Enhancing access to Early Childhood Care and Development
Quality early childhood...An investment for the future

What is Early Childhood Care and Development?
Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from the prenatal period to 8 years of age with the objective to ensure fulfillment of the rights of all children to develop to their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential.

Significance of Early Years and Early interventions:
Children who receive early interventions are more likely to
• Perform better in school
• Be healthier and more emotionally balanced and socially responsible in adult life
• Become more economically productive throughout life
• Provide better nutrition, health care, stimulation and educational opportunities for their own children as adults

Facts on ECCD in Bhutan
• Only 7% of children aged 3 to 5 years are attending ECCD (Source: MoE Annual Education Statistics).
• Most ECCD facilitators are not suitably experienced. The ECCD facilitators (who are mostly class XII passed) do not have adequate training on child care and psychology. At the moment they only receive a 10-days crash course on ECCD before they are sent to take charge of a centre.

Findings from Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey (BMIS 2010)
• Children from the poorest households are less likely to be engaged in early learning than children from the richest households.
• The poorest children are at greatest risk of being left alone without adequate care.
• Children of the poorest households are less likely to grow up healthy than children of the richest households.
• The youngest and poorest children are at greatest risk of becoming disabled.

Early childhood interventions have a significant impact on children affected by violence, disability & developmental delays
Interventions in the early years ensures a child’s right to quality education from the start

**Major Challenges:**

- Providing equitable access to high-quality ECCD services across diverse populations
- Addressing the complexities of budgeting and governance in implementing ECCD policies and programmes
- Inadequate state funding – ECCD has been reflected in the Government’s 11th Five Year Plan with some very impressive targets. However, the programmes are unfunded and subject to funding through grants or other support from development partners

**What has been done?**

- Establishment of Centre based ECCD programme
- Parent education through NFE programmes
- Early Stimulation incorporated into NFE programmes and at Health Centres
- Incorporation of policy on ECCD into the draft National Education Policy
- Development of Early Learning Development Standards for Bhutan

**What needs to be done?**

- Endorsement of the National Education Policy
- Improving access to centre based ECCD programme especially for the hard-to-reach population

**KEY MESSAGES:**

- ECCD Begins at Home – Parent Education towards Caring for Children in a Nurturing and Stimulating Environment is essential.
- Investing in Quality Early Childhood is a Critical Investment for a Country’s Future. It is the best strategy that any nation can adopt to reduce social inequities and raising productivity of the society as a whole.
- Inclusive ECCD interventions are essential to cater to the unique needs of every child regardless of his/her ethnicity, abilities, gender, language, socio-economic status etc.
- Active partnerships and multi-sectoral collaboration is necessary to provide integrated ECCD services covering health, nutrition, protection and education.

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