

**A National Case Study on Delivery
of Early Childhood Services
Bangladesh**

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Acronyms

ECS - Early Childhood Services.
NEP - National Education Policy.
NNP - National Nutrition Programme.
PMED - Primary and Mass Education Division.
ECCED - Early Childhood Care, Education and Development.
NGO - Non-government Organization.
SDW - Socially Disadvantaged Women.
NPIC - National Implementaion Committee.
LPIC - Local Project Implementaion Committee.
TAC - Technical Assistance Consultants.
NPD - National Project Director.
ECD - Early Child Development.
SCF/US - Save the Children Fund, USA
NCD - Nutrition and Child Development Project.
NCTB - National Curriculum and Text Book Board.
EFA - Education For All.
DNFE - Directorate of Non-formal Education.
NEC - National Economic Council.
ECNEC - Executive Committee of National Economic Council.
GPS - Government Primary School
RNGPS - Registered Non Government Primary School

A National Case Study on Delivery of Early Childhood Services Bangladesh

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1. Background: The child as a focus of attention from development planners, political leaders and development activities emerged very slowly and finally captured a place among numerous pressing developmental needs of adult men and women in Bangladesh. Traditionally the Bangladesh society shows more concern for matters related to adult life compared to children's childhood needs and care. Childhood, especially in poor, disadvantaged homes, slips into adulthood as early as 7/8 years of age when these children start taking responsibility of different domestic chores including looking after the younger siblings and working for earning income to help parents. However, child development activities started modestly just after Bangladesh's independence in 1971 with the establishment of the 'Shishu Academy' (Children's Academy) and adoption of a policy for the children. Presently, major government childhood service providers are: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare and Primary and Mass Education Division. They are addressing a number of diversified developmental needs of 0-8 years old children of the country.

Bangladesh and child development

The following are the major policy statements, status and action programmes regarding children in Bangladesh.

- (i) Article 28 (4) of the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh declares that the state can make special provision for the progress of children.
- (ii) In 1973 the government assumed the responsibility of primary education by nationalizing a little more than 36,000 primary schools. In 1974, the government nationalized all primary school.
- (iii) In 1976, the Bangladesh Children's Academy was established.
- (iv) Bangladesh signed UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. (UNCRC)
- (v) Government formulated a National policy on Children to ensure the security, welfare and development of children.
- (vi) Compulsory Primary Education Act was enacted in 1990.
- (vii) According to the National policy, Boys and Girls under 14 years of age are considered as children.
- (viii) The under five-mortality rate in the country is 135 per thousand live births. (The State of the World's Children, Early Childhood, UNICEF, 2001)
- (ix) Presently 90% of 6+to10+ age group children enroll in primary schools and the completion rate is 60% at primary level of education.
- (x) Child labour constitutes 12% of the total labour force.
- (xi) The number of orphans, destitute and street children is increasing due to flood, cyclone, tidal bore, river erosion, disease and manmade disasters.
- (xii) Girl children are discriminated against; they have less access to health, nutrition, security although girls' participation in primary education has recently increased resulting parity with boys.

Focuses of the National Children's Policy:

- (i) Birth and survival - Ensure child's right to survival with provision of health, nutrition and physical security.
- (ii) Education and psychological development -Ensure proper facilities for education for achieving appropriate moral, cultural and social values.
- (iii) Family Environment - Ensure proper family environment.
- (iv) Assistance to children in difficult circumstances - Extend special assistance to children in difficult circumstances and establish equal opportunities for them.
- (v) Best interest of the children - Adopt policy of ensuring best interest of the children in all national, social, family or personal situations.
- (vi) Legal rights - Ensure the legal rights of the children within the national, social or the family contexts.

According to the National Children's Policy all children of Bangladesh-irrespective of caste, creed, colour, sex, language, religion or opinion, social status, wealth or birth-shall enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

National Education Policy 2000

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2000 considered the need for a well - designed school preparedness education programme for the majority of the first generation learners who live in the poor environment that lacks prerequisites for academic activities the schools demand from children.

National Nutrition Programme (NNP)

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is currently implementing a nationwide nutrition programme for pregnant mothers and the 0-2 years old children which includes feeding programme, poultry and vegetable, awareness raising sessions on nutrition, nutrition gardening etc.

Education for All (EFA)

As follow up of the Dakar Conference in 2001, the Bangladesh Government has recognized age group 3-5 as its target group for launching an early childhood education and development programme with the objective of ensuring children's physical and mental development and preparing them for entering school with right academic pre-requisites, attitudes and habits.

1.1. The main purpose of the case study

The main purpose of the case study is to take stock of the situation in Bangladesh in terms of how different ministries involved in early childhood services are coordinated or integrated to develop and implement comprehensive early childhood policies and programmes and to propose a direction for national action.

1.2. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- 1.2.1. take stock of the ministries involved in early childhood services and their respective policies and programmes.
- 1.2.2. examine how and how well their policies and programmes are coordinated or integrated.
- 1.2.3. examine the scope of cooperation between private initiatives and government policies.
- 1.2.4. identify areas for improvement and possible reform.
- 1.2.5. suggest tasks to be undertaken with priority.

1.3. Early childhood services as defined in the study: Early childhood services referred to in this study are defined as, both formal and non-formal/informal, public and private care and education services provided for children between age 0 and 8, including the services for their families (parent education programmes). This may include other forms of early childhood programmes and activities like Kindergarten, pre-school education, day care centers, and family care centers etc.

2. Study Questions

2.1. Ministerial Auspices: This part of the study includes ministerial responsibilities in the form of legislation, policy formulation financing, administration and provision of early childhood services. Table 1 below shows how and through what mechanism the concerned ministries and their private counterparts provide childhood services to their target group of children who are mostly disadvantaged and belong to poorer section of the society.

Table - 1
Provision of Early Childhood Services in Bangladesh

Name of the service	Setting No. of Institution/ Center	Age served	Opening hours	Enrolment	Responsible Ministry
1. Physical development					
1. Health and Nutrition	*1.1. T.H.C, hospitals, clinics that provide mother and child health care. * 490 + clinics & hospitals	0 - 8 years	4 hours per day on average	Serve 10 - 20 children on average per day as routine work. Total: 7,500 percentage approx.	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
1.2. Health, Nutrition and Child minding.	* 1.2. Crèche or day care center. * 57	0 - 5 years	4 hours per day on average	Serve 10 - 25 children per center on average. Total: 1425 approx.	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs,
2. Integrated child development: Physical and intellectual development (educational activities)	* 2.1. Pre-School center of Shishu Academy. * 73	4 - 5 + years	2 hours per day on average.	Serve 25 children per center on average. Total: 2000 approx.	Ministry of Women & Children Affairs.
	* 2.2. Orphanage, Children's homes. * 76	0 - 8 years	Residential	One orphanage provides shelter to 30 - 100 children belonging to different educational levels, maybe 5 children at one level, 10 - 15 children may belong to another level etc. Total: 2,250 approx	Ministry of Social Welfare.
3. Intellectual development of children. (Educational programmes)	* 3.1. Baby class of Govt. Primary School. * No. of Center & Institutions. 42,000	4 - 5 + years	$1\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day	30 - 50 children per class on average Total: 1,50,000 children approx.	It is an initiative of school and community; NPA suggested for a pre-school programme in this setting under the responsibility of Primary and Mass Education Division, it is not yet Govt. approved programme.
"	* 3.2. Nursery, Kindergarten, Baby class (English & Bangla Medium Schools). Total: 8,960	3 - 5 years	3 hours per day on average	20 - 30 children per class on average (3 classes) Total: 6,72,000 approx.	Private initiative under the supervision of Ministry of Education.
"	* 3.3. Maktab * 10000-12000	4/5 - 5/6 years	2 hours per day on average	10 - 15 on average Total: 1,200,00 approx.	Private, mostly mosque based community initiative.
"	* 3.4. Private and NGO Schools. (3 classes) * 60,000	6 - 8 years	$1\frac{1}{2}$ - 3 hours per day on average	25 on average Total: 4,50,000 approx.	Private, NGO under the primary and Mass Education Division of Ministry of Education.
"	* 3.5. Classes 1 - 3 of Govt. Primary Schools. * 42,000	6 - 8 years	$1\frac{1}{2}$ - 4 hours per day on	30 - 50/60 on average Total: 3,15,000 approx.	Primary and Mass Education Division of Ministry of Education.

2.3. The quality of early childhood services: Government and NGO efforts.

The holistic development of children, which includes physical, social, emotional, intellectual and moral development of children depends highly on the quality of the services provided by any agency, either Government or NGO. As mentioned before, different ministries and different NGOs have their own specific target groups with a variety of restrictions in terms of age-range, gender, economic status and the like. The variety of target groups led each ministry or the NGO to address specified developmental needs of its own target population. Thus orphans or street children's basic needs of a home received preference from the Social Welfare Ministry while the educational needs of normal children of age 6 -10 receive due attention from the Primary and Mass Education Division and, in the same way, care and security of infants and children of working women received highest attention in the Ministry of Woman's and Children Affairs.

2.4. Actions needed

4.1. EFA Plans on ECCE: Bangladesh

Background issues and concerns: The existing socio-economic and cultural context of the country affects ECCED children, specially poor and vulnerable, adversely because children of illiterate poor enter primary school without any academic preparation required for receiving school education tend to lag behind, their acute malnutrition result in poor performance at school and they get no academic assistance from their illiterate or semi-literate parents, consequently low achievement lead them to lose interest in academic activities at school leading to failures and dropout. So as adults they get no better-paid jobs and their children become victims of this vicious cycle of poverty and illiteracy.

4.1.1. Summary of National Plan of Action: [Background] NPI I proposed

(a) restructuring and redirecting the existing pre-school educational facilities, (b) formalizing the 'baby classes' in primary schools by phases (c) promoting and supporting wider non-formal, family and community based initiatives, and (d) developing the concept and suitable curriculum, educational toys and learning materials; special teacher training arrangements, advocacy, parental education on physical and nutritional needs of children and undertaking research and pilot projects. The NPAI proposed to formalize the 'baby classes' in two phases, covering 30 percent of the primary schools by 1995 and 50 percent, by 2000, a total of 4.20 million by 2000 (total 4-5 year old children, 8.40 million). The government was also to provide substantial support for classroom construction, teachers, implementation, research etc to feeder school programmes at community level.

During this period, the only ECED programme undertaken was a component of the government's Integrated Non-formal Education Programme (1991 - 97) for 75,000 children. Primary Education Development Programme (PEDPI, FY 1998 - 2003) proposed to establish 'baby classes' in 60,000 schools and allocated funds for one million books, display and play equipments per year which should have covered 2.4 million children, counting at 40 children per school. The 'baby class' was treated more as an activity for familiarizing children with schooling' but 'not oriented toward 'child development' (PMED, 1999). The baby classes in primary schools were not approved or formalized by government, no structure curriculum was prepared, no separate teachers were appointed and no clear attendance record of children was maintained.

A survey (BBS-UNICEF, 1999) estimated 11.52 million 3-5 years children with a gross enrolment of 2.6 million children in pre-school education with a gender parity index of 1.1. (PMED, 1999). The net estimated figure was 9.356 million children in 2000. Information gathered from different sources in 2001 shows a total of 1.864 million 4-5 year old children benefited from various ECED level programs, 1.05 million in 'baby class' in 42,000 GPS, and RNGPS; others attended Kindergartens (484,000) Madrasahs (242,000), ethnic minorities' Para centres (46,875), non-government institutions (33,800) and a small number in orphanages, Day care centers and pre-school centers. Fifty two percent of 4.54 million children enrolled in primary grade I in 1999 came from pre-school programme. National

Curriculum and Textbook Board has recently printed a new primer for baby class to replace the 1981 version.

The NPA II has suggested three phases of formal and non-formal sub-streams.

- Primary schools would take the 5 year old and run existing 'baby class' that provides a one - year's school preparatory course.
- ECCE will run as an integral part of all formal government, community, and satellite and non-government primary schools. It will promote pre-school programmes of Shishu Academy, schools for ethnic minorities and disabled children, children's homes and madrasahs.
- The non-formal sub-sector will organize family and community-based programmes for 3-5 year old children of marginalized families. It will provide training to parents and caregivers and help organize community level day care in cooperation with employers, government ministries, civil society and NGOs.

ECCE programs in both the formal and non-formal sub-sectors will have to link up with health, nutrition, water and sanitation and poverty reduction programs of the government and NGOs, as well as engage in socialization and initiation of children to education. The target population for both the programs, with projections, is shown in table below:

Table - 2
Total ECCE program target population by benchmark and
Projection by phases of the NPA II

Age group 3-5 years	Benchmark 2000	Growth Projection and Targets by Selected Years (in 000s)		
		2005	2010	2015
Boys	5191	5614	5477	5950
Girls	5002	5408	5276	5732
Total	10193	11022	10753	11682
5-year olds	2912	3179	3150	3293
Boys	1477	1613	1600	1674
Girls	1435	1566	1550	1619

These children will be served by phases as 30% by 2005, 50% by 2010 and 80% by 2015 through both Formal and Non-formal education sector with equal share (50% of the total children by both sectors).

Both Directorate of Primary Education and Directorate of Non-formal Education will each establish an ECCE unit and will maintain liaison with children units in other ministries/Departments, NGOs.

Complementary activities for all stakeholders: This has been proposed to create awareness about the importance and benefits of ECCE at all levels in the government, private and NGO sectors as well as the civil society both for support and mobilizing resources.

Common activities for all sub-sectors:

- Coordinate actions in developing a data base on 3-5 year old children
- Develop necessary materials for creating awareness
- Arrange effective monitoring and supervision of the programmes by respective Directorate in conjunction with the local center management committee
- Make periodical assessment of the performance of the ECCE children.
- Promote appropriate changes in the educational systems at Kindergartens, maktabas, feeder schools, orphanages, daycares etc to make them more relevant to the needs of children in context of Bangladesh society.
- Conduct studies, research, undertake experimental and pilot projects
- Expand the role and function of Shishu Academy in line with ECCE concepts

National committee on Primary Education (1997): The committee recognized the importance of pre-school education but feel that in view of the shortage of teachers and physical facilities in schools and severe resource constraints, it proposed instead of one year baby class to treat the first six months of grade I of Primary schools as school preparedness education.

**Matrix 1
The quality of early childhood services: Govt. & NGO efforts**

	Quality as defined and understood	Monitoring mechanism & Assessment results	Funding Sources	Training & educational requirements of early childhood staff	Curriculum & Pedagogical guideline
Govt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving goals/ objectives • Finding resources both man & material in place and on time • Proper utilization of resources • Completing programme by target time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly quantitative aspects • Monitoring usually reflects programme designers' viewpoints and ignore beneficiaries' interest • Pressure on money spending in time rather than quality use of resources • Delayed fund release and quick spending affect quality • Quick spending changes objectives of programme • Positive assessment result is demanded or requested while negative result is ignored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Govt. fund & donor fund are equally being used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary, Higher secondary, B.A., M. A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of activities are common and planned curriculum has not yet been evolved. • No professional training facility is present except programme related initial short orientation training for the newly recruited staff.
NGO/ Private bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting needs of the target group • Addressing beneficiaries' needs • Achieving objectives • Changing lives of people children, women and men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly quantitative aspects • Try to know beneficiaries attitude through informal meetings and occasions. • Field level participation in planning reaches closer to the type of spending and amount required. • Close contact with field fill up gaps in monitoring • Assessment is planned, hence influences results • Results are reviewed and are addressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor fund and Govt. fund. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literate, dropout of secondary schools, Secondary, Higher secondary, B.A., M.A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned curriculum, training manual, learning materials are designed reflecting objectives of programmes • Some Organizations have designed their own professional training programmes,

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF has designed a curriculum on ECD, which is being used by many NGOs.
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2.5. National level coordination mechanism: network, council or taskforce etc:

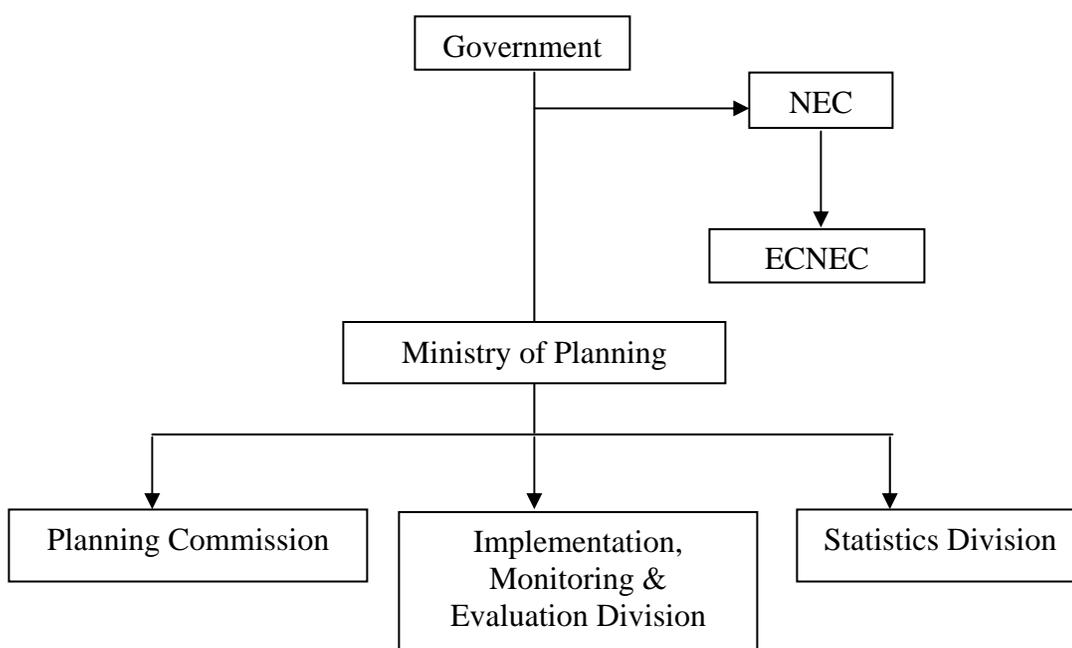
2.5.1. Coordination mechanism:

The highest body of government for coordinating activities of all ministries is Cabinet Division under the Prime Minister. In the cabinet meetings, important programmes of all ministries are discussed and decisions taken.

The development projects of national importance requiring big fund are approved by National Economic Council (NEC), which is composed of all the ministers and members of the Planning Commission and presided over by the Prime Minister. The NEC formulates policy, goals and objectives of development planning. It finalizes and approves Five Year Plan (FYP) and Annual development Programme (ADP). However, each ministry is responsible for developing its development projects, get these approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), implement those through Directorates or by creating Project Implementation Units and monitor and evaluate the projects through its own channels.

Figure 2

The Planning Mechanism of the Government is shown in the diagram below:



The Planning Commission an organ of the Ministry of Planning is responsible for national planning as mentioned earlier.

The Implementation, monitoring and Evaluation Division under Ministry of Planning is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of all the development programmers/projects of different ministries and report to the Planning Commission.

Coordinating committees: Besides there are different type of committees formed in different ministries for coordinating monitoring and quality control of different programmes as the following:

- National Steering Committee
- Tripartite Project Review Committee
- Project Implementation Committee

- Technical Assistance Management Team
- Consultant's Team
- National Project Implementation Committee
- Local Project Implementation Committee
- Technical Assistance Consultants

An example of another type of coordination effort has been developed in the new ECD programme of Shishu Academy under Women and Children Affairs Ministry which involves all the development partners of Government, NGO and community leaders and parents. These are mentioned below:

- National Resource Team
- District ECD Committee
- Upazila ECD Committee

- A network on ECD has been formed by UNICEF Health Division, major activity of the network is exchanging and disseminating ECD programme experiences. This network includes Government, quite a good number of NGOs and INGO representatives but no professional and academician. This is housed in UNICEF office and members are invited by UNICEF. No coordinated effort has started yet for developing a pedagogical guideline, on the other hand each agency develops its own curriculum or training manual.

At present there is little room for evolving a coordination or cooperation strategy among ministries and child development is yet to be considered as a continuous and progressive process of human life that adds on different abilities at different age for meeting diverse age specific developmental and learning needs of children. Consequently at age 2, while Health stops its functioning, the day care and Kindergarten takes over and likewise at 4 – 5, pre-school comes in. All these actions are taken as segregated programme of a ministry or an agency where Health practitioners are not requested to provide guidance on children's health or developmental needs to kindergarten staff or Education Ministry people. For socially disadvantaged children, NGOs and Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs have development programmes but they rarely exchange ideas with Ministry of Education. This is the current practice as observed in the study.

2.5.2. Utilization of assessment results:

Generally the government programmes are regularly assessed or evaluated by outside experts. But there is doubt whether the results of programme evaluation reports indicating weaknesses or limitations of the programme found through the assessment or evaluation are widely disseminated among stakeholders from top to bottom at field level. The evaluation reports are generally written in English, which has its own limitations while mid-level and junior national level staff appeared to remain in the dark about the programme results, especially about the weaknesses of programmes. The programme planners, high level government officials are supposed to be the readers of the evaluation reports who are supposed to use the findings in their next programme design.

The evaluation culture in both government and NGO is similar. Both of them try to influence the evaluation findings in order to demonstrate "success stories" rather than critical reporting indicating weaknesses and limitations. On the other hand, evaluation experts are also not very willing to antagonize government or NGO high level people in order to get next assignment smoothly. These affect quality, no doubt.

2.5.3. Quality related indicators:

The programme monitoring checklists of most of the Government programmes cover similar type of indicators like:

- No. of centres/ homes etc
- No. of children
- No. of teacher/caretakers/ayas etc
- Contact hours/working hours
- No. of dropout
- No. of listed items/materials
- No. of successful children/men/women etc.

The monitoring mechanism largely covers the input indicators of the programme and misses most of process indicators and output indicators in almost all programmes of all ministries.

2.6. Duplication and fragmentation in Programmes of Ministries:

Previously, it was discussed that different ministries have their identified target population for the services the ministries are assigned for. Health and Family Welfare takes care of 0- 2/3 years old children and their mothers are taken care of through its National Nutrition Programme. This age group is again included in the target children of day care centers and children's home programmes of Women and Children Affairs Ministry and Ministry of Social Welfare. Similarly the day care centers and children's homes, orphanages offer basic education to children from 6-10 who at the same time are the target group of Primary and Mass Education Division.

Moreover, each ministry develops its own training curriculum and learning materials. Very recently, the education programmes of children's homes under Social Welfare, daycare centers of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs are using curriculum and textbooks of formal education system of Primary and Mass Education Division.

The Hard to Reach Programme of Ministry of Education was developed to offer basic education to the working, poor children apparently has no linkage with Social Welfare Ministry. Similarly the street children's programme which offers education through micro teaching, peer learning, group learning etc was evolved by the Social Welfare Ministry without consulting Ministry of Education. The INGOs and NGOs that are concerned with health and nutrition develop their own training materials normally without consulting Ministry of Health. But EPI programme of Ministry of Health is the best example of coordination between Government and NGOs because all of the NGOs actively participate in the implementation of this programme throughout the country.

Directorate of Non-formal Education under PMED is an example of a coordinating body of NGO activities in the area of basic education for dropout children, poor children, adolescent and adults.

With some NGOs, it has been observed that at central level, there is no linkage or coordination with the related Ministry, but at local level, local NGO field level workers and Govt. field level workers work together and supplement each other's programme. Many experimental projects of NGOs/INGOs are tested, practiced in local formal primary schools without much interference from central government stakeholders.

The baby class education in formal primary schools has been evolved as a joint initiative of local schoolteachers and the community. All government Primary Schools run these 'hidden baby classes' without formal assistance or approval of Primary and Mass Education Division.

2.7. Integration of early childhood services in one Ministry:

This idea is still premature in Government circle as discussed earlier. In spite of the situation, UNICEF has been trying to make Women and Children Affairs Ministry as focal institution for early childhood services in order to coordinate all kinds of services required by and delivered to the children aged 0-8 years. As follow up of this, an ECD programme has been designed and initiated in the Shishu Academy under Women and Children Affairs Ministry (discussed earlier). The project started with awareness raising campaign and a number of advocacy materials have been developed in 2002. This appears to be a good starting point in the integration of early childhood services.

The goal of integrating early childhood services of different ministries may be very difficult to materialize because Ministry of Social Welfare and Primary Education Division or Health Ministry may not accept the idea of a focal Ministry, which would oversee and coordinate their respective programmes. The bureaucratic ego may hinder this kind of an approach.

2.8. Government initiative to promote cooperation: This principle is yet to gain acceptability in Government. Infact, children's development has a long way to go to be considered as number one priority in all ministries. The reason is adult's multiple problems have continued to receive highest priority in national development planning efforts. In this situation the causes of children are to wait till the conscience of the society is awakened in their favour.

2.9. Suggestions to improve cooperation and coordination:

The matrix below provides a picture of children's services and programmes being delivered by family, different ministries, organizations and the communities. It further indicates the need for joint/collaborative actions linking different stakeholders belonging to family, community, ministry and NGOs for the holistic development of children, which might also be cost-effective reducing a high amount of wastage by avoiding duplication.

Matrix 2
The stakeholders and Ministries that play significant role in children's development, (age 0-8)

0-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-8 years
Home Parents Grand parents Siblings Other relatives	Home Parents Grand parents Siblings Other relatives	Home Parents Grand parents Siblings Other relatives	Home Parents Grand parents Siblings Other relatives
Day Care Centers Care takers/attendants Other children	Day Care Centers Care takers/attendants Other children	Day Care Centers Care takers/attendants Other children	Day Care Centers Care takers/attendants Other children
Health Centers - Nurses, doctors, field workers promoters in govt. health complexes centers - Nurses, doctors, field health workers of NGO clinics/programs Community - Traditional birth attendants - Neighbours: adults & children	Health Centers - Nurses, doctors of govt. health complex - Nurses, doctors, field workers/programs Community Neighbours: adults and children	Health Centers - Nurses, doctors of govt. health complex - Nurses, doctors, field workers of NGO health clinics Community Neighbours: Adult and children Kinder garten (GOB, Private & NGO) - Teachers - Caretakers - Other children - Head teachers - Curriculum designers - Material developers - Teachers & caretakers' trainers - Policy planners	Health Centers - Nurses, doctors of govt. health complex - Nurses, doctors, field workers of NGO health clinics Community Neighbours: Adults and children Pre-school centers (GOB, private & NGO KG, I & II, baby classes) - Teachers - Caretakers - Other children - Head teachers - Curriculum designers - Material developers - Teachers & Caretakers' trainers - Policy planners

2.9.1. Findings and Suggestions:

Finding 1: Policy:

(1) Absence of a National Policy on Early Childhood Care, Education and Development as Government agreed in Dakar Conference to address 3-5 year old children's developmental needs.

Suggestion:

1. The Government should enact a National Early Childhood Care, Education and Development policy as early as possible.

2. The government stakeholders and NGO decision makers as well should be sensitized for recognizing the need of an integrated approach for child development which should be coordinated by a single ministry having a taskforce or a network represented by other concerned ministries. In the meantime, as initiated by Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the advocacy and awareness raising activities may continue before formally identifying this ministry as focal institution for Early child development.

Finding 2: Social Mobilization and advocacy:

At present awareness level regarding ECS of Ministry staff in general and Shishu Academy staff in particular is low.

Suggestion:

1. For undertaking the responsibility, Shishu Academy staff under Ministry of Women and Children Affairs should be sensitized and well informed about Early Childhood services and well prepared for discharging their Social Mobilization and advocacy programme on ECD.
2. The parents, community leaders, NGO and Government programme managers, educators, lawmakers, teacher Association, school managing committees, media people should be oriented in order to demand and be capable of delivering right type of ECS.

Finding 3: Teacher/Staff preparation:

The table 1 demonstrates that there is enough literacy skills in the practicing curriculum in all type of serices/programmes which did not address other developmental needs of children.

Suggestion:

Relevant teacher's and caretaker's training package should be designed addressing children's age specific developmental needs.

Finding 4: Resource Mobilization:

There is a tendency in the Government system that without providing required resources, supplies, materials, the central level policy makers demand products on time and of good quality. For example it is demanded from the Govt. Primary School teachers to enroll 100% primary age group children of the catchment area without extending classroom facilities, school supplies and most importantly, the required number of classroom teachers without whom classroom teaching learning cannot take place.

Suggestion:

1. The government may sponsor ECS programmes in collaboration with community, NGO and other private bodies which may be implemented in phased manner, i.e, through pilot programme in selected districts may gradually increase its service area and finally cover the whole country over a targeted period.
2. There should be community based planning from bottom indicating type of man & material resources required for next 2/3 years, which may be reviewed by central people.

Finding 5: Quality Control:

The early childhood services providing centres suffer from shortage of facilities and materials.

Suggestion:

1. The centers/schools should have facilities like play grounds or open space for open-air games and developmentally appropriate play materials in the classroom which should be linked with the curriculum and classroom/center based activities.

Finding 6:

The government staffs are not informed about the programme results or findings of assessment or evaluation reports.

Suggestion:

The findings of all programme assessment or evaluation reports should be translated into Bangla and disseminated widely especially among the mid-level and field-level staff.

Finding 7:

"In government programmes, there is not much pressure on us to do good job and there is no regular staff development plan and programme which are available in NGOs. For this reason, Govt. programmes bring less quality outcomes and NGOs as work under bosses' pressure to do good job, act more efficiently and deliver comparatively better quality results of their programmes. The Govt. officers in present situation do not get opportunity to utilize whatever knowledge and ability they have."

A comment from a Government mid - level progamme implementing official on working environment Govt. office suggests that there exists a feeling of doing routine work in a monotonous working environment that discourages initiative and innovativeness. Above all for

performing good job there is neither pressure nor reward or any kind of incentive in the Government system.

Suggestion:

Encouragement, incentive for good work, scope for professional skill development for junior staff may remove the monotony of the mechanical environment of government offices and allow young people to compete with each other and be encouraged to do quality work by supportive seniors.

Finding 8:

The knowledge and information relating to children's development and needs is limited in the country.

Suggestion:

An information cell on ECCED may be established in Shishu Academy under Ministry of Women and children Affairs. Moreover, relevant ministries like PMED should establish resource center/information cell for their own use.

Following Dakar conference on EFA, Primary and Mass Education Division is at present finalizing a Plan of Action for the country which highlight the required early childhood services in terms of school preparedness programme for 3 – 5 years old children. In the process of developing NPA, Directorate of Primary Education undertook a relevant research study on Early Childhood Care, Education and Development (ECCED). The study has recommended among others, the following two actions that may appear as relevant for this study too:

- i) Community based early childhood care, education and development programme may be initiated for age group ranging from 6 months to 5 years in houses of interested women members of credit groups, members of local government institutions – Union Parishad. They are to be encouraged to open home based childcare, education and development package programme under the management of local government authority.
- ii) The existing practice of managing Baby classes by government primary schools demonstrates a good example of community and school's self management capacity and initiative. The primary schools having Baby classes can be encouraged to turn these into full-fledged ECCED class managed by the respective community with the help of schools.

Besides the above two the following suggestions are made for better coordination among ministries and agencies on childhood services:

*A national ECD network maybe formed under the direct control of Ministry Women and Childrens Affair to be represented by concerned Government Ministries and NGOs working in this area. This network would promote sharing of programme experiences both positive and negative in order to learn lessons on ECD and thus improve the quality of the existing services.

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