

CPC Learning Network

Agency Learning Network on the Care and Protection of Children in Crisis-Affected Countries

Report on the ECCD Forum on

“Early Childhood Care and Development: what is practiced Vs what should be practiced” and launch of the ***National ECCD Network in Sri Lanka***

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A national forum on ***“Early Childhood Care and Development: what is practiced Vs what should be practiced”*** was held on November 20th, 2009 in Colombo at the Sovereign Corporate Hotel, Rajagiriya, by the Children’s Secretariat- the Ministry of Child Development & Women’s Empowerment in collaboration with the UNICEF, Care and Protection of Children Learning Network in Sri Lanka attached to the Columbia University- the USA and the Institute for Participatory interaction in Development –Sri Lanka.

Chief Guest: Sumedha G.Jayasena Honourable Minister of Child Development and Women’s Empowerment.

Participants: **92 participants** from the relevant government organizations, ministries, institutions, bi-lateral agencies, non government organizations, private sector academia and the think tanks in ECCD were participated.

Goal of the Forum: The goal of this forum is to bring humanitarian and development practitioners, researchers, academics, private sector representatives and the government officials to discuss what is practicing and what needs to be practiced in improving ECCD in Sri Lanka in much collaboration and coordination.

Objectives:

- To share the systems, approaches and experiences in ECCD in Sri Lanka
- To link with the existing ECCD coordination mechanisms including health sector
- To discuss the gaps in the practice of ECCD in Sri Lanka
- To launch the ECCD Network in Sri Lanka

Expected outputs/outcomes: It was expected to gather information on the recent and future efforts taken in improving Early Childhood Care and Development in Sri Lanka in relation to the context. In the light of this information, it was expected to discuss what should be practiced to improve ECCD in Sri Lanka, and share the ideas with the participants.

The expected outcome of the forum was to raise discussion on ECCD practices and gaps in those practices. It was expected to promote the relevant organizations to network and participate in its activities at all levels. The long term outcome would be the improved ECCD in Sri Lanka.

Forum proceedings: The forum commenced with the Lighting of the traditional oil lamp & National Anthem and the welcome address & inaugurative remarks by Yamuna Perera- Director, Children's Secretariat.

The speakers during the inauguration were Dr. Deepthi Perera- Director, Family Health Bureau, Dr. SM Moazzem- Head of Health and Nutrition Division, UNICEF, Ms. Nanditha Hettitantri- Coordinator for Sri Lanka, Care & Protection of Children Learning Network in Sri Lanka, keynote speech by Dr. Indrani Thalagala- ECCD National Committee member & Consultant for the Children's Secretariat, Mr. A. Dissanayake- Secretary, Ministry of Child Development & Women's Empowerment, Sumedha G. Jayasena, the Chief Guest for the forum, Hon. Minister of Child Development and Women's Empowerment.

The ECCD Network in Sri Lanka was officially launched by Sumedha G. Jayasena, honourable Minister of Child Development and Women's Empowerment. The chief guest and the participants noted remarks and signed in the ECCD Network book of registration. Mr. Jayantha Peiris- Deputy Director, Children's Secretariat presented vote of thanks.

Forum Session one was a Panel Presentations and open discussion on the theme of the forum, chaired by Prof. Lal Perera- Director General, National Institute of Education. Dr. Sudarshini Fernandopulle, National ECCD Committee Member & former National Programme Officer for Child Health, Family Health Bureau Dr. Deepthi Perera- Director, Family Health Bureau- Ministry of Health & Nutrition and Mrs. Yamuna Perera- Director, Children's Secretariat- Ministry of Child Development & Women's Empowerment were the panelists.

Session two was a Group Discussion and preparation of presentations on gaps in the the practice of ECCD in Sri Lanka, areas for collaboration and suggestion for improving the current practices with the stakeholder groups of national level and provincial level Government, Non government, Private sector, Academics and Think Tanks. The groups were,

- Group of ministries and Department representatives of the government
- Group of chief secretary's representatives, provincial chief secretaries (or representatives) and provincial coordinators for ECCD
- Academic institutions for ECCD education and studies
- Development partners (NGOs and private sector).

The group presentations were presented and discussions were conducted in the plenary session.

Some of the Gaps identified by the participants are,

- Lack of coordination among the government officers and government organizations, lack of coordination with development partners working on ECCD and lack of commitment from the divisional level government organizations in improving ECCD.
- Difficulty in setting up provincial and divisional committees on ECCD.
- Lack of consistency among the education institutions on ECCD education and trainings.
- Lack of public knowledge on the importance of ECCD.
- Norms! standards on ECCD,
- Need to indentify the stake holders!
- Minimum Standards for the diploma courses! Teacher qualifications
- Curriculum gaps
- Poor monitoring mechanisms and assessment procedures.
- Poor networking between ECCD and formal education.
- Information gap
- Deployment of CRPOs! ECCD offices at DS offices.

Session three was to discuss the way forward for the ECCD Network. The participants agreed the followings.

- 1- Appointed Ms.Yamuna Perera, Director for the Children’s Secretariat, as the President for the ECCD Network in Sri Lanka and Ms.Nanditha Hettitantri, Care and Protection of Children Learning Network Coordinator for Sri Lanka as the Secretary to the ECCD Network in Sri Lanka.
- 2- Nominated Prof.Elsie Kothelawela and Dr. Indrani Thalagala as the Advisors for the ECCD Network in Sri Lanka. More experts will be nominated later.
- 3- Appointed a working Committee, representing all the groups in order to identify the guidelines, criteria for membership, roles and responsibilities of the collaborative agencies and the activity plan for the ECCD Network in Sri Lanka.
- 4- The Working Committee agreed to have a one day workshop in December 2009 to identify the guidelines, criteria for membership, roles and responsibilities of the collaborative agencies and the activity plan for the ECCD Network in Sri Lanka.

Summary of Participation (detailed list of participants is attached)

• Ministry of Child Development and Women Empowerment (different departments)	19
• Other Ministries	10
• Departments	02
• Chief Secretaries Representatives	03
• Universities / Collage of Education	06
• Provincial Education Secretaries	01
• Provincial E.C.C.D. Coordinators	05
• Pre School Diploma Awarding Institutions	06
• Developments Partners	13
• I.P.I.D.03	
• Private Sector	01
• National Institute of Education	01
• Media	04
• Out Station E.C.C.D. Assistants	06
• UNICEF	02
• National Committee	05
• National Child Protection Authority	01
• Care & Protection of Children Learning Network	01
• Other	04
Total	93