Early Childhood Care & Education Policy – where are we?
Country in focus: India
An Introduction

The awareness of the criticality of early childhood for later development & its implications for the development of human resource of the country has increased a lot as reflected in the various policies, programmes and legislations in place.

Out of 158.7m children under 6 years (Census of India 2011), about 76.5m children (48%) are reported to be covered under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).

Of the total children under six, some 30 to 40 million do not have access to any ECCE services mostly belong to very poor and disadvantaged circumstances.

ECCE interventions for young children in low socio-economic groups compensate and prevent developmental delays.

From the viewpoint of policy and advocacy, it is important that the children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are exposed to stimulating home environment as well as encouraging centre based ECCE.
The National ECCE policy reaffirms the commitment of the Government’s integrated services for holistic development of all children, along the continuum, from the prenatal period up to 6 years of age.

The Policy lays down the way forward for a comprehensive approach towards ensuring a sound foundation for survival, growth & development of a child with focus on care and early learning for every child.

National Policy for Children & Integrated Child Protection Scheme

National policy on Education National Nutrition Scheme

National plan of Action for Children, UNCRC, Education for All

Delivered through public, private and non-governmental service providers

Crèche services through public schemes and statutory provisions

Despite the existence of multiple service providers, there is no reliable data on the actual no. of children attending ECCE provisions

Article 45 of Indian Constitution

Right to Education, Act 2009

National plan of Action for Children & National Curriculum Framework
The National ECCE Policy conforms to the vision of holistic and integrated development of the child, with focus on care and early learning at each sub-stage of the developmental continuum, in order to support children’s all round and holistic development.

The vision of the policy is to achieve holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below 6 years of age by promoting free, universal, inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualized opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential.

The sub stages are:
- Conceptions to birth
- Birth to three years
- Three to six years

The Policy thus acknowledge multiple models of ECCE service delivery and would be applicable to all ECCE programmes that are offered by public, private and non governmental service providers in all settings.

The diagram includes the following four categories:
- Health
- Protection
- Nutrition
- Education
Key Areas of the Policy

- Improving quality (minimum specifications, quality standards, regulation, curriculum, play and learning material, programme assessment and child assessment)
- Strengthening Capacity (institutions, personnel, families and communities)
- Access with equity and inclusion in programmes and interventions across service providers
- Institutional and Implementation Arrangements (ECCE Cell, National ECCE Council, Plans of Action) & Partnerships
- Advocacy and awareness generation
- Convergence Child Coordination among policies and programmes
- Monitoring and Supervision (MIS, National ECCE Council, etc.)
- Periodic Review
- Research & Documentation
- Increased investment towards ECCE
Quality Standards

1. Health, Nutrition, personal care & Routine
2. Infrastructure & Physical Environment
3. Children Experiences & Learning Opportunities
4. Organization & Management
5. Assessment & Outcome Measures & Managing to support quality system
6. Protective Care and Safety
Broad Analysis of the specific provisions

- Universalization
- Free vs Affordable Access
- Role of Private Providers
- Issue of Inclusion

- Standards
- Governance
- Costing of the Policy
- Care Element
Way Forward

Building an advocacy framework
Budgetary Advocacy

ICDS – to cover the growing needs of the system
Linkage with Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan (SSA) & Right to Education

Create and Enforce Mandatory Infrastructure Guidelines for Anganwadis
Create National Curriculum Standards for Early Childhood Education
• Reaching the unreached
• More adequate programmes for children under 3 years
• Addressing quality issues in pre school education
• Need for teaching-learning and play materials
• Shift in enrolment trends
• Training & Capacity Building of ECCE Teachers Pre Service Teacher’s Education
• Supervision & Monitoring
• Resource Hub for Anganwadis
• Involvement of Community & Other Stakeholders
• Advocacy at Policy Level
Stakeholders across

- Child
- Family and community
- Govt departments
- NGOs, PRIs, Anganwadi Monitoring Committees, SHGs, Panchayat
- Local self governance/Networks/NGOs
- MLAs /IAG/vernacular media/CSO collectives, State commissions
- Parliamentarians, Ministries, statutory and judicial institutions
- Public & citizens at large

- Stakeholders as partners & spokespersons
- Stakeholders as Long lasting Advocates

Partners Child rights
The main challenge for a country like India which has a huge child population is to ensure that they get proper grounding & ample opportunities to unfold their potential and contribute to Nation’s progress on all counts.

The Country now has well intentioned Policies & programmes for ECCE in place. However the huge gap between policy & implementation of these programmes is a matter for grave concern. The mere provision of services is not sufficient.

Universal access, regulation of private sector etc are some of the claims which require efficient mechanisms for delivery of services & monitoring.

Unless the quality dimensions of these programmes are ensured they are not likely to impact the situation of children.

To meet this challenge it is imperative that all concerned parents ECCE workers, policy makers & experts become informed stakeholders in the venture.