimal support for construction of building and other indoor and outdoor materials. Whereas, the general principle is to have the community and the schools running ECD programmes to be responsible for construction. These national policies are not being fully followed at the district level. There are still many disadvantaged parts of the country that is not receiving benefits of the ECD education in the communities. Sustainable Policies have conceptualized different dimensions: These are Social sustainability, political sustainability, and capacity sustainability. The government of Bangladesh has decided integrated approach in terms of policy. But in practice, the issue of health, nutrition, sanitation, education, pre natal/post natal care are dealt by different agencies without having any coordination. ECD program and service delivery is primarily community based, the financing of those programs and services should be leading to a more connected participatory set of local stakeholders. Early childhood development involves education, health, nutrition, immunization, psycho-social support and other services to provide for the total development of the child. But, neither Bangladesh nor Nepal has a 'Ministry of Integrated Early Childhood'. There is no coordination across ministries/agencies. Coordination is fragmented in both the countries. There are different national bodies involved in early childhood education. There are Vertical policies and problems contained in different ministries or agencies with little interplay between them. It inevitably leads to gaps in services. Given the situation following are the objectives of this review.

General objectives:

- (a) To give an account of the policy goals, strategies and programmes implemented by Bangladesh and Nepal.
- (b) To make a comparison of various dimensions of the ECCD activities of both the Countries.

Specific Objectives:

- (a) To critically examine government's strategic directions and integrated policies for governance and implementation of ECCD activities.
- (b) To evaluate issues like access, resource, health care and nutrition including pre-primary education, family involvement and training in Bangladesh and Nepal in the areas of ECCD.
- (c) To identify the best practices and find out the worthiness, constraints and challenges in policy development and implementation of ECCD services.

6. Methodology:

6.1 Study Design: The ECCE Policies of Nepal and Bangladesh is reviewed. Besides, all the documents available on current status of ECCE of these countries are consulted. The documents published by UNESCO, Unicef and concerned national/ international organizations are brought to consideration. Relevant data available on the issue is used. The EFA and MDG documents are analyzed in details and intensely in line with the National Plan of Action of the relevant countries. The Lancet series and Hinary documents published in this regard are taken into consideration.

The countries for review do have almost same social and economic background. The ECCE provisions of these countries starts formally during nineties and afterwards. ECCE was not earlier a part of public policy of these countries. The governments of both the countries have limited capacities for developing policies and systems. The issue of access, quality, resource, coordination and management appears as most challenging for these countries. Having same type

of social and economic background, the government policies on early childhood of the countries should be affirmatively pro-poor and establishing equity is a great challenge for them. So, this review tries to identify that how the inequities are addressed. There are high maternal and child mortality in the countries. Parallel to the formal system, there are non-formal programmes including NGO activities. In this backdrop, the study design includes drawing information and analysis of government's policies, strategies and critical analysis of ECCE programs. The documents of ARNEC is also reviewed.

6.2 Sample:

Purposively selected documents, books, Reports and other statistical data is used to formulate the Review Report.

6.3 Process of Review:

1. Searching for literature
2. Sorting and prioritizing the available literature
3. Studying the policies .
4. Review documents including primary and secondary research materials, Texts, articles..
5. Analytical reading on ECCE documents
6. Structured and non structured discussions
7. Comparison across studies
8. Organize the ECCE content
9. Writing the review.

6.4 Outcome of Review:

By reviewing the policies, the following outcomes will be achieved:-

- (a) Compilation of existing ECD related policies
- (b) Enhanced capacity in preparing a policy framework to improve early childhood services and provisions.
- (c) Development of a sound policy knowledge and resource base for policy makers, including justification and foundation for early childhood.

- (d) ECD theorists and activists will be able to share experiences and perspectives in policy development and implementation. The government and non government organizations will have knowledge about implementation mechanism of services.

ECCE is a major input into a child's formal education. The priority focus for long has been on universal primary education but there is an increasing realization that achievement of quality requires a much more vigorous engagement with ECCE. Mostly, priority target group for ECCE coverage is 3-5 years old children including disabled, isolated communities and communities suffering social exclusion. Some of the countries focus on partnership strategy for its engagement. Both 'Care' aspects and academic aspects are considered while reviewing ECCE policies.

The policy review covers contents, modalities of organizations and operations, coordination, monitoring and evaluation and all other institutional strategies. The core national commitment, Program priorities, quality of interventions, resource mobilization, and partnership issues are taken into consideration.

Following are the guiding principles while the ECCE policies are reviewed, are:

1. Review inherent policy of the document
2. Specific Characteristics of each policy.
3. Strategies of implementation.
4. Legal and policy Framework understanding the Vision, Mission and Goals.
5. Situation of Children in Bangladesh and Nepal.
6. Major components of ECCE policies (education, Training, Care, monitoring)
7. Key Concepts related to ECCE
8. Guiding policies and guidelines
9. Program Interventions and Standards.
10. Early learning and Development standards.
11. Management and coordination
12. Family Involvement
13. Monitoring and Evaluation procedure.

6.5 Scope of Review:

The Policy review includes all sectoral and cross-sectoral activities on ECD. The review also covers

1. Provision of constitution, legislature executive orders and plans, government decisions and national policy.
2. Views and opinions of various national level policy makers, government officials, political leaders, NGO personnel as well as relevant stakeholders are included in the review process.
3. Previously established sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, plans and strategies.
4. Policy and coordination gaps, conflicts and duplications, key strategies and standards.

It discusses trends and developments rather than focusing on one item at a time. The review evaluates previous and current developments in regard to how relevant and or useful the ECCE policies are. It will examine the significance and worthiness of the policies.

Early Childhood Care and Education is the first of the six EFA goals. At the same time, it seems to be one of the less important areas to the policy makers of most of the countries. This review will help to identify good practices as well as constraints and challenges in policy development and implementation.

The Report shows how one policy is related to other. It means how one policy is similar or different from the other. There are many documents presently available on the issue. Some international organizations are regularly publishing the ECD status of countries. Besides, the National Plan of actions of the respective countries, the planning documents, Annual reports and annual development programs are available. The research evidences published by UNICEF, UNESCO, ARNEC and some other global research organizations are taken into consideration.

6.6 Issues Covered:

1. Role of local government bodies in ECD (decentralization, delegation of authority and financing and monitoring system)
2. Education structure (public/private) about ECCE
3. Inter-sectoral coordination and gaps
4. ECD services for the children living in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities

5. Sustainability of ECD programs and policy gaps
6. Human resources at various level required for implementation of quality ECD programs.

6.7 Limitations: During review, updated data was not always available. There are different types of data on the same issue in government documents. Data on access and finance is some times prone to errors. The availability of age segregated data is often a problem. Updated information on field level ECD activities is not always readily available .parallel arrangement of ministerial responsibilities in both the countries generates different types of information. Even information provided by one NGO does not support the other. Government documents mostly tilts to success stories and are not interested to reflect the wrongs of activities done earlier.

7. Findings:

The National Plan of Action (NPA-II) of Bangladesh with regards to the EFA goals for the period 2001-2015 contains targets with EFA indicators for (i) formal and non formal Early Childhood Care and Education (ii) formal primary education (iii) Non formal Education and (iv) Quality (Primary Education). The sixth Five year plan document of the government of Bangladesh stresses on gender sensitive ECCD that values women which ultimately contributes to balanced development. Bangladesh has ratified the convention of child's right in the very early stage of its formation and it is being accepted as a fundamental principle for implementation of programs on children. Bangladesh and Nepal are the signatories of world declaration on Education for All in 1990 and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000). Both these documents recognize the ECCD provisions and this has resulted to formulation of comprehensive ECCD programs.

The first Education Commission Report, known as 'Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission Report 1974' recognizes early years from birth to age five as a very critical stage for human development. It takes into consideration the creation of day care centers and kindergartens for children from age three to five. There was proposition for establishing a research institute for early childhood development with relevant training for teachers on child psychology and nursing. Bangladesh Shishu Academy (children's Academy) is established in 1976 for social and cultural development of children. The NGO's started pre school activities pertaining to limited numeracy skills, pre reading and writing in the early unities and NGO's. There was no support in

terms of resources from the government to the NGO's to continue baby classes. They mobilized resources with the support of the local and internal organizations. In 1994, the government of Bangladesh issued circular encouraging primary schools to organize 'baby classes'. There was no provision for structured curriculum or a separate and trained teachers. The Shishu Academy started basic reading, withing and arithmetic in its district level pre-school activities in 1995. The Primary Education Development program (PEDP I) of the government supported baby class operation. They introduced primers without any learning materials or toys for the children.

7.1 Enrolment in ECCE and Primary Schools: Bangladesh

The Bangladesh government has taken 2001 as the benchmark with an estimation of 10.38 million children of age group 3-5 years. It is estimated to grow up to 11.02 million by 2005 and to 10.76 million by 2010 and 11.69 million by 2015. The NPA II sets target of total coverage of 3.31 million during 2001-2015 (1 million by 2005, 1 million by 2010 and 1.31 million by 2015). The same document sets a target of coverage under the non formal education system as follows.

Table 4: Target of Coverage under non formal education.

2001	40% of the base year population of 10.38 million or 4.123 million
2005	25% of 40% of 2001 or 1.04 million
2010	45% of 40% of 2001 or 1.87 million
2015	30% of 40% of 2001 or 1.25 million
2001-2015	80% of 2001 population or 3.32 million

Source: NPA-II and Non formal education Survey.

The gross enrolment rate, in other words the number of children enrolled in grades 1-5 relative to the total population of children aged 6-10 years (official primary school age) was 103.5% in 2009 (up from 93.7% in 2005). The net enrolment rate, in other words the number of children of the official primary school age (6-10 years) enrolled in Grades 1-5 relative to the total population of children aged 6-10 years was 93.9% in 2009 (up from 87.2% in 2005).

Table: Enrolment in Primary Education

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Students in Grades 1-5, GPS and RNGPS	13,056,577	12,939,129	12,916,522	13,010,370	13,281,194
Students in Grades 1-5, All	16,225,658	16,385,847	16,312,907	16,001,605	16,539,363
Students in Grades 1-5 aged 6-10, All	15,114,102	15,244,630	15,041,743	14,880,249	14,947,002
Children aged 6-10	17,315,296	16,771,776	16,514,419	16,390,221	15,982,744
Children aged 6-10- PEDP-II Macro Plan	17,930,000	17,880,000	17,840,000	17,800,000	17,750,000
Gross enrolment rate (%)	93.7	97.7	98.8	97.6	103.5
Boys	91.2	92.9	93.4	92.8	100.1
Girls	96.2	103.0	104.6	102.9	107.1
Gender parity index	1.05	1.11	1.12	1.11	1.07
Net enrolment rate (%)	81.2 —	- 90.9	91.1 — L	90.8	93.9
Boys	84.6	87.6	87.8	87.9	89.1
Girls	90.1	94.5	94.7	94.0	99.1
Gender parity index	1.07	1.08	1.08	1.07	1.11

Source: Annual Sector Performance Report, Bangladesh Primary Education 2010.

The governments of Bangladesh, Nepal and other south Asian countries have committed to achieve EFA goals by 2015. The very first EFA goal is about expanding and improving early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. There is no clear cut defined responsibilities of various players and implementing partners with a nodal agency to ensure synergy and holistic coordination. There is very limited awareness amongst the policy makers about the value of ECD. There is lack of systemic knowledge management and communication between the formal and non-formal sectors. This has resulted to low attention and very few demand for quality services. Though, Bangladesh has developed Early Learning Development standards (ELDS) but interventions and practices are mostly sub-standard and low in most cases. There are high levels of stunting in both the countries but child and maternal mortality has reduced in recent times. Children in both the countries attend school

based or center based programs for pre-primary education but the participation is very low. Data on access to services by children under three is not available. Even when data on some other issue is available, they are often not disaggregated by age and programme. Pre-school teachers and caregivers are not qualified in these countries. There are ECD provisions run by the governments but legal bindings is absence resulting to low level of importance and care. The international communities are now strongly supporting the policy development and implementation process than before.

7.2 Bangladesh Experience: Conceptual Framework, The NPA I (1992-2000) initiated early childhood and education program in a limited scale by formalizing 'baby classes'. There were limited scale restructuring of the pre school facilities, promoting the non-formal initiatives of the NGO's and preparing curriculum, learning materials and conducting parenting in government and non government sectors for the implementation of ECD activities. During this period GOB allocated funds for one million books, play equipments, displays and pictorials books. The 2000 Assessment shows that 10.3 percent of the children targeted are covered in this program. A survey conducted by BBS/UNICEF/ PMED, 1999 shows that 11.52 million 3-5 years old children have been covered with a gross enrolment of 2.6 million children in pre-school education having a gender parity index of 1.1. The net estimated figure was 9.356 million children by 2000. Report of the National Committee on primary education, 2005 suggests that a total of 1.864 million 4-5 year old children benefited from various ECD level programs.

The above mentioned data shows that we have a very big coverage area in terms of number for the early childhood care and education. These children are from both urban, rural and disadvantaged areas including hill tracts and haor area. So, it is always difficult to address all the areas of development within the existing framework of support. In case of enrolment, we have achieved gender parity but the issue of quality is a big challenge for Bangladesh. Most of the children are from poor family. The parents are not well aware if child care. Only, the care has been expanded modestly in some pockets of the urban area. The quantitative achievement tells nothing of those who are excluded because of poverty and other disadvantageous situation. There is a great chance of poor retention and unsatisfactory outcomes in care and learning. In Bangladesh, we don't have adequate information on life-skills programmes. The GOB has not adequate institutional capacity to handle all the children who are enrolled in pre-primary centers.

7.3 ECCE Goals and Principles:

The MDG aims to increase the participation of Young Children in ECCE programs. The government of Bangladesh has adopted a right based approach to literacy for all children as a basic human right. The Government through relevant ministries and agencies have the primary responsibility of formulating early Childhood Care and education policies. It has identified the following principles for promoting ECCE activities.

- Foster a society in which importance of investment in early childhood years is understood and prioritized as a critical input to human development of the country.
- Mobilize all stakeholders to collaborate and coordinate on issues related to the needs, rights and well-being of all children from conception to age eight.
- Ensure that all children have access to age and developmentally appropriate early childhood interventions and achieve successful school transition.
- Support parents with appropriate parenting skills and knowledge to help their children develop to their full potential.

(Source: NSAPR and Framework ECCD).

The jomtien Framework for Action states that efforts to expand access must be accompanied by quality services. Scarce resources have been frequently used for expanding systems with insufficient attention to quality. A sizeable percentage of children is acquiring only a fraction of care, skills and education of which they are expected to master. It requires increasing the share of national income and budgets allocated to basic education and child care. At all levels of decision making, regular mechanism for dialogue with civil society organizations and community members should be ensured by the government. This is seriously absent in the case of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a highly centralized and command driven forms of management in the government system. A better governance of education system in terms of transparency, accountability and efficiency should be in place.

In order to achieve the goals articulated above, we should review the education system with reference to expansion of quality early childhood education and development, rights of disadvantaged children, facilitations of active participation of stakeholders in the lifelong learning process and development of national, regional institutional capacities and devoting additional funds along with financing of the governments.

These principles are reflected in the governments framework for Early Childhood Care and Development. It promotes joint action will be undertaken by institutions, linking parenting education with early childhood care and education, utilizing formal and non formal quality systems and ensuring more effective donor coordination.

The government has set principles to address the needs of children belonging to different age group. The care interventions are considered comprehensive and multifaceted. A growing body of knowledge suggests that development of child begins within the family and mostly depends on parents and the surrounding environment. So all the factors relating to development should be taken in to consideration. The ECCE framework recognizes the following guiding principles:

a. Holistic Approach: There should be a link between the Physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional and self awareness domains and complements vice versa. Research suggest that neglect to one domain adversely affect the others. So project on ECCD should deliver sessions that establishes synergy to other interventions and all the development domains are properly recognized.

b. Continuity of Care and Services: Programmes should be linked to each other. The child care related interventions will be available at the same time. The issue of health, nutrition, stimulation, social Support and other related things will be rendered at the same time. Transition form one stage to another stage will be done in a proper way; Such as, transition of the child (conception to three) to early childhood services (three to five), to pre school (five to Six) and then to school (six and beyond) should be done in a smooth and congenial way.

c. Parents Education/Caregiver Education: Parents and caregivers will be provided child rearing practices. They will be sensitive about the development of children form conception to birth. How growth and development in different domains are unfolded and what should be daily practices should be known to the caregivers/parents.

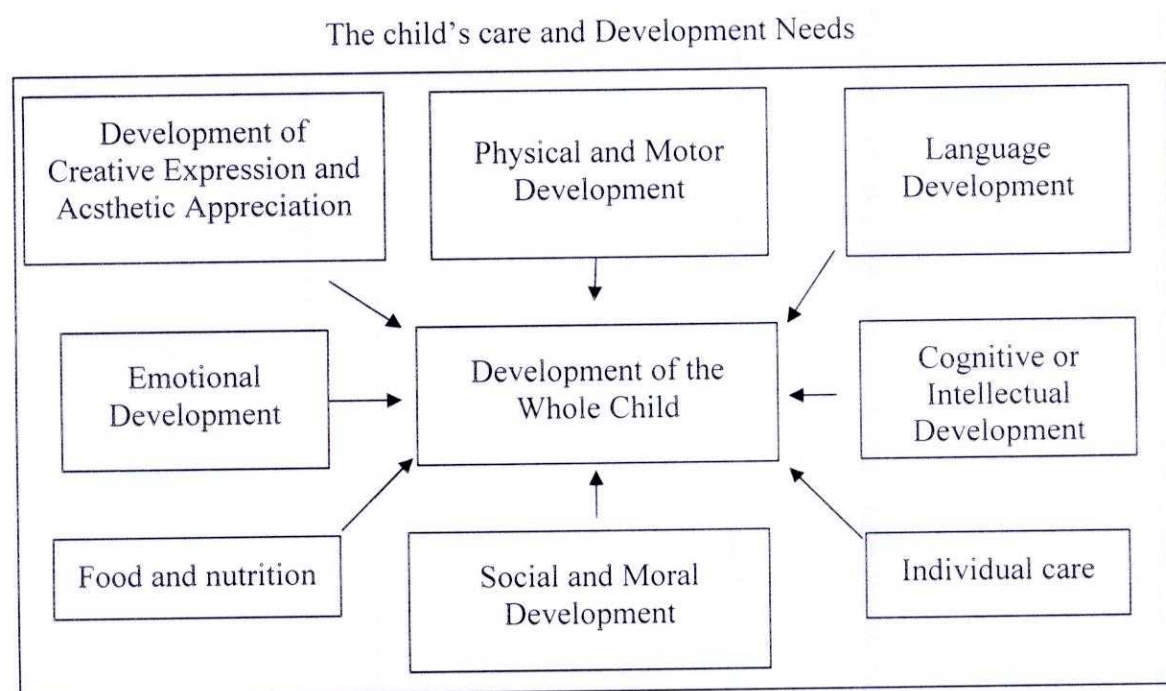
d. Community participation: To identity needs, the Community people, local representatives and volunteers will be involved. They will be taken in to Consideration while providing remedial support and health care. This will create ownership and create a sense of responsibility.

e. Access to Age and Culturally Appropriate programs: Children should have the right to access in early childhood programs. It could be ECD programs in home, school or community. This program will be extended form conception to eight year of age.

f. Inclusion: Special needs children will be provided with required support and mainstreamed. None will be excluded from the provision of early childhood care and services

g. Life cycle Approach: There will be continuity of services .This services range from conception to primary school resulting in long term impacts.

The NPA II has designed the ECCE activities based on development needs of children and it relates to UNESCO schematic arrangements:



Source: UNESCO 2001

The government of Bangladesh has defined 'Early Childhood Care and Education as a holistic and integrated approach focusing on children from conception to eight, to ensure their right to survival, protection, care and optimal development through family focused, center and school based programs; The very vision is that all children irrespective of genders, special needs, ethnicity, religion, geographical location and economic status are nurtured, valued and loved and have the best stand in life for reaching their full potential. The 'Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and policy Framework' reveals that the target group is all children from conception to eight

with special priority given to disadvantaged communities, poor families, children with special needs, ethnic minorities and children living in remote geographical areas.

A study conducted by Unicef named 'KAP on early childhood Development 2001,' shows that 50% of rural mother do not know the importance of fostering curiosity and self-confidence in a child. They consider playing as a waste of time.

7.4 Health, Nutrition and Sanitation

The issue of health, nutrition and sanitation are great concerns for the children of Bangladesh. The GOB and the NGO's are providing health care, nutrition oriented activities (protein biscuit for tiffin), iodized salt, hygiene and sanitation program for the children of rural and urban areas.

In urban slum, the child mortality is higher than in the rural population. Living standards of the slum dwellers are low. The children do not have safe drinking water or proper sanitation in the slums. They are exposed to toxic substance and hazardous waste. A study of 'Household food security in urban slum areas of Bangladesh by IFPRI finds that 48.3% of children above five years of age living in the slums have never attended to school. The Government has no dedicated program covering holistic areas of development for the urban children. There are very few programs run by the city corporation to develop the condition of the slum dwellers having a very low importance. Our children are also affected by domestic violence, acid burn, climate change, sexual abuse and ill mental health. Other than some long procedural legal framework, we don't have policy guidelines on the emerging areas related to ECCE. The infant mortality is reduced to 41 per 1000 live birth in 2008, according to census of the bureau of statistics, which were 53 in the year of 2002. Maternal mortality is reduced to 2.07 in 2008 per 1000 live births. Both the countries have shown improvement in child mortality.

Scientific researches demonstrate that the brain develops during pregnancy and continues to grow at a rapid pace during the first three years. This is why, government, encourages intervention during the first three years of childhood. There is provision in govt hospitals to provide immunization for measles, diphtheria and other childhood complexities. At the same time, same local and international organizations are also providing health care services including immunization. The document regarding government's health policy (draft health policy 2010) recognizes access to integrated ECCD interventions. It refers to supportive care giving for

promoting optimal brain development, education, nutrition, and health services and parenting and community awareness programs. The government of Bangladesh and Nepal with the support of WHO provides vitamin A tablets and de-worming capsules for the young children. The roles of parents are recognized in policy documents for creating enabling environment for the children. Involvement of parents in providing consistent and caring support help language development and good performance at schools. The 'National strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction' document of government suggests children who are enrolled in pre-primary schools have chances greater competencies in the later years.

Most of the programs are targeted to the children in the age bracket of 3 to 5 years. Most of these programs are tilted towards psycho-social development or lean toward the education and cognitive development. Ministry of Health looks at services for the development of children from conception to three years of age through its child health programs. However, the services provided by the Ministry of Health lack the early stimulation components required for psychosocial and emotional development of children.

7.5 Participation in Education:

The net enrolment is recorded at 93.9% in 2009. Gender parity in enrolment has been achieved. There is concern about drop out and the quality of education. The drop out has been reduced to 45:1 in 2009 from 50.5 in 2006.

Table 7: Repetition and Drop out Rate, 2005-2009

	2005	5006	2007	2008	Total	2009	
						Boys	Girls
Repetition Rate %	10.5	11.2	11.6	11.3	12.1	12.1	11.8
Drop out rate %	47.2	50.5	50.5	49.3	45.1	47.8	42.5

Source: (ASPR, 2010, BPE).

Meeting the learning needs of the disadvantaged children is also a great challenge. The second primary education Development program (PEDP II) is a flagship program of the

government, which endeavors to respond holistically to the needs of the primary education sector as a whole. Earlier in nineties, there were independent projects dealt with fragmented aspects of the primary education system. Under the PEDP-II, all the interventions are brought under a common umbrella and demands are met holistically addressing a number of important issues at the same time. In last six years (2006-2010) under PEDP-II, 40,000 classrooms have been constructed, 32,000 teachers are recruited and training on certificate in education has been completed for 82,000 teachers. They are presently dealing with the pre-primary school children. Though, they did not have focused training on different aspects of the early childhood Development. Some NGO'S have provided short courses to their teachers to run the centers.

Though the PEDP-II is launched with a view to support the students from grade 1 to 5 but their interventions will contribute to ECCD programs of the government. The extra class room added to the government schools will also accommodate the baby class students. The contents of training of teachers have some link to age appropriate child behavior and practices. Besides, teachers at the very initial part of their job are getting some kind of training which is far better than a non trained teacher.

According to the Operational Framework for pre-primary education, the total number of 5-6 year old children is 2,220,106 and there is a requirement of 88,804 centers. Presently, the government has taken measures to construct two-class room in each Govt: schools for the pre-primary children. At the same time, a plan is underway to recruit two female teachers in each school for the pre-primary children. Free primers and materials are also supplied in these schools.

There are unstructured pre primary or baby classes in many areas of the country run by NGO's and at the same time the government has formally introduced one year pre primary classes in govt. primary schools from 2010. The government of Bangladesh is a signatory to the UN convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Millennium Development Goals (2000). All the international pledges have been reflected in the policies and programs formulated by the government. It has been recognized that there will be a pre school education for the children of 3-5 years. The issue of early childhood education has duly been recognized by the National education commission report and the sixth five-year plan. The baby class was earlier introduced with a purpose to familiarize children with schooling. It was not oriented toward the

overall development of children. Article 17 of the constitution of Bangladesh obligates government to adopt effective measures for the purpose of

(a) establishing a mass oriented, uniform and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law.

(b) Relate education to the needs of the society and producing trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs and

(c) Reducing illiteracy within such time as may be determined.

7.6 Management of pre-primary and primary Education:

Management of universal primary education is a state responsibility. There is provision in favor of women and children in Article 28, clause 4 of constitution of Bangladesh. In 1974, the government has taken over the management of primary schools. Later on, Universal primary Education program has been initiated by the government and a separate Directorate of primary. Education has been established in 1981 with its administrative offices in divisions districts and Upazila level. Primary education (Compulsory) Act 1990 has been formulated to intensify the activities of primary education and subsequently the primary and Mass Education Division Implementation monitoring Unit (CPEIMU) was established in 1990 to help monitor the compulsory Primary education and also to carry out the child education and literacy survey. The first ladder of mainstream education system starts with early childhood education for 3-5 years age group. The govt determines age 5⁺ to <6 as the baby class. The ECE for children of 3-5 years of age group is imparted for one or two year besides family. The Pre-Primary Education can happen in 'baby classes' or pre-primary sections attached to primary schools and in private nursery schools/kindergartens. NGO run centers have different types of operational system from other non-government primary schools. NGO schools operate mainly in areas not served either by government, non-formal or private schools. The basic objectives of the NGO run schools are essentially to meet the educational needs of vulnerable groups in the society. Besides, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Hill Tracts Affairs Ministry and the Social Welfare Ministry also conducts baby classes/centers/para to address the issue of pre-primary education. The Religious Affairs Ministry of Bangladesh and the 'Hindu Kallyan Trust' also runs mosque and temple based education respectively which also includes reading of religious scripts.

The education policy of 2011 has recognized the need for early childhood education and accordingly, the NPA has targeted for gradual introduction of school based formal ECCE program under the management of government primary schools. Parenting education and awareness programmes are at present available only with the NGO program. It is also extended to the rural and disadvantaged areas.

The ministry of Primary and Mass Education is the apex body for management of primary and Early Childhood Education. The MOPME is involved for formulation of policies while the DPE is responsible for implementation of development programs/ projects. The responsibilities include management of personnel including teachers, in service training of teachers and staff, distribution of free textbooks, reading materials etc.

7.7 Age Segregation: The ECCD policy Framework emphasizes on following period of life which creates active effect:

1. **Pre-Natal and birth:** It is mentioned that maternal and child health care during this period significantly reduces infant mortality rates, low birth weight and morbidity rates.
2. **Birth to Three years:** Better parenting skills are enhanced through education on health, nutrition, and feeding practices. It is extremely important for parents and caregivers to be aware of rapid brain development during this time and to provide opportunities for appropriate stimulation and learning. Safe and secure environment with a consistent and nurturing relationship with a caregiver is critical to be established during this period.
3. **Three to Six years:** Children do have rapid development and socialization skills through interaction with peers and with individuals other than family members during this time. Through attending center based early childhood programs (day care and pre-primary school) children acquire school readiness skills. While education needs are being met by early childhood education programs, children at this stage, continue to have health and nutrition needs as well. Therefore ECCD programs should have the provision for all these critical components.
4. **Six to Eight years:** Children go through a process of transition to primary school during this period. Through better school readiness, children have better chances of having successful and effective school experience. There is strong evidence that positive

experiences in school during the early years result in reduction of dropout and repetition rates as well as completion of primary school and achievement of higher education.

7.8 Public Financing in ECCE programs:

Education has been a priority sector with the GOB since 1972. Comparing to other ministries, resource allocation has been high in education sector. The GOB allocation in the universal primary education sector includes development of physical infrastructure of government primary schools (class room, offices, Primary Teacher Institute, utilities etc.), supply of text books, training of teachers, school feeding programs, stipend, grants to registered and non registered private schools. The total cost of ECCE under PEDP for the period 2003-15 has been estimated to 48.9 billion Taka as against the total PEDP cost of Taka 403.532 billion Taka. This is 12.1% of total cost (Source NPA II 2003-15, Page 71).

Financing of education is mainly a government responsibilities in Bangladesh. The source of recurrent allocation are the revenue earnings of the government. Considerable amount of development allocation comes from external aids, loans, grants which accounts for less than 30% of the government development expenditure on basic education.

Public expenditure on education has been increasing over the years from 11.13% in 1990-91 to 14.18% in 2005-06. The highest allocation for education as compared to all sectors was 27.85 in 2009-10. Public expenditure on ECCE spreads in different ministry like MOWCA, MOPME, MOE, Religion Affairs Ministry, Social Welfare, MOCHTA and LGRDC. The actual cost on ECCE incurred by different ministries is not available.

Education in Bangladesh is state funded. Since last thirty years, Government is also taking loans and grants from the development partners to conduct projectized and programme activities for the primary education. There is no clear-cut budget allocation by the government dedicated for the early childhood care and education. But there is common allocation which cross cuts ECD related activities like pre-primary education, health and nutrition. These funds are used by different government offices without any coordination. Most of it is spent on administrative purposes like providing salary of teachers construction works and contingency purposes.

In non-government schools/Centers, the parents are funding the cost. NGO's are also contributing ECCE. They also don't have collective list of expenditure. The development

partners provide fund for education through loan and grants to the Bangladesh government and also to NGO's.

7.9 Partnership:

To ensure better synergy, Ministry of women and children's Affairs (MOWCA) have taken initiatives to bring other ministries and government and non-government agencies in to a common platform. The government of Bangladesh has encompassed the complete age group (Conception to eight years) of early childhood. The policy Framework of ECCD provides common vision, goals and guiding principles of ECCD. It suggests for developing program interventions. This document is closely aligned with the 'Operational Framework for pre-primary Education' developed by MOPME. This Framework provides guiding principles for implementing education programs for children of 3-5 years of age. It has also got common standards for all types of pre-primary education.

Pre-school education is being undertaken by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. The development of children aged 3 to 5 are not formally included. Educating children aged 3 to 5 has not been included in the education structure.

Since 2000's some national and international NGO's and Government have structured ECCD programs for different age groups and promoted parenting education. BRAC, save the children USA and Plan Bangladesh have designed curriculum, low cost learning materials and trained profession to introduce and support ECCE activities. A pilot project for innovative and comprehensive ECCD model was launched by Shishu Academy in partnership with NGO's in 2001. The ECD network is formally launched in 2005 with GO-NGO collaboration. The Early Learning for Child Development Project (ELCDP) of the government continues to promote early learning programs with the involvement of NGO's. ECD in postgraduate medical education and nursing colleges is introduced since 2008 and approved by Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council. The government has started to provide pre-primary schooling support in all govt. primary schools and to be expanded to all other types of primary schools from 2012. There is a plan of the govt to open Shishu Bikash Kendro (ECD Centre) in each Upazila (Sub-district). The issue of health care services for the newborns, pregnant mothers, young children and vulnerable and disadvantaged children are involved in the draft National Health Policy 2009. The Education Policy of 2010 includes 1 year pre primary education for children of age five.

The GOB has authorized BRAC and Save the Children USA to organize pre-primary classes in GPS and RNGPS. BRAC has organized more than 24,000 baby classes in the premises of GPS or in the vicinity of the school where the mother school enrolls children in grade 1. This is a glaring example of partnership between the government and NGO. The BRAC program is effective in remote rural and hilly areas. Save the Children USA has organized 2000 home and community based centers in school catchments areas linked to designated mother schools. Some other organizations like Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Grameen Shikkha and Plan Bangladesh are working with family and community based programs with support from the government. The government also takes UNICEF's support in its pre school program of the Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP) in three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachori and Bandarban. The 'para' center (neighborhood Center) supports the ethnic children in to education. The ECCE programs adopted by government and NGO's can be categorized in to three groups:

1. Government approved and assisted School based pre-primary education conducted by NGO's. NGO activities also supported by national and international donors.
2. Government initiated informal 'baby classes' in GPS/kindergartens and Ebteyee Madrasha (religions school)
3. Community and NGO managed limited ECD programs.

The GOB's commitment to follow the partnership approach with organizations/NGO's and individuals as mentioned in DAKAR Framework for Action is reflected in GOB Policy and Guidelines. It includes encouraging and allowing NGO's to establish and manage pre-school classes, extend technical assistance in development of teaching, learning, training and play materials for the program and ensure enrollment and continuity in primary education. The government also accepted health, nutrition, water and sanitation programs of UNICEF and WHO.

7.10 Experience of Nepal in ECCE:

The Nepal Government encourages Community participation in the development of early childhood development since the Seventh Plan (1987-1992). There are provisions for opening pre-primary schools by communities, NGOs, groups or individuals.

Pre-primary classes were established in the early 1990s, to enhance the quality of primary education. The National Plan aims to make early childhood centers different from the primary school and to make them community-based centers for the overall development of a child within a playful and enjoyable environment. The high-level National Commission for Education has also emphasized the need for developing child-friendly ECD centers in the community. The government aims to build up partnership with the communities in management as well as in cost-sharing. Through this strategy of community-based ECD. Under the provisions of the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) II, to run a *Shishu Kakshya* (SK—child-care centre), one should first of all form a management committee to work out the details of running an ECD centre, then formally apply to the District Education Office for permission to run the centre. The community must provide a room and other physical facilities necessary for running the SK. The community should also make provision for the salary of the SK teacher. The BPEP II responsibility is limited to providing training to the SK facilitators, making some of the teaching/learning support materials and facilitator guidebooks available. In Nepal, Early Childhood Development Section is established under the Department of Education of the Ministry of Education and Sports to look after the ECD development needs and provide support.

Non Government organizations are running ECD centers in Nepal mainly for orphans and destitute children. Many programmes of this type are conducted by philanthropic organizations like the Nepal Children's Organization, SOS Children's Villages, and Paropkar. The Children Welfare Co-ordination Committee under the National Social Service Co-ordination Committee monitors and co-ordinates the activities of these organizations.

A National Early Childhood Development council is formed in 2005 at the national level and is chaired by the Ministry of Education and Sports with members from different national and international agencies. This council provides a broad base to harmonize ECD activities and to ensure coordination among national and local level programmes.

At the district level, District Child Development Boards (DCDB) have been constituted in some districts chaired by District Development Committees. The board is responsible to ensure community participation and to coordinate with local Government bodies, I/NGOs and local authorities and to raise funds and providing support to construct ECD centers. At the village and municipality levels, the Village or Municipal Education Committee is responsible to

coordinate the child development activities at the local level. The Committee also looks at pre-primary classes carried out in public and private schools.

7.11 Health, Education and ECCE Centers

The Nepalese government aimed to construct 30,000 new ECD centers within the school year of 2008-09. The government reports that they have achieved their target of construction. The long term plan is to have a total of 74,000 centers by 2015. The Directorate of Education does not have enough resources to fully support the expansion. As a result, the facilitator's training has been reduced from 16 days to 8 days. Matching funds are also not available for all new centers since the expansion of 6,000 new ECD centers was not budgeted for in 2008-2009.

Learning materials have been purchased through the district education offices and are being distributed to the ECD centers around the district. Special trainings are given to make learning materials out of locally available materials. Many NGOs and partners are participating and encouraging this practice of utilizing locally available materials.

Formal schooling in Nepal in grade 1 begins only from 6 years of age. However, it is estimated that 30 - 40 percent of those who attend grade I are less than 6 years old (Action Plan, 1992, quoted in Evans, 1992, p.13). In the recent years, the entry age to formal primary education has been reduced to 5 years of age.

In 1997, the Ministry of Primary Education started to take initiatives to open pre-primary classes in order to separate the under age children from Grade I and improve the teaching and learning situation in Grade I. The basic idea was to separate the young children from Grade I and the development of young children was the secondary concern. However, the inclusion of Early Childhood Care and Education as the first goal of EFA has brought about change in this concept. Later the focus has been shifted from separating the under aged children from Grade I to the development of children at ECD programs. Still, ECD is not part of the formal national education structure.

There is a target of the Nepal government to render ECD services to 80 percent of children aged 3 – 5 by the year 2015. Similarly, it has targeted to have 80 percent of new entrants at Grade 1 with ECD exposure by 2015. In order to achieve the goals the EFA National Plan of Action and the EFA Core Document 2004-2009 in Nepal have made commitments to expand and improve ECD provisions throughout the country.

The curriculum developed by the directorate of education is not mandatory for all organizations. As a result, uniformity is not maintained in ECD programs. There is not uniform kit box of ECD related materials. There is no uniformity of training courses in terms of contents and modality among different organizations. There is no authorized body to provide accreditation and ensure the quality and relevance of the training programs. There is a need to develop a standard training package that includes basic components required for the holistic development of children. There is no mapping of the need for ECD centers. In every district, different NGO's, government offices and private sectors are involved in the development of ECD in Nepal. But there is no coordination. The roles are not defined clear-cut. There is lack of awareness and conceptual clarity. Lack of coordination often results to duplication of the program in the field. The experts opined that coordination at central level is not effective in comparison to district level and village community level. There is a lack of culture of sharing in most of the organizations (Govt. and non govt. organizations). There is no structural and functional coordination between different government initiatives and organizations and communities.

7.12 Institutional Arrangement:

There are (1) Government ministries, (2) UN Agencies, International NGOs and NGOs, and (3) Private Sectors for the implementation of Early Childhood programs in Nepal.

The Ministries of Education, Local Development, Health, Women, Children and Social Welfare are primarily responsible for ECCE services. As a part of its EFA program components, the Ministry of Education and Sports through its Department of Education is implementing a large number of early childhood development programs. The MOH under its various programs especially MCH program is providing health services to the pregnant and lactating mothers and young children. It is also monitoring the nutritional status of children below three years in some districts through its extension programs. The Ministry of Local Development coordinates child development programs with other relevant ministries and NGOs at the local level. The Municipalities and VDCs are responsible in the implementation and monitoring of ECD programs at the local area. The need of orphans, abandoned and displaced children are looked after by the newly created Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare.

A National Early Childhood Development Council has been formed under the chairpersonship of the Secretary, MOES. The members of the council include representatives from MOH, MOLD, MOWCSW and the representatives of UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs. The Director of the Department of Education is the Member Secretary of the Council. The District Child Development Board (DCDB) has been constituted in 35 districts under the Chairpersonship of the District Development Committee President. The Board consists of members from the concerned line Agencies. DCDB is responsible to ensure community participation and coordinate with local GOs, NGOs and local authorities. DCDB contributes to raising funds and providing support to construct ECD centers.

To enhance efficiency in ECD implementation and ensure sustainability of the ECD programs, decentralization of authority to local bodies has been taken as a key strategy. Through the enactment of 'Local Self Governance Act', the local elected bodies—VDCs and Municipalities have been delegated the authority to run ECD centers through partnerships with NGOs, CBOs and local groups and to authorize the interested bodies to run ECD centers. Guidelines have been developed to facilitate the process of decentralization and to empower local bodies to run ECD programs. VDCs and Municipalities can open and/or give approval to run ECD centers as per the local need. VDCs and municipalities have taken responsibility to approve the ECD centers in certain localities. ECD records of Education facilitators, trainers, development partners and local agencies involved in ECD and resource materials etc, are maintained by the district education offices. This information has been made accessible to all ECD partners.

The ECD centre is managed by a center management committee on the chairpersonship of a parent of the centre. This committee is entrusted with many jobs. It is responsible for the designing, implementation and monitoring of the centre. It is the responsibility of the concerned management committees to generate and properly utilize the available resources. The committee recruits, train, support and monitor the performance of the ECD workers (facilitator and helper) under transparent criteria. To ensure community participation in the operation of ECD centre and to take ownership of the centre from management and financial perspectives is an important function of the committee. The management responsibility of pre-primary classes in community schools is borne by a separate sub-committee of parents working under the overall supervision of the School Management Committee.

7.13 Partnership:

There are some UN agencies and international organizations who are contributing to ECD in Nepal. UNICEF Nepal is providing support to the government and other agencies in development and implementation of ECD programs and, on the other hand, it is implementing ECD programs through its regional offices. UNESCO Katmandu is providing support to the government and other organizations in initiating various ECD related activities. Its' support has been instrumental in the expansion of ECD services which includes preparation of ECD strategic paper, ECD curriculum, training manuals and undertaking of training programs and establishment of ECD Resource Centre at the DOE.

ECD services to children living in rural, remote and disadvantaged communities are provided by Save the Children US and Norway and plan Nepal. These organizations are implementing ECD programs in coordination with the local NGOs. There are more than hundreds of NGOs and CBOs involved in the implementation of ECD programs. But among them, the leading NGO is Seto Gurans National Child Development Services.

The private schools have been implementing ECD programs in the urban and sub-urban areas. Almost all private schools are providing some sort of pre-primary education. Their contribution in extending ECD services to the children living in the urban areas and belonging to better of families is also significant.

The international NGO's are running the ECD centers in most cases through the local NGOs or Community based Organizations. They are also running some of the programs directly and independently. The implementing international organizations provides funds for most of the recurring expenses, such as the facilitators and helpers remuneration, training costs, and costs for materials and nutrition supplementation. There are management committees to run ECD centers. Some organizations are allowed to charge a reasonable monthly fee to the children attending the centers. Emphasis is placed on recruiting the facilitators from the local communities. There are around 1079 ECD centers being run by NGOs and INGOs in Nepal.

The Department of Education has developed a forum for networking of institutions and individuals dedicated to ECD in Nepal. Organizations are encouraged to become members of the ECD National Network. A network of ECD service providers has been provisioned at the District Education Office at the district level. All local level organization are encouraged to join the ECD Network.

A partnership policy and guiding principles for the partner organizations have been developed to implement and monitor the Program and use of funds. UN agencies and INGOs are involved technically and financially in the program where the government resources are insufficient.

7.14 Implementation Strategy: ECD programs in Nepal, are being implemented through project and program models. Most of the community-based and school-based ECD centers are being implemented under EFA program by the DOE. The centers are being run through the district level administrations. A budgetary provision for ECD programs is made by the EFA program, which is largely funded by the external donors. The centers are managed by ECD center Management Committee, which comprises of local people and parents of the children enrolled in the center. There is virtually no existence of monitoring and feedback system at the govt. level. The school supervisors and RPs are not responsible for monitoring the centers. They are already over-burdened by their responsibilities of monitoring the schools and organizing training programs. It reveals that they are not in a position to take further responsibility of monitoring ECD centers.

The Local Self Governance Act (1999) makes provision to delegate the authority to manage and implement ECD programs to the local government bodies—VDCs and Municipalities. The local government bodies are authorized to establish ECD centers with their own resources and issue permission to establish implement and organize such establishments.

The budget for ECD program is available with the MOES/DOE under its EFA program, which is channeled to ECD centers through DEOs. ECD programs or centers are not included in the education structure, so this program has not been a major responsibility of the DEOs. So there is no one official directly responsible for implementing and monitoring the ECD programs although the ECD quotas are distributed and training programs for the facilitators are organized by the DEOs.

In case of International organization, financial arrangements, training and other support are provided by the respective organizations implementing ECD programs. The NGOs have relatively better monitoring mechanism and feedback system. The trainers and supervisors appointed by the organizations continuously monitor the programs. There is lack of such provision in the programs run by the government. With permission from the government, the

private schools run ECD classes. Charging fee to the parents of the children enrolled is the only source of fund in these schools. The school authorities are responsible to manage and monitor the ECD classes. Most of the pre-primary teachers in these schools do not have access to training due to the lack of training provisions for the teachers teaching in private schools. The recently launched 'School Sector Reform Plan' has also spoken clearly about ECD programmes and further mentioned that ECD is to be brought to the mainstream in order to enhance the learning outcomes of the children.

In the context of the socio-political situation of the country, expansion of community-based ECD centers and orientation of primary school teachers, head teachers and parents are the main areas of intervention. Two different modalities of support have been adopted for urban and rural areas: a demand driven approach with partial government support for urban and accessible areas, and special support for the establishment and operation of ECD centers in areas where deprived and disadvantaged communities live.

Approximately 25 per cent of the ECD centers are to be established in the disadvantaged and high poverty pockets of the country where the government provides the major portion of the cost for these centers. Special attention is to be given to children from high risk groups such as street children, orphans, children with disabilities, child labourers and children from the dalit, disadvantaged and Kamaiya families.

In response to the commitments made by the government at international forums - World Summit for Children, World Conference on Education for All and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the national plans and policies for ECD have been developed in Nepal. The government's plans and policies can be found in the National Five-Year Plans, Ten-Year National Programme of Action (POA) for Children and Development (1992), EFA: Plan of Action (1992-2000) and BPEP Master Plan (1997-2002). BPEP II (Basic Primary Education Project) and the concept paper of the Tenth Plan have emphasized on opening and conducting community-based ECD centers.

The government supports VDCs and municipalities to operate SBKs (Shishu Bikas Kendra) through grants based on contract. According to the Education Regulation 2002, SBKs are to offer programmes for the holistic development of children below four years.

7.15 Gender Parity and Diversity:

There were 4,032 ECD/PPC (Pre-primary childhood) centers in the country in 2004 1,692 government supported and 2,340 privately run. Of these, the least number were in the mountains and the highest were concentrated in the Kathmandu Valley. In 2009, the number of ECD centres reached 29,089 (24,773 government supported and 4,316 privately run). Out of the total enrolment, 17.4 per cent were dalits and 38.8 per cent janajatis.

Gender parity in gross enrollment ratio has been attained with a GPI of 0.98, and there is no marked difference in terms of overall enrollment of dalits and janajatis and other castes. There are nine districts where the percentage of children in Grade 1 with ECD/PPC experience is more than 35.5 per cent, whereas there are 44 districts, mostly mountain, hill and some terrain districts, where less than 16 per cent of the children in Grade 1 have ECD/PPE experience. Moreover, there are 48 districts where the percentage of children with ECD/PPE experience is below the national average (18.3%). Of these, 12 districts have less than 5 per cent of children in Grade 1 with ECD/PPE experience.

Of the ECD centers, about 11,890 are school-based pre-primary classes and the remaining ECED centers are community-based. In addition, there are 3,413 pre-primary classes run by private schools.

8. Discussion:

8.1 Common Issues & Challenges:

The governments of Nepal and Bangladesh have adopted ECD policies with vision and goals relate to health care, education and social protection. They have identified a variety of indicators to realize the needs of the young children. Both the countries have endorsed the EFA 2015 and are signatories to major international agreements on the rights and protection of children.

The government programs of both of these countries are designed and implemented in very uncoordinated ways. Each ministry/agency delivers its own programs. So, there are chances of resource wastage and loss of human potentials. ECD policies also provide an acute challenge

policy oversights in these countries. Bangladesh has national working groups for development of 'Operational framework for pre-primary education' and 'Development of policy on Early Learning' comprising members from different ministries, IER of Dhaka University and IED, BRAC. A good number of organizations are offering pre-primary education in a scattered way without following any national standard. Same is the case to Nepal. The government of Bangladesh formulates ECD documents with the support of the academics and the ECD activities but the implementation of programs are not jointly done. The policy documents of both the countries provide direction that effective service delivery mechanism would be in place but in practice there are duplications, overlapping and gaps in the system. The health service providers could be the first point of contact with children and families for pre and postnatal nutrition and child vaccinations. But, the health workers are not adequately oriented on the issue of maintaining formidable contacts with the families or children.

The budget provisioning in these countries are very poor ranging from 2-3% of the total education budget. Even, the clear-cut picture of expenditure on ECD is not available. There are gross budget allocations for childhood development in different categories through different ministries but it is not reflected that how much is actually spent for the children. Most of the expenditures are met for infrastructure development, salary and for contingences. There are a growing interest among the NGO service providers, civil society and donors to support the ECD activities. The ECD policies of Nepal and Bangladesh are not aligned with other national policies. To realize the ECD benefit, a coordinated and integrated multi service delivery approach is very important. The policy makers, service providers and ECD activists must ensure access to organizational resources to minimize the gap between policy adoption and implementation. Though there are incremental budget allocations in this sector but it is not adequate to handle the ECD interventions. At the same time, we have to take in to account that the proper use of public money and consider the impact of policies. The teachers of primary schools of both the countries are not properly trained and are less motivated because of poor salary. There is no academic exercise that which areas are to be prioritized; whether improving school facilities, enhancing teachers training or supporting parents by granting financial support.

no coordinated program of the government to support the pregnant mothers, neonatal and the young children for providing food supplementations and micronutrients. The rate of exclusive breastfeeding among children under six months of age is only 43% (National low birth survey of Bangladesh, BBS) in Bangladesh. Despite extensive campaign by the Government and NGO's to promote breast-feeding, many mothers don't pay heed to the message. It requires frequent visit of health and family planning workers to share this to parents. The children are not adequately prepared to enter in schools. Bangladesh has been ranked 57 out 100 countries in how young children below five years of age are prepared to succeed in school (save the children, state of the world's mother 2009, Investing in the early years, 2009). This ranking was done on index based on health, academic achievement and parental care. This gives an understanding that the policy of inclusive services and linked practices. The ECD should be mainstreamed in all activities but in application, it is neither a right of the children nor a fully responsibility of the state. Like some other program of the government, the ECD policy is implemented half-heartedly. It should cover the age bracket from conception to at least five years of age. But, the planning commissions of the government of Bangladesh do not have any project dedicated to the pregnant mothers.

The gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education in Nepal is 41%. The program is being expanded without basic structures like institutionalized training institutions, regular fund flow, regular supervision and monitoring. Less than 14% children are exposed to any kind of early childhood program among those who are enrolled in grade one. This is really a frustrating situation. So, most of the children are not functionally ready for school (ECD Impact Study, Save the children and Unicef). There is no uniformity in the contents and modality of the training programs being conducted by the government and different organizations. In both the countries, there is no authorized body to look after the quality of services and accreditation of trainings. Each country has to develop standard training packages that includes basic issues relating to the 'Whole child' development. The Directorate of primary education in Bangladesh in its primary school census 2009 has shown that there are 1032262 children enrolled in pre-primary schools but in case of Nepal, they don't have a regular (yearly) census. As a result, it is difficult to make plans for knowing requirements and delivery of services. Though, both the governments have given priority to expand ECD services in its plans and policy documents but not committed to

(PCRW) and 'Small Farmers Projects' in the rural areas. It did not continue after the completion of project period. Because, there were no provisions to sustain it structurally and financially. There is a risk that the centers established under the EFA programs may discontinue after the termination of the EFA program.

8.2 Institutional and Capacity Issues:

In Bangladesh, there is no country wise comprehensive advocacy program. The ECD services are planned at the central level but there is a gap in the areas of awareness and realization among the relevant authorities to give priority to ECD programs. As a result, the needs of individual and at different geographical location can't be properly addressed. Inter sectoral coordination is very important to achieve FCA goals. In Bangladesh and Nepal, a large number of NGO's and UN agencies are involved in providing ECD services. There is lack of coordination among them and their roles are not defined. At the same time, the governments do not have the initiatives to ensure coordination between NGOs and monitoring of the interventions. There is a need for coordination both is central and field levels. In Nepal, some of the poor communities cannot provide matching fund that results to non-establishment of ECD centers in remote and poor areas. The government should have mapping of the ECD centers and provide financial assistance for the poor and remotest areas.

NGO's offer reading, writing, and numeracy through rhyme and play in day care services in both the countries. There are some areas, where NGO services should be complemented by Government support, as some of the NGO's do not have required manpower and financial support. In urban cities, the kindergarten system provides education services through private enterprise charging high tuition fees. This high expense is unaffordable for most of the people. The pre-primary education teaches children math, bangla and school readiness skills. Presently in Bangladesh there are more than 36000 baby classes in government schools. NGO's and religious schools also offer pre-primary education. But, there are differences in contents, delivery of topics and methodology in running the baby classes. The 'Operational Framework for pre-primary education' is developed to bring all the pre-primary service providers on a common platform. But, the Framework is not followed by the service providers in areas of curriculum standard,

they follow different strategies in providing programs. Immunization action is one of the success stories of public health services in Bangladesh. This is achieved mainly because of 1, 20,000 EPI sites services at local level and for community engagement. Curative care, disease prevention and health promotion interventions are provided by the community-integrated management of childhood illness. The health workers and physicians provide this service at different hospitals and centers but there is few participation of the community people and mothers. The government of Bangladesh begins a nation wide vitamin A plus campaigns. This intervention is provided on the national immunization day. Vitamin A capsules are given to children aged 12 to 59 months along with the immunization against killer disease of diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis, polio and measles. Infants of 1 months also receive vitamin 'A' capsules within six weeks after delivery. These health's related interventions has link with government's draft 'Health policy 2009' and draft 'National children's policy, 2009'.

Bangladesh & Nepal faces some critical challenges to ensure ECD services for their children. The institutional capacity of both the countries are not well orchestrated. The understanding at the policy level on the importance of ECD provisions is lower than expectations. Both the countries recognizes the importance of addressing the needs of early childhood years. A remarkable progress is made in meeting children's survival and protection by making some provisions in health care, nutrition, immunization and education. There are school readiness programme for five years old children in a limited scale conducted by both the governments and non-government organizations. Communities and local government organizations are also involved in immunization and childcare. None of these two countries have institutionalized coordination. This results to duplication, Overlapping and wastage of money and resources.

Though, governments have some good policies related to early childhood in place but are not always applicable. We find that a large number of children in both the countries are poor and marginalized. They enter schools unready. That may lead them to fail or drop out. As a result, they can never reach to their full potential. At the same time, the countries don't develop economically or socially to their fullest potential. The governments are committed to reducing

8.3 Sustainability

There is a problem of sustainability of ECD programs in Bangladesh and Nepal. There are lack of ownership of community people, dependency on donor's money to continue programs, demand driven approach in establishing ECD centers and lack of adequate physical infrastructure. Monitoring in government schools/centers by DPE and DOE officials is relatively less effective than those of the NGO's. There are less qualified teachers and inadequate or no training on ECD in cases of govt schools and centers. No advocacy is in place to implement 'demand based' ECD centers. The ECD curriculum doesn't have provision for developing local curriculum based on local needs. The sector based isolated program on health, nutrition and education program are in both the countries. It should be replaced by an integrated ECD programme. There is no local participation in Nepal and Bangladesh for planning ECD programs. So, effective implementation is not possible with out the participation of local community people. There is no code of conduct including for quality assurance of the program.

8.4 Decentralization and Networking:

The government of Nepal adopts an strategy for decentralization. They have delegated the authority to establish, implement and monitor ECD centers to local government bodies. Involvement in some areas of Nepal was found successful in mobilizing local community in the management of ECD centers. The Primary education system in Bangladesh is highly centralized. The decentralization practice of Nepal can be replicated in Bangladesh. Affiliating ECD centers to formal schools has both positive and negative impact on ECD programs. The positive thing is that the availability of classroom helps sustainability of the program. Similarly, the ECD children comes to school with their elder brothers and sisters, As a result they are found attending regularly more than the community based ECD centers. The negative part is that the school authority gives low priority to ECD programs, as they are more involved with higher grades. The teaching learning method in formal school is more formal and structured. As a result, the teachers and facilitators tend to adopt the same methods in centers, which are not always child friendly. The existing policy on ECD focuses more on expanding ECD services rather than

holistic effort is made in most of the cases. The policies should have legal implication so it could be turned into practice.

8.5 Monitoring:

Important information on the implementation and oversight of the policy can be drawn through monitoring. This issue is not described in detail in government policies (like Operational Framework for primary education, National education policy 2010) of Bangladesh. Monitoring indicators should be attached with the policy goals and vision. Also, indicators relating to activities of governance, accountability and transparency should be aligned with the policy guidelines. Monitoring should be of two types, (1) technical monitoring by government officials and (2) Public audit by community. In ECCD policy Framework of Bangladesh, it is mentioned that a child with special needs should receive services and treatment in accordance with his /her identified needs. But, the GOB is Annual Development program of Ministry of primary and mass education do not have any kind of dedicated budget allocation to serve the identified needs of the children. It also states that sufficient age appropriate equipment and resources will be provided to enable children to optimally develop. But in reality neither the govt. or NGO run schools have such kind of age appropriate materials. Even, the govt. schools don't have minimum number of toys or play items. The issue of mental health for children is never taken in to practical consideration. The child's unique behavioral temperament is not recognized in most case.

The ELDS is developed to allow children to progress in a sequential manner in their own unique pace. The age from birth to 96 months is divided in to six age group but age appropriate supportive practices are not introduced in baby classes. The teachers are supposed to be trained on domain specific competency based curriculum on all subjects especially math and science. But, the govt has no such provision of training or accredited institutions. The curriculum in every cases is not linked to successful transition from home to Pre School and then from preschool to primary school. National Health policy 2009 (draft) includes health services for mothers but other than six-month leave for female govt. officials, no such health support or care is available for women folk.

children's policy 1994 of Bangladesh. It has considerable directions to ensure the child's rights and protection but there is no specific authority determined for safeguarding child's right. A mechanism should be developed to determine responsibility of concerned authority for the protection of child rights. At the same time, pre-education should be declared as a part of compulsory education. The pre school education can be incorporated in the existing compulsory primary education Act 1990 through amendment. Policy should be reviewed after a specific period of time to accommodate the emerging needs. At the same time, Policy recommendations should be tried out to check the validity and functionality. The politicians, policy makers and the stakeholders should be oriented on the issue. Measures should be taken to exchange policy ideas and conduct awareness programmes to inform the guiding principles of any policy document. Mass media should be used for raising awareness of the parents and community people. The policy document should be a practical one. Lack of practical aspects in policy will create problem for sustainability of programs.

9. Conclusion:

The government of Bangladesh and Nepal are committed both nationally and internationally to implement. Early childhood care and education. Achieving all the six goals of EFA is linked to sustainable development of a country. Bangladesh and Nepal have made significant contributions to increase access to care and education, achieve gender parity, and enhance health and nutrition support to its children. Still, many challenges need to be addressed to achieve 'whole child' development. Many isolated efforts have been undertaken to support the needs of children. A great deal of changes have occurred during the last decade both on the supply side (food, nutrition, stipend, a basic education) and on the demand side. Cross sectoral efforts have brought some of the poor and disadvantaged children to the mainstream of early childhood care. But, the progress is not up to the expectations and of good quality.

There are a large number of policy documents to guide programs on early childhood development. Most predominant policies refer to pre-primary education, health and nutrition, security, and social, emotional and cognitive development of children. The very idea of reviewing the policy documents of Bangladesh and Nepal on ECCE is an attempt to understand

of inter sectoral coordination; ECD conditions in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities; involvement of local government bodies and basic requirements to address the problems have been discussed. It is expected that this policy review will help the policy makers, researcher and planners to have clear understanding on ECD, activities of Bangladesh and Nepal. They will be able to engage participation of children and adults in ECD programs, identify decentralization mechanism, promote coordination, and address the issues of sustainability and mainstream ECD program in the public and private structure.

There is a need for the development of norms and standards to ensure quality ECCE. Parents, policy makers, community members & the ECD activists should work jointly for the betterment of children. Both govt. and non-govt. activities should be aligned and there should be collective responsibility of all to pursue the interest of the children. It is expected that this report will help the policy makers, researchers and the ECD activists to contribute to a greater extent in the field of early childhood care and education.

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