

Winning for Children: A Shared Commitment



The Seychelles Framework for Early Childhood Care & Education



*A multi-sectoral policy document
for all stakeholders in ECCE*



Foreword

The Seychelles Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, entitled “**Winning for Children: A Shared Commitment**”, embodies our country’s commitment to young children. It lays down our beliefs and values about children and early childhood and our common vision for a winning start in life for all children in Seychelles.

Every child deserves a right start in life.

Good quality early childhood care and education provisions guarantee that the rights of all young children are met and their potential developed. It is an indispensable foundation to learning throughout life, as it leads to better educational achievements, responsible citizenship, lifelong health and economic and human development.

In Seychelles, we are committed to overall children’s development because we recognize the intrinsic value of childhood and believe that, from the earliest age, children’s development and learning should be fostered through their interaction with caring human beings in secure, nurturing and stimulating environments.

It is this conviction that has led us to review and strengthen our ECCE provisions and create an innovative and comprehensive system that will ensure all families’ access to quality education.

This policy document, while being deeply anchored in the economic and social realities and ECCE country specific context, has also been inspired by international research findings and best practices. It calls for a broad and holistic approach, with better integration, articulation and coordination of early childhood services.

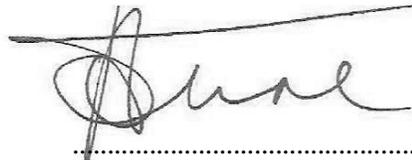
In order for its guiding principles to be adopted and the strategies set out to be effectively implemented by all stakeholders, there is a critical need to have binding agreements and shared responsibility across the sectors and departments involved the parents, civil society and the private sector.

With the publication of this Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, I call upon all our stakeholders to come together to build strong partnerships to support our parents and create a firm foundation to ensure that our children develop and receive proper care and education in their early years. This will be the springboard to guarantee a brighter future for them as well as for our country.

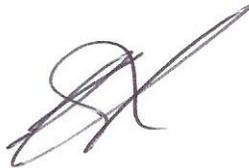
Danny Faure
Vice President of the Republic of Seychelles

Statement of Commitment

We hereby collectively pledge to commit our Ministries' full engagement to the implementation of the *Seychelles Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education* and to ensure that the rights of all young children are respected and their potential nurtured.



.....
Mr. Danny Faure
Vice President and Minister for Finance and Trade



.....
Mr. Vincent Meriton
Designated Minister and Minister
for Community Development,
Youth and Sport



.....
Mrs. Macsuzy Mondon
Minister for Education,
Employment and Human
Resources



.....
Dr. Erna Athanasius
Minister for Health



.....
Mr. Bernard Shamlaye
Minister for Social Development
and Culture

Date: 04 October, 2011

ii

PART 1: THE NEED FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE and EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Following the first UNESCO World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, ‘Building the Wealth of Nations’ held in Moscow from the 27th-29th September 2010, the Vice President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Danny Faure, (who as guest of honour, delivered both the opening and closing speeches at the conference) pledged his wholehearted support to implementing the Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation: ‘Harnessing the Wealth of Nations’, adopted by the conference delegates. The Moscow Framework calls on governments to adopt a broad and holistic approach to ECCE for all children aged zero to eight years of age. It reiterates that ECCE is a right and an indispensable foundation for lifelong learning and inclusive development with proven benefits in health, nutrition, improved educational achievement and efficiency, social and gender equity, greater employability and earnings, and better quality of life.



Early Childhood Care and Education was also the focus of a First Ladies Summit in Kuala Lumpur in October 2010 which was attended by a Seychelles delegation led by the First Lady. The forum provided a platform for countries to share experiences for fruitful learning and enrichment. The crux of the meeting was a call for countries to re-visit their own legislation and policies in relation to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) so as to provide an enabling environment for the development of its human capital and the leadership competencies of every child so that a “Child of today becomes a Leader tomorrow”.

As a follow up to the UNESCO Conference, a high level multi-sectoral National Committee for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCECCE), chaired by the Minister for Education, Employment and Human Resources with the Minister for Health as vice chair, was set up in October 2010 to develop a National Framework for ECCE in line with the recommendations of the Moscow Conference.

Strong political commitment, high investments and civil society/private sector dynamism are needed for the success of an integrated national approach to early childhood care and education. The Seychelles Government, through the Office of the Vice President, is determined to make this happen.

1.2 Rationale for the Development of an ECCE Framework

Seychelles is committed to overall children's development and displays excellent indicators in health, education and well-being which were recently showcased at the World Conference on ECCE in Moscow. This commitment is demonstrated through the following actions and achievements:

- a. Seychelles is signatory to a number of international and regional treaties and global commitments on children including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990. It is also signatory to the Dakar Framework for Action, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 states that 'ECCE is an instrument to guarantee children's rights, opens the way to all the EFA goals and contributes powerfully to reducing poverty, the overarching objective of the Millennium Development Goals.'
- b. The 'Seychelles Millennium Development Goals: Status Report 2010' states that Seychelles has achieved all MDGs targets (except for Goal 8 where public debts are still problematic) It has surpassed the set targets for Goal 2: Achieving universal primary education.
- c. Seychelles is ranked 1st by the African Report on Child Well-being¹ for the provision of basic services with objective results on children themselves. It ranked 16th overall out of 52 African countries on the child friendliness index.
- d. The 2007/8 UNDP Human Development Report gives Seychelles a high human development status with an HDI value of 0.843 and a ranking of 50 out of 177 countries making it the highest ranking of African countries. The Seychelles income per capita rose from USD 8,000 in 2002 to USD 9,028 in 2009 and is predicted at USD 11,040 in 2011.
- e. The Constitution of Seychelles guarantees free basic health and education and affords special protection and support to the most vulnerable groups in society, including women, working mothers, children, the aged and the disabled. (Articles 1-39)
- f. Government dedicated 2005 as the year of the child. Under the theme, 'Our Children, Our Treasure, Our Future' (CTF), a National Action Plan for Children 2005-2009 was drawn up. Two other major projects arising from the CTF theme were the 'Project Child Well-being Survey'² and the development of the 'Risk Indicator Framework'

¹ The African Report on Child Well-being 2008, developed by the African Child Policy Forum measures to what extent governments are meeting their obligations towards children

² A Baseline Study of the quality of life of children (aged 6-19) based on the Seychelles Model of child Well-being.

In spite of these numerous achievements, there are many reasons for strengthening ECCE for which the development of a national framework is indispensable.

- a. New research, cited in UNESCO's Concept Paper for the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE) in 2010, shows that early childhood especially the first three years of life, is a very sensitive period when significant and critical brain development takes place. The quality of experiences received during these early years is determinant for the child's future. The UNESCO concept paper also cites evidence (Arnold, 2004; Mustard, 2005 and Young, 2002, 2007) from longitudinal studies carried out in both developed (UK, Sweden) and developing countries (Jamaica, Turkey) to show the positive impact of quality ECCE programmes on the intellectual development, social well-being, independence, concentration and sociability of pre-school children. It is therefore necessary to align new policies and practice to this body of emerging and ground breaking research.
- b. Demographic trends and changing patterns of family and social life (single headed families, rising divorce rates, dysfunctional families, rising female employment rates) make it imperative that children and family related policies are reviewed, strengthened and implemented in a holistic way so as to be fully responsive to changing needs. Although the prime responsibility for the education and upbringing of children rests with families, many families can no longer do it alone. Modern families with diverse forms of living arrangements and social challenges need to be fully supported and guided in the complex task of bringing up children.
- c. New forms of discrimination and abuse emerge due to modern lifestyles and globalization. Children are the most vulnerable prey. Concerted action is needed to protect children from harmful influences and provide them with safe and healthy environments for their all round development. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been widely disseminated among various target groups and training organized for various categories of duty holders, there is a need to systematically adopt a 'rights based' approach to all planning and programming processes to ensure compliance with articles of the Convention.
- d. There is concern about insufficient educational outcomes (MDG status Report 2010, Nolan 2009) and the low proportion of students passing national and international examinations in secondary schools and in post-secondary institutions. A new focus on ECCE will lay stronger foundations for learning.
- e. There is also concern about the relative underachievement and under-participation of boys in education. Good quality ECCE programmes can help to challenge gender stereotypes and develop gender equality from the very ages when identities are being formed.

- f. The sectoral nature of ECCE service delivery in Seychelles (shared amongst various Ministries, departments and agencies such as Education, Health, Social Services and Community Development and Youth) has resulted in lack of linkages between services, fragmentation and duplication of efforts and lack of a common agenda and standards. A common framework will enable a more coherent and integrated approach.

The development of the framework will also stimulate new thinking on child development, promote local research and build new connections among academics and service providers. It will bring Seychelles in line with international best practice in early childhood care and education.

Early childhood and maternal health and nutrition reinforce educational prospects

1.3 Purpose of a National Framework

The purposes of a national framework are to:

1. Have one overarching government policy document that will guide developments and improve outcomes in early childhood care and education for all children in the age bracket 0 to 7+ years (below 8).
2. Provide unified Vision and Goals for Early Childhood Care and Education in Seychelles
3. Improve continuity and transition in Early Childhood between different child centered provisions and the primary cycles
4. Provide early childhood professionals and partners with guidance on revised principles, aims and objectives of ECCE
5. Clarify government's commitment to funding and resource allocations for the 0 to 7+ age group and provide guidelines for public and private funding
6. Provide the basis for the establishment of common standards with age appropriate indicators to raise the level of service quality
7. Inform parents of entitlements and services that support the fulfillment of their children's rights and that facilitate reconciliation of their work and child rearing responsibilities
8. Reaffirm the need for all partners to work together innovatively in the best interest of the child and their families
9. Reduce tension and competition among various agencies and ministries working for the betterment of children and families
10. Provide a roadmap for the creation of a comprehensive professional development system
11. Delineate clear responsibilities for the management, monitoring and evaluation of ECCE across the age range at ministry and community level
12. Address the special needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children

2.0 Early Years

2.1 The Importance of the Early Years

A Winning Start

Early childhood is a very critical period when rapid transformations occur in children’s physical, mental, cognitive, and socio emotional facilities. Recent advances in neurobiology and other brain research fields (Mustard 2002, 2005 quoted in the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007) have highlighted the crucial role of the early years in the formation of the human brain. According to this body of research, the period 0-3 is marked by heightened activity in the growth of brain cell connectors which reaches its peak at the age 3 and then moves into a plateau followed by a period of elimination when density decreases to adult levels.

Early childhood is also a very sensitive period and the quality of a child’s experiences in the early years has a major impact on his/her future life chances. Research in brain development in the first weeks and months of life shows that negative experiences in the early years, have long-lasting effects on brain development and major social and economic impacts on society. (Bailey 2002; Horton 2001, quoted in the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007).



Negative experiences are associated with behaviour and learning problems, substance abuse, involvement in crime and poor physical health. On the other hand, adequate nutrition and positive nurturing coupled by stimulating experiences in the early weeks and months considerably enhances a child’s physical, emotional, social and intellectual well being for the rest of his or her life.

Participation in high quality ECCE programmes results in better outcomes for the child and society. Evidence from impact studies and longitudinal studies carried out both in developed and developing countries (Arnold, 2004; Mustard, 2005; Arnold et al , 2000; Sylva et al 2004) show the positive impact of ECCE on children outcomes as well as broader benefits for the family and society.

Research also shows that investing in early childhood is the most powerful investment that a country can make with returns over the life course much greater than the amount of the original investment. Some of the beneficial impacts on the child, their families and society are listed below.

Benefits to the Child:

- a.) Enhances social and emotional development
- b.) Improves language and basic cognitive skills development
- c.) Improves physical and motor development
- d.) Improves school readiness
- e.) Nurtures positive self-image
- f.) Increases retention, completion and achievement
- g.) Compensates for disadvantage and vulnerability
- h.) Levels playing field for disadvantaged children
- i.) Enhances gender equality
- j.) Improves life chances through staying longer in education

Benefits to the Family:

- a) Increases productivity of parents especially single mothers
- b) Reduces stress in balancing work and family life
- c) Supports better functioning and well-being of families
- d) Reduces the incidence of domestic violence
- e) Improves confidence and parenting skills through effective parenting programmes

Benefits for Society:

- a) Leads to higher productivity and earnings and less dependence on social assistance
- b) Reduces dropout, repetition and special education placements resulting in savings for both governments and families
- c) Results in lower rates for remedial, juvenile delinquency, and child maltreatment
- d) Strengthens communities and increases social cohesion
- e) Improves human capital
- f) Makes savings on health through preventative care and early intervention.
- g) Increases efficiency of services through better interagency cooperation and linkages

2.2 Definition of Early Childhood

The term 'Early Childhood' is familiarly used in education, health and social contexts in Seychelles. Education Act, 2004, which is the main piece of legislation providing for the organization, promotion and development of education in Seychelles, makes a distinction between **formal** early childhood education and **non-formal** early childhood education. It describes formal early childhood education '*as **education** provided either in a primary school or in an institution especially designed for the purpose and suitable to the needs of children of or more than three years but under eight years of age*' and non-formal early childhood education as '*services for children below the age of three which are subject to inspection and monitoring by the Ministry*'.

The Ministry of Education policy document ‘Education for a Learning Society, 2001’ makes a similar distinction between formal early childhood education for the age group 3 ½ to 8 years and **non-formal** early childhood education for the age group 0 to 3½ years. Each age bracket has a *distinct* set of goals. The goals of early childhood (3½ to 8 years) are to lay the foundation for further attainment and learning while the goals of non-formal early childhood education (0- 3½ years) stress the integral nature of learning at this crucial stage and the need to develop the service as a natural extension of the care received in the home.

In other official education documents including the National Curriculum Framework (2001), the term early childhood cycle has been used since 2001 to refer to both a curriculum and organizational entity and to demarcate the first four years of schooling in the basic education system as shown in Table 1. Cycle 1, the early childhood cycle comprises the two years of crèche education (non compulsory) and the first two years of primary school (compulsory.) It encompasses the age group 3.3 to 7+ years (below 8 years). The structure allows for a smooth transition from pre-school to primary.

Table 1: Structure of the Basic Education System

Cr1	Cr2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
3.3 -5.3yrs		5+ - 7yrs.		7+ - 9 yrs		9+ - 11yrs		11+ - 14 yrs			14+ 16 yrs	
Cycle 1 (Early Childhood)				Cycle 2		Cycle 3		Cycle 4 (Lower Secondary)			Cycle 5 (Up.Sec)	



Free non compulsory



Free Compulsory

Cr: Creche

P: Primary

S: Secondary

One of the priorities of the latest Education Reform Action Plan 2009-2010 is to review the Early Childhood Education curriculum to focus on literacy, numeracy and life skills. The plan also mentions the introduction of profiling at EC, the development of a policy on special needs and a new reading scheme in Kreol the mother tongue in the second, third and fourth year of the EC cycle. The years 0-3 do not fall within the ambit of the current reform.

The Moscow Framework recommends the Early Childhood period to span the ages **0 to 8 years**. This is in line with international practice based on new research in developmental psychology and the need to ensure smooth transitions. Education and curriculum policies in Seychelles refer to early childhood as spanning the period 0 to 7+ years (just below eight years) which extends to the end of the second year of primary education (P2). This definition will be adopted to avoid major revisions to curriculum and organizational structure. All other sectors and Ministries will adopt the same definition.

A Holistic Approach

The holistic approach recommended by UNESCO highlights the interwoven nature of care and education. It is aimed at converging care and education in a continuum of learning experiences from birth onwards to ensure coordinated services for the full development of the child's potential in the physical, cognitive, emotional and social domains. This approach finds echo in the Ministry of Education's policy document 'Education for a Learning Society' although it is specifically used to describe learning experiences in the non-formal sector. The holistic approach is described in the following terms:

'In these early formative years which are so crucial to the future health, emotional stability and mental development of the child it is of utmost importance that the child is viewed as an integral whole and that balanced provision is made for all his/her developmental needs: nutritional/physical, emotional/social, cognitive. This calls for the closest possible collaboration between the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Affairs to ensure that quality services are provided to this most vulnerable group.'

(Education for a Learning Society, 2001)

'Education Act' 2004 provides the Department of Education with the legislative mandate to regulate educational services for the age group below 3 years. In adopting a common understanding and interpretation of the term 'early childhood', the new ECCE Framework will seek to provide clearer directions for a seamless progression in the delivery of services for children of 0 to 7+ (just below eight) years of age. It will also bridge the traditional divide between the non-formal settings and formal early childhood education.

2.3 Vulnerable Children

All children are vulnerable because they need protection and guidance to be nurtured into responsible individuals. However if we apply the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) definition of 'vulnerable' to children who are unable or who have diminished capacity to access their rights to survival, development, protection and participation or who are deprived or harmed as a result of their physical condition or social, cultural, economic, political circumstances and require external support, the following groups of children could be considered vulnerable.

- Abused children (sexual, physical, emotional)
- Children of parents who are alcohol and drug dependent
- Children infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS
- Children in situations of domestic violence
- Children with disabilities or learning difficulties
- Orphans and children in foster care

- Children living in single headed households (especially female headed households)
- Children whose parents are unable to afford child minding or day care services
- Children living in the west region of the island (National exam results and results of the Child well being study show greater disadvantages for children living in those areas.)

Research clearly shows that early intervention improves the lives of vulnerable children and helps to break the cycle of dysfunction and underachievement. All children in Seychelles are entitled to free education and the full range of benefits (subsidised meals, transport) as from the age of 3+ years.

There are early health intervention programmes (from birth) and education programmes (from crèche onwards) that target children with physical and learning disabilities. Low income families and children are assisted by the Social Welfare Agency. Special funds such as the ‘Dedicated funds³’ and ‘Children’s fund⁴’ are available at school level to assist children from low income families affected by the macro-economic reforms.



This service is not comprehensive enough and not all vulnerable children are targeted in the very early stages before they enter crèche. Different groups of vulnerable children have very specific needs. It will be necessary to allocate additional funds and design tailor made strategies to ensure adequate protection and support for all the above groups. Policies that target early childhood development can break the cycle of disadvantage. The practice of

early home visits and parental support for vulnerable groups has proved successful in many countries.

One obstacle is the lack of data. Although data collection systems have improved through initiatives such as the Observatoire des Droits de l’Enfant de la Région Océan (ODEROI)⁵, reliable and coordinated information on vulnerable groups continues to be an issue because 1) Data collection systems are not disaggregated by age groups 2) Sensitive data on abuse and violence which takes place in the home is not easy to gather and 3) confidentiality issues create barriers to sharing information among service providers.

³ Funds range from SR 75,000 for a small school to SR100, 000 for large schools. These funds are on top of the normal budget.

⁴ A Consolidated Fund for Children derived from taxes on beer and managed by the President’s Office. All schools receive SR 25,000 from these funds.

⁵ An observatory for Children’s Rights based at the University of Mauritius and set up by the Indian Ocean Commission (COI) and UNICEF in 2004 to strengthen national and regional monitoring of children’s rights in the Indian ocean region.

3.0 SITUATION ANALYSIS

3.1 Key Socio-Economic and Demographic Factors

Seychelles Population

Preliminary results from the Population and Housing Census 2010 show the country has a total population count of 88, 311 of which 51.3% are males and 48.7% females. 22% of the population are aged less than 15 years and 77.7% are aged 15 and above.

Table 2 shows the mid-2010 estimated population figures for the age bracket 0-8 years which are rebased on the 2002, Population and Housing census results.

Table 2: Mid 2010 Estimated Population for age group 0-8 years

Age	Males	Females	Total
0	776	713	1489
1	765	806	1571
2	653	726	1379
3	761	776	1537
4	793	701	1494
5	749	768	1517
6	731	738	1469
7	729	665	1394
8	549	578	1127
Total	6506	6471	12977

Source: *National Statistics Bureau*

A total of 12,977 children fall in the category of early childhood (0-8 years). This figure represents 14.7% of the total population of Seychelles. The total population in any one year ranges between 1127 and 1571 depending on the year. There are an estimated 4638 children in the age group 0-3.3 years who fall within the non-formal education sector.

The population is characterised by slow growth rate, low birth rate and a low death rate and is not predicted to increase enormously over the next twenty years. There were 1580 births in 2009 compared to 1546 births in 2008. Table 3 shows the projected population until 2027.

Table 3: Projected Population

Population	2017	2022	2027
Males	47, 500	49, 800	51, 900
Females	48, 200	51, 000	53, 800
Total	95, 700	100, 800	105, 700

Source: *Seychelles in Figures, 2009 Edition, pp. 8 (NSB)*

The Seychellois population is of mixed origin from African, European and Asian descent. Christianity is the dominant faith in the country and about 82% of the population is Roman Catholic. Other non Christian religious faiths include Islam, Bahia, and Hindus. (Population and Housing Census, 2002).

Seychelles has three national languages; Creole (Kreol), English and French. Creole (Kreol) is the mother tongue of the majority of Seychellois and is the medium of instruction for children in crèche, P1 and P2 in state schools. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are acquired in the mother tongue. English gradually becomes the medium of instruction as children progress through primary school. French is taught as a second language throughout.

The literacy rate for both males and females is 96%. (NSB, Seychelles in Figures, 2010)

Demographic Characteristics of Households and Families in Seychelles

The character of Seychellois families has changed significantly over the last fifteen years. The preliminary findings of the 2010 census report show that the number of households has increased from 10,946 in 1971 to 24,212 in 2010. These findings also reveal that household size has dropped from 5.0 in 1971 to 3.7 in 2010. The average family type has moved from the traditional large extended family to nuclear and single-parent family units. Families of 3 to 4 members increased from 32.0% in 1993 to 40.5% in 2007. One of the most striking features has been the drop in the Total Fertility Rate from 6.0 in 1971 to 2.2 in 2008 (NSB, 2009).

The drop in family size has been related to factors such as the availability of free family planning services, access to free education, the rise in female labour participation, the growth of the service led economy, as well as the rising cost of living. This change in family structure has resulted in the loss of readily available free childcare especially for the 0-3 years and a dependence on external support networks.

Along with the declining household size, there has also been a steady increase in the number of female-headed households, from 51% in 1993 to 57% in 2007. Statistics indicate a predominance of single female-headed families, with 54% of female household heads reporting to be *not in union*, compared to male household heads (66%) that were reported to be *in union*. (NSB 2007).

A large number of children in Seychelles are born outside marriage. Out of the 1580 births in 2009, 321 (20%) occurred within marriage, 947 (60%) were acknowledged and 312 (20%) were not acknowledged by the fathers. Non acknowledged births increased from 18% in 2008 to 20% in 2009. (NSB, 2009).

A significant proportion of children live within families where the head of the family is not married (66.4%). The growing numbers of married couples seeking divorce has more than tripled in the past 20 years from 34 to 145 registered divorces in 1998 and 2008 respectively. As of 2008 one in three marriages ends up in divorce. Only a little over than half (53.1%) of children live with both of their biological parents. Around 7.7% do not live with either of their biological parents. Most of the children living in orphanages have living biological parents but they are not capable or do not want to take the responsibility for their children's upbringing.

Labour Participation Rates and Trends

Patterns and rates of female employment have changed in the last few years. More women are entering the labour market and accessing formally male dominated occupations. The 2010 census shows a labour force of 50,923, (57% of the population.) Of the labour force, 94.2% are in employment and the unemployment rate in 5.8%. Gender disaggregated data is not yet available but the high employment rates overall indicate high employment rates for women as well.

Available national gender disaggregated labour statistics date back to the 2002 Census report which shows a rising female participation rate but very little evolution in patterns of employment when compared to the 1994 Census. Women in the 2002 census report are still reported as having lower status jobs and clustered in unskilled jobs. Table 4 shows that overall labour participation rates increased from 62.1% in 1994 to 72.3% in 2002. (Census 2002.) While rates for men increased by 9% from 68.1% in 1994 to 77.2% in 2002, female rates increased by 11% from 56.1% to 67.4% in 2002. This figure is expected to considerably increase in the 2010 census.

Table 4: Labour Participation Rates by Sex, 1994 and 2002

Age group	Male		Female		Total	
	1994	2002	1994	2002	1994	2002
15 < 20	32.3	40.5	30.4	32.0	31.4	36.3
20 < 25	88.9	89.8	82.6	84.5	85.8	87.2
25 < 30	93.7	93.5	87.1	88.8	90.3	91.2
30 < 35	93.8	94.6	85.4	89.7	89.6	92.2
35 < 40	94.0	93.4	82.6	89.9	88.7	91.7
40 < 45	92.2	92.6	78.8	87.4	86.2	90.1
45 < 50	90.7	91.0	73.6	84.1	82.8	87.8
50 < 55	86.1	86.3	64.6	78.2	75.2	82.6
55 < 60	76.0	79.7	52.4	66.2	63.4	73.0
60 < 65	52.6	51.5	30.3	40.3	40.7	45.3
65 +	6.1	9.4	3.3	3.0	4.9	5.5
Total	68.1	77.2	56.1	67.4	62.1	72.3

Source : Census 2002

The Seychelles CEDAW State Party Report 2010 notes that a large majority of women work in the hotel industry, tuna factory and health services where shift work is the norm. Juggling child care and working schedules are extremely stressful especially in the cultural context where responsibility for children falls disproportionately on women.

Government’s recent call for families to be pro-active in seeking employment and achieving self-sufficiency through the ‘leve-debrouye’ campaign, (Get up and fend for yourself) makes added demands on good quality child care.

Maternity Leave

All women in the public and private sector irrespective of marital status are entitled to 14 weeks of paid maternity leave and up to 4 weeks of unpaid leave. Expectant women are offered job security and cannot be terminated while on sick leave or maternity leave. In the public service, special protection such as exemptions from night work and shift work is also provided for working mothers with children below the age of crèche. Sick leave for parents who have to attend to sick children is granted upon production of a medical certificate. There is no provision for paternity leave.

Table 5: Socio Economic Factors Impacting on ECCE

No of Families	24212 (2010 Census report: preliminary findings)
Average size of Family	3-4
Female headed Households	57% (2007)
Divorces	140 (2007)
Marriages	405 (2007)
Maternity leave	14 weeks paid ; 4 unpaid
Employment Rate	94.2% (2010 Census report: preliminary findings)
Unemployment	5.8% (Census 2010)
Education	10% gap in educational achievement in favour of girls

3.2 Current Provisions for Early Childhood Care and Education

Services under the responsibility of the Department of Education

ECCE improves attendance and performance at primary and beyond.

Primary Education

There are 25 primary state schools and 3 private schools which cater for children aged 5.3 to 7+ years. Primary education is compulsory and free in state schools. All children (2671) attend primary schools and there is excellent coverage of 100%. Schools are within easy access in all districts on the 4 main islands. A Zoning Policy makes it compulsory to attend schools in his/her district. Children who live outside the perimeter of the school are provided with free bus service to and from school. School hours are from 8:00 am to 2:30 am, five days a week during term time. The average number of school days in a year is 195.

There are two types of free after school services for all children in crèche and primary schools who require these services. They are 1) Homework supervision and 2) After school supervision. Both services are offered from 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm and are supported by the Children's Fund.

Pupils in state schools follow a prescribed National Curriculum. Kreol the mother tongue is the language of instruction in primary 1 and 2 and children develop basic literacy and numeracy skills in their own language. English and French are also introduced as second languages in early childhood.



Staffing in Primary schools

There were 99 teachers in P1 and P2 classes in 2010. 25 hold a certificate level qualification, 23 a Diploma Part 1, and 42, a Diploma Part 2 qualification. There are 8 (8%) untrained teachers at this level. All teachers at this level are female. The Teacher Pupil ratio is 1:20

The National Institute of Education (NIE) was formally responsible for the training (pre and in-service) of all teachers. Early childhood trainee teachers (Crèche, P1, P2 teachers) followed a 4 year training course leading to a Diploma in Education at post secondary level. This responsibility has since 2010 shifted to the University of Seychelles. The University currently offers BEd programmes in partnership with the Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia to prospective teachers. Entry requirements have been reviewed which raises concern for the supply of teachers for the EC level.

All crèche, P1 and P2 classes have in addition ancillary teachers who work alongside class teachers and provide additional support to pupils. Most ancillary teachers have followed a one year certificate course in ancillary teaching run by the Ministry of Education in two consecutive years from 2005 to 2007. This was a broad based programme covering units in school organization and policies, professional development, early childhood teaching and learning strategies, preparing and managing learning resources, support for pupil learning, and partnerships with class teachers and parents.

Crèche Education

Children from the ages of 3 years and three months up to five years and three months are catered for in crèches which correspond to the two years immediately prior to entry into primary schools. Crèche education is free in state run institutions and available in all districts. There are 32 Crèches on the four main islands. Most of the crèches are attached or adjacent to the primary schools and are easily accessible. There are 4 private fee paying pre-school establishments that also cater for Seychellois children within this age group. They are the 1) Independent School 2) International School 3) Ecole Française and 4) Children's House.

Table 6 shows that intake figures into crèches have remained fairly stable from 2005 -2007 with a slight increase as from 2008. In 2009, the total intake into the two years of crèche including private schools was 2,928. Although crèche education is not compulsory, this figure represents almost 98% of all children within the age range 3.3 to 5.3 years. Equal numbers of boys and girls attend crèches and all classes are mixed.

Table 6 : Crèche Education from 2005-2009

	2005	2006 ⁽¹⁾	2007	2008	2009
Number of creches	32	32	32	32	32
Number of pupils	2833	2823	2835	2923	2928
Number of teachers	189	186	191	206	193
Number of ancillaries	134	151	262	167	238

Source: Policy and Planning Unit, Ministry of Education

Note:

⁽¹⁾ From 2004 also includes Ecole Francaise

Crèche hours are from 7.30 am to 2.30 pm for 5 days a week during the school terms only and after school supervision is available as described above. School meals are provided for a small fee of SR 2.00 to all children irrespective of home background.

The curriculum guidelines 'Lakres dan Sesel' in state schools puts emphasis on pre-learning (literacy and numeracy) and socialization and early life skills. The Policy Statement of the Ministry of Education 'Education for a Learning Society, 2001' stipulates that the focus is the child as agent of his/her own learning. The teacher's role is to organize and to draw out this learning- much of which will take place through play especially during the two years of crèche education.

Private schools follow their own curriculum. The Children's House, for example, adopts the Montessori approach to early childhood education. This approach based on the work of Dr Maria Montessori is a confidence building approach to learning which recognizes the immense capacity of children to absorb information when given the freedom and independence to learn at their own pace. It is fully committed to parents' participation in daily activities and the children's development. Other private schools which prepare students for British or French examinations set their own curricula.

Staffing in Crèches

In 2009, there were a total of 193 teachers and 238 ancillaries at crèche level in state schools. 20.7% of the teachers hold a diploma level qualification, 50.2% a certificate level qualification and 26.4% are untrained. (Ministry of Education, 2009). An ageing workforce, low recruitment and high attrition rates are serious challenges for staffing at this level. There is a heavy gender imbalance in staffing. 100% of teachers and ancillaries at this level are female. The teacher pupil ratio in crèche is 1:15.

There are two Schools for the Exceptional Child, one on Mahe, and a centre attached to Baie St Anne School on Praslin. They cater for children with serious physical and learning difficulties who need special attention and cannot be mainstreamed. There are only 2 children of crèche age at the School for the Exceptional Child on Mahe.

Pre Crèche Children (0-3 years)

There are two main forms of structured ECCE provision for children below the age of three. They are 1) Day Care Centres and 2) Child Minding services. Both are privately owned and managed with varying level of supervision and support from Government. Many families as was customary in the past, leave their children with family members especially grandmothers or employ a person to look after the child in their own homes.

Day Care Centres

The Day Care Centre policy (2005) produced by the Ministry of Education and Youth, cites two main reasons for encouraging the setting up of day care centres. 1)providing for the social needs of the country's citizens primarily that of the working mother to facilitate the dual role of motherhood and the pursuance of a personal socio-economic career, and 2) the need to provide for the sound educational development of the child's early formative years.

The Department of Education has the portfolio responsibility for overall standards in day care centres. All operators wishing to start a day care centre must register with the Department of Education. Licenses are issued for a period of 5 years renewable annually if standards are met. These standards are contained in '**The Day Care Centre- Policy, Strategy and Standards/Regulations, Guidance Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines of 2005.**' Most of the standards are based on the WHO Standards schedule and cover areas such as physical environment, health and safety nutrition and food service, staff family interactions and the curriculum. The policy also makes recommendations for fees, staff pupil ratios, and staff knowledge, experience and professional development.

Coverage and Access

In 2010, there were 22 day Care Centres registered under the Education Act 2004 (Sl.4.5 of 2005) with an intake of 740 children (388 girls and 352 boys). This figure represents 21.9% of the total estimated population for the age group 0-3. Most of the centres are medium sized with populations ranging from 15 to 50. Fees range from SR400 to SR1200 although the average fee is around SR500.

Day care centres are unevenly distributed across the country. Only 14 out of the 23 districts have day care centres although some districts such as St Louis and Anse Royale have more than one facility. Some of the most densely populated and disadvantaged areas such as Port Glaud do not have day care facilities.

Government Assistance

At least 12 out of the 22 the day care centres are state owned, under the responsibility of the district administration and leased out to private operators for a reasonable rent. Government has provided free training in day care management and operation for two cohorts of operators and assistants in 2005-2006 and 2007-2008. The Certificate course in Child Care and Education was managed and delivered by the National Institute of Education with input from the Ministries of Health and Social Development. Over 30 participants benefitted from this one year part time training which focused on basic understanding of child development within the early years environment (0-4) and the acquisition of skills in infant care focusing on health and safety.

The six modules covered were as follows: 1) Child Development and Early Learning, 2) Providing a safe /stimulating environment for babies/toddlers and young children, 3) Legislation and procedures governing Child Care and Protection, 4) Partnership with family and community, 5) Communication skills and 6) Managerial and Administrative duties of a Day Care Centre.

Day Care Centres receive a subvention on the import of educational materials although this does not cover essential materials such as glue and paint. The needy family receives subsidies from the Social Welfare Agency.

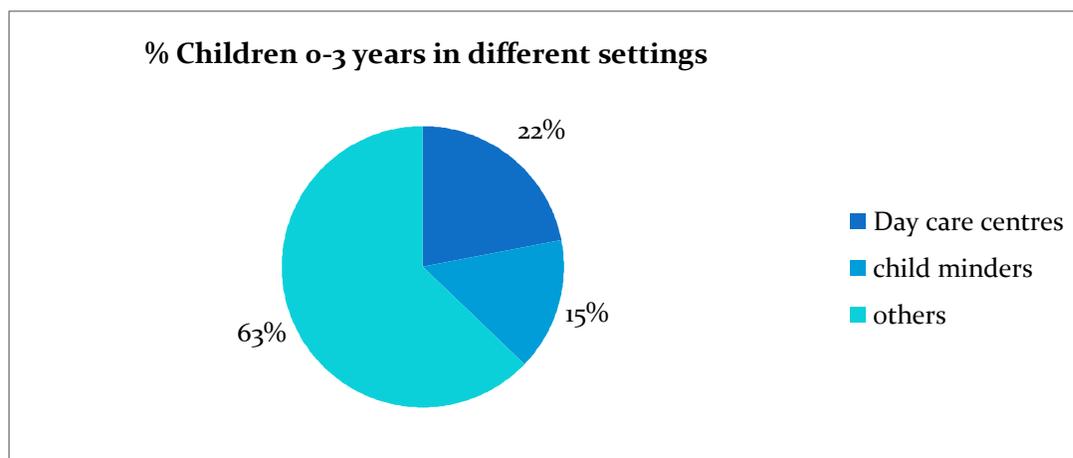
Child Minding Services (Not under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education)

Government has also encouraged private individuals to set up child minding services in the districts to provide employment opportunities for women and to meet increasing demands for child minding services by working mothers.

A recent survey on child-minding services reveals that there are a total 182 child minders providing services in 23 districts. A total of 709 children use this service. This represents 15.3% of the total estimated population.

The Ministry of Education does not regulate child minding services. There are a number of guidelines for child minding operations developed by the Public Health Division of the Ministry of Health, the Small Enterprise Promotion Agency (SEnPA) and the Ministry of Community Development and Youth. Their main aim is to ensure a safe and healthy environment for children. It is unclear whether these guidelines have been officially approved or are being implemented.

Figure 1: Percentage children 0-3 years in different settings



Services provided by the Ministry of Health

Child Health Services

Seychelles has a very comprehensive system of free health care for early childhood and has comfortably met the MDG goals for maternal health. Table 7 below shows some of these impressive statistics and the relatively low **Infant and child mortality rates**.

Table 7: Selected Health Statistics

Vital Statistics	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Average 2004 to 2009
Mid year population	82474	82852	84600	85032	86956	87298	84383
No. of Registered Births	1436	1536	1467	1499	1546	1580	1497
Crude Birth Rate (per 1000 pop.)	17.41	18.54	17.34	17.63	17.78	18.10	17.74
Crude Death Rate (per 1000 pop)	7.41	8.12	7.85	7.41	7.61	7.84	7.68
Infant mortality Rate(per 1000 live births)	11.84	10.42	9.54	10.67	12.94	12.76	11.09
No. of Registered Child Deaths	4	1	2	3	3	3	3
No. of Registered Maternal Deaths	1	1	0	0	1	0	1
Maternal Mortality ratio (per 100,000 births)	69.64	65.10	0.00	0.00	64.68	0.00	40.09

Source: Epidemiology and Statistics Section: Division of Health and Surveillance: Department of Health

The Ministry of Health runs a total of 17 health centres located on Mahe, Praslin, La Digue and Silhouette. All these facilities offer services in child health, immunization, family planning and medical consultation. The Child Health Programme offers health care for children 0 - 4 years. The *Well Baby Programme* offers post natal care, growth monitoring, immunization, developmental assessment, general physical examination, anticipatory guidance and counselling when needed. The Dental Care programme forms an integral component of the Child Health Programme. The aim of the programmes is to raise the oral health status of the infants and toddlers so that by the time they are six years of age they have a good oral health status.

Antenatal Care

All expectant mothers are targeted for ante natal care and for delivery in the maternity unit. In 2008, the attendance rate for ante natal care was 98.8 per cent and 99.1 per cent of deliveries took place in the maternity unit. In 2009, out of 1538 deliveries, only 8 mothers did not turn up for ante natal care (0.6 per cent) and 3 (0.2 per cent) deliveries took place outside the maternity. (Register of cases, Maternity). The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has also stabilized for the past decade with an average of 11 per 1000 live birth for the past 6 years. In 2009 the IMR was 10.76.

The current protocol for post delivery stay in the maternity is two days following a normal delivery and five days for post caesarean section. After discharge from the maternity, the mother and her baby are automatically referred for post natal care and follow up in their respective district health centres. Domiciliary post natal care is scheduled to take place within the first week after discharge. However, this is delayed most of the time due to staff shortage or transport problems. In some instances by the time post natal care is attempted, breast feeding is already disrupted.

The Ministry of Health has adopted the Denver Development Screening Test (DDST) model to assess developmental achievements in children 0 - 4 years. It is administered by assessing a child's performance on various age appropriate tasks. The turn-out for the well baby clinic is almost 100 per cent up to the age of 2 years. However after the second birthday which also marks completion of the childhood immunization programme, the attendance rate declines to about 50 per cent. The follow-up after the second birthday is six monthly i.e. two visits per year.

School Health Programme

The programme is seen as a continuation of the Child Health Programme offers growth monitoring care, immunization, medical examination in second year crèche, cardio vascular screening, health education, and anticipatory guidance and counselling. Screening for vision impairment forms parts of the screening programme and dental care is also integrated in the School Health Programmes. All children 0-5 years are targeted for immunization and the coverage rate is 100 per cent for all antigens.

Early Childhood Intervention Centre

To complement the preventive and curative aspect of the child health services, the Ministry of Health engages a variety of child health specialists to deliver specialized care.

Early
intervention
can reduce
social
inequalities

The early intervention centre which was inaugurated in 2008 is mandated to serve children aged 0-3 years with development delays. Children eligible for admission to the programme are those found to be significantly behind other children of their age in some areas of achievements in the early childhood period and children who fail the Denver Test on two consecutive attempts. Other more serious conditions such as autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are also managed at the centre. The health team includes: a doctor, a nurse, a speech therapist and a speech pathologist.

The Early Intervention centre programme is family-centred and aims at helping families teach skills to the child in a favourable child friendly atmosphere. Home visits and school visits are done to complement the care when the need arises. Each child receives a play-based assessment by the team for establishing eligibility for enrolment, setting goals and objectives, and updated evaluations are done on a 3 to 6 monthly basis. If services are needed after age five, the child will be transited into an appropriate program, e.g. School for the Exceptional Child.

Other Early Childhood Intervention services include: Physical Therapy to strengthen the arms and legs; Occupational Therapy to improve the hands and eye coordination; Pediatric to assist with the curative aspect and the Audiology to assist with the correction of hearing impairment.

The Child Protection Unit

The Child Protection Unit within the Ministry of Health is staffed by two nurses and its main role is to prevent child abuse and to protect victims of child abuse. The Child Protection unit also coordinates screening and examination of victims of abuse and provides medical reports to the police. They work closely with the Social Services now under the new Ministry of Culture and Social Development and the police.

Nutrition Service

The School Nutrition Policy (2008), developed by the Ministries of Health and Education, ensures that children are provided with a balanced meal for lunch and that the tuck shops sell nutritious snacks and drinks. It prescribes guidelines for all school meal providers (for lunch) and school tuck shops. Provisions exist for close monitoring of operators by the Ministry of Education officials and Health Inspectors.

One of the major challenges to children's health is obesity linked to a change from traditional diets high in fish protein to more processed foods. A study conducted by the Unit for the Prevention of Cardio Vascular Diseases (UPCCD) in all schools found that the prevalence of

'overweight' increased from 8.7% to 13.5% in boys, and from 11.8% to 18.6% in girls from 1998 to 2004. The prevalence of 'obesity' increased from 2.1% to 5.2% in boys and from 3.1% to 6.2% in girls. Physical activity decreased over calendar years and was inversely associated with excess weight. (Bovet et al.)

The nutrition policy has been adopted by all schools but has not yet been fully implemented because of lack of staff and adequate monitoring. Easy access to junk food, sugary and fatty foods make the fight against obesity almost impossible. Although parents show concern, there has been little observed change in nutrition patterns.

Services for children provided by the Community Development Department

Seychelles is divided into 25 districts which serve as constituencies for legislative and presidential elections and as geographical units for local administration and community services. The Community Development Department under the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sport provides district administrations with planning and programme development support as well as focussing on empowerment of local communities and promoting community based involvement and participation. Some of the Community life programmes are the Neighbourhood Recreational Activities (NRA) programmes, District Family Council, Disabled Support group and Senior citizens. Two of the programmes which relate to EC are 1) The Neighbourhood Recreational Activities (NRA) programme and 2) The District Family Council.

The Neighbourhood Recreational Activities (NRA) programme regroups children age 5 – 15 years old on a sub district level. Under the supervision of an adult they participate in various cultural, educational, social and environmental activities organized directly by the department or jointly with other agencies. Its main objectives are to encourage and promote community solidarity amongst the children, to stimulate children to set personal goals and targets thus motivating their sense of achievement and to provide the children a much needed alternative to negative influences affecting communities.

The District Family Council is a district based committee that comprises of volunteers who want to work with and for families in their districts. The main objectives of the Committee are to promote, defend and protect the interest and welfare of the families in the district, to empower families to fulfill their roles, to organise activities, develop programmes and implement policies for the benefit of the family and to uphold beliefs, living values and positive attitudes conducive to stable family life style.

Services provided by the Department of Social Development

The Social Services Division is a service oriented Division under the Department of Social Development in the new Ministry of Culture and Social Development that has the responsibility to promote the well-being of children, families, disabled persons and persons placed on probation orders. Its overall objectives are the maintenance of society, restoration of social functioning and alleviation of social problems.

It consists of the following sections:

- a) Legal Services & Child Protection
- b) Community Social Work
- c) Probation Services

Legal Services and Child Protection

The Legal Services Unit was set up in 1997 and its function is to represent the Ministry of Culture and Social Development before the Courts in matters concerning children and family. Some of the main issues it deals with are custody, maintenance, guardianship, foster care, access, adoption and interdicted person's property. It provides reports to courts and the Family Tribunal on areas mentioned above, as well as providing guidance and counselling to families on children issues. Laws giving protection to children and families are scattered under several pieces of legislation, namely, The Constitution of Seychelles, The Children's Act, The Penal Code, The Civil Code and The Criminal Procedure Code.

A multi agency committee, the Social Services Committee led by the Director of Social services is made up of representatives from Social Services, Health Department, Ministry of Education and the National Council for Children. It meets on a weekly basis to consider reports and make recommendations.

The Child Protection Unit was set up in October 1999. The Unit's aim is to work in partnership with other child protection partners to protect children from sexual, physical, neglect and emotional abuse. The Unit is also responsible for the overall coordination and investigation on all child abuse cases, in collaboration with the Family Squad of the Seychelles Police, and all other partners. Among the services it provides are counselling and guidance for abused children and their families, registration of children who are at risk and preventive work especially in relation to child abuse.

Child Protection work requires good inter-agency cooperation. In 1996, the Inter-Agency Committee was set up to strengthen this cooperation. The Committee meets on a fortnightly basis and is comprised of representatives from Social Services, Seychelles Police, Health Department, Ministry of Education and National Council for Children. In 1997, the committee adopted a document entitled 'Working Together' which outlines procedures for Inter-Agency cooperation on protection of abused children.

In 2005 an interagency mechanism for gathering information on all case of violations of the rights of the child was put in place. This process of collaboration results in a ‘Child Protection Register’.

There is a Family Tribunal which addresses all cases from the Ministry of Culture and Social Development and makes recommendations to all parties concerned regarding the custody and safe keeping of children.

National Council for Children (NCC)

The National Council for Children (NCC) is a statutory body set up to promote the well being of the child as laid down by the CRC. The Council provides education, advocacy and therapeutic services to children up to 18 years, and also works with the family. It conducts sensitisation workshops on Domestic Violence, Child Protection, Human Rights and Parenting to empower men and women as well as Parenting Programmes and spots on the media. Funding is provided both by the state and fund raising activities.

3.3 Achievements and Challenges

(1) Age bracket 5.3- 7+ years (below 8 years): Corresponding to first 2 years of Primary School

Aspect of ECCE	What we are doing well	Our Challenges
Access and Coverage	<p>Excellent coverage of 100%. 2671 pupils catered for in 25 primary schools (55 primary 1 and 54 primary 2 classes) and 3 private schools.</p> <p>Free and compulsory schooling. Constitutional right</p> <p>Schools within easy access in all districts on the 4 main islands. Zoning Policy makes it compulsory to attend schools in district.</p> <p>After school supervision is available until parents can collect them. Approximately 800 children use this service.</p> <p>School buses available for remote roads.</p> <p>2 Schools for the Exceptional Child to cater for children with special needs. (Free School bussing)</p>	<p>Inadequate provision for after school and holiday programmes to assist working families</p> <p>Lack of facilities for pupils with minor physical disabilities to integrate mainstream schools</p>

Aspect of ECCE	What we are doing well	Our Challenges
Inclusiveness	<p>Special Needs Programme and support for children with learning difficulties</p> <p>Early Childhood Coordinators and Special Education Coordinators in primary schools</p> <p>Subsidized school meals</p> <p>Dedicated fund for less fortunate children</p> <p>Social welfare grants</p> <p>Rehabilitation Services offered to children with developmental delays at community level. Holistic programme for strengthening legs and arms as well as speech pathology, occupational therapy physiotherapy, audiology, adaptive aids etc.</p>	<p>Health related and social related information on children not readily available to schools and teachers .</p> <p>Weakness in intervention at P1-P2 level</p>
Quality of infrastructure/resources	<p>Most schools built or renovated in the last ten years</p> <p>New schools e.g. Au Cap Primary School have child friendly architectural designs</p>	<p>No multi-purpose rooms for activities requiring movement, space</p> <p>No written norms or standards for buildings</p> <p>Old schools not appropriate for EC, e.g. toilets, height of blackboards etc</p> <p>Outside play area needs to be refurbished/upgraded</p> <p>Inadequate resources e.g. toys, plasticine, paper, and crayons.</p> <p>Poor quality toys flooding the market</p>

Aspect of ECCE	What we are doing well	Our Challenges
Gender Equity	Equal ratios of boys and girls taught in mixed classes	Early signs of boys' underachievement
Goals /educational outcomes	Acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills Acquisition of a sound base in academic subjects sufficient to support further learning in secondary schools.	Unsatisfactory outcomes especially in numeracy (SACMEQ report 2005; P6 national exams results)
Curriculum	Prescribed National Curriculum complete with Framework, subject documents, teaching learning programmes and units of studies. Core curriculum resources and guidelines. Language policy. Use of mother tongue as medium of instruction	Quality and variety of resources – attractiveness for young learners Many teachers adopt formal rigid approach too soon ; abrupt transition from crèche
Health	National School Health Programme Effective School Immunization Programme in state schools (100%) Health Consultation room Nutrition Policy Dental health programme Theme day activities Health promoting school concept	Obesity /Easy access to junk food Nutrition policy not implemented and monitored. Need to strengthen immunization in private schools Room also serves as sick bay - lack of privacy National School Nutrition committee without teacher representation. Difficult for teacher release on committees School level committees not working Health information not shared with teachers Limited nurses- cannot be attached full time to school

Aspect of ECCE	What we are doing well	Our Challenges
Child Protection and Well-being	<p>New pastoral care system reviewed in 2010</p> <p>Personal and Social Education Curriculum</p> <p>Interagency cooperation for the protection of children- ‘Working Together’</p> <p>National Commission for Child Protection (partners from all sectors).</p> <p>Risk Indicator Framework</p>	<p>Long delays because of lack of coordination</p> <p>Not meeting regularly</p> <p>RIF. No follow up in health: - time-consuming. Some elements of RIF only being implemented by social workers.</p>
Staffing (no and qualifications) Pupil Teacher Ratio Professional Development	<p>85% of teachers trained to minimum (certificate)standards. Assistant teachers to help. Teacher Pupil ratio of 1:20</p> <p>School-based PD</p>	<p>High attrition rate Low intake into teacher training courses Ageing workforce</p> <p>Not always focused on teachers’ needs Unclear policies for PD</p>
Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>School based monitoring systems: assessments Teacher support system External Quality Assurance</p>	<p>Translating information into action for improvement</p>
Governance	<p>Trained school managers at senior and middle levels (Master’s level)</p> <p>New EC Section set up as from January 2011.</p>	<p>Diffused and fragmented leadership for different services in education and health</p>
Partnerships	<p>Mechanisms and documents for interagency collaboration. Newly created School Councils Parent Teacher’s Associations in all schools Participation of NGOs such as NCC, CARE, wildlife clubs</p>	<p>Procedures not followed. Long delays</p> <p>New Handbook on School Governance is silent on early childhood</p>

(2) Age bracket 3.3- 5+ years: Corresponding to 2 years of Crèche Education.

Aspect of ECCE	What we are doing well	Our Challenges
Access and Coverage	<p>Almost 98% coverage. 2657 children catered for in 30 crèches and private schools across the country on the 4 main islands. Free in state run classes</p> <p>Excellent participation in spite of being non-compulsory.</p>	<p>'Missing children'</p> <p>Irregular attendance because of non-compulsory status</p>
Quality of infrastructure/resources	Most crèches purpose built	Limited resources and manipulatives
Inclusiveness	As above	
Gender Equity	Equal participation of boys and girls	
Goals	Foundation for primary school	
Curriculum	<p>Lakres dan Sesel 1995</p> <p>New Reading Scheme in Creole</p>	<p>Learning areas compartmentalized</p> <p>Focus on numeracy, literacy and life skills</p>
Health	<p>National School Health Programme includes full medical checkup in crèche year 2</p> <p>Health promotion talks on radio/TV</p> <p>Dental Health Programme well implemented</p>	Records filed in clinics. Not available to schools.
Policies/guidelines		
Staffing (no and qualifications) Pupil Teacher Ratio	<p>70.9% hold some recognized form of qualification</p> <p>1:15</p>	<p>26.4% untrained.</p> <p>High attrition rate</p> <p>Low intake into teacher training courses</p>
Monitoring and Evaluation	'Profil Lakres' provides detailed information	Not continued in primary
Governance	Senior teacher appointed for everyday administration	
Partnerships	<p>As above</p> <p>Close relationships with parents</p>	

(3) Age bracket 0- 3½ years) – Multiple provisions largely unregulated

Aspect of ECCE	What we are doing well	Our Challenges
Access and Coverage	<p>22 registered Day Care Centres catering for 740 children</p> <p>182 child minders catering for 708 children</p> <p>Total coverage = 37%</p>	<p>Unequal coverage for age groups and district wise</p> <p>Some costs prohibitive for low income groups</p> <p>Child minding services not regulated</p>
Quality of Infrastructure	A few community-based centres provided by District Administration	No standards. Some private owned – part of homes converted – annexed. Poorly equipped.
Inclusiveness	Information not available	
Gender Equity	Information not available	
Goals	Information not available	
Curriculum	A few Day Cares only have curriculum and guidelines	No common curriculum or guidelines
Health	<p>Antenatal Booklet up to 4 years –</p> <p>Home post natal visits within one week</p> <p>6 weeks mother and baby check up in district health centre - family planning advice for mothers.</p> <p>Visits to Day Care Centres and child minders by health care workers</p>	Late visits because of staff shortages
Staffing (no. and qualifications) Pupil Teacher Ratio	Information not available	Missing data Often staffed by non-qualified auxiliaries. No standards on child/minder/ norms not adhered to (may range from 1 to 15.)
Monitoring and Evaluation	Ministry of Education responsible for Day Care Centres.	Unclear monitoring for child minders
Governance	Day Care operators followed one year training	Some operators engaged in other business
Partnerships		

Summary of Main Challenges

1. Access and coverage for 0-3 years groups
2. Holiday and after school provisions for all age groups
3. Staff qualifications and professional development for all sectors especially the 0-3 group
4. High attrition rates and difficulties in recruitment for early childhood professionals
5. Availability of coherent and age appropriate standards and regulations across the board especially for 0-3
6. Some unsatisfactory educational outcomes
7. Quality assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation
8. Availability of updated and disaggregated statistical Information on EC

3.3 Parental Expectations

Parents' views on early childhood provision were gathered through focus group discussions.

Views on practices in Early Childhood Settings

Children looked after by relatives most often grandmothers

Parents expressed great satisfaction with this arrangement. They felt at peace knowing their children were safe and well-looked after in hygienic and spacious conditions. Distance from home, transport and weather conditions were some of the daily constraints.



Child Minders

There were mixed views on child-minding services. Some parents expressed satisfaction with the level of cleanliness, safety, food, and fees charged. They felt that 5-7 children was a reasonable group size for child minding. Others were very dissatisfied with the level of hygiene which caused frequent illnesses and the overcrowded conditions (over 13) in some homes and flats. Examples were given of children being kept in cots all day and sharing same bath water.

Day Care Centres

Parents expressed overall satisfaction with level of supervision and organization in some day care centres which were however considered to be quite costly. The main causes of dissatisfaction in others were the level of hygiene, the lack of adult supervision and security and the degree of vandalism because of public access at night. One major concern was the poor training and

attitude of some day care attendants. Another concern was the perception that day cares were providing only child minding services with insufficient attention being paid to the children's overall developmental needs.

What Parents Expect

1. Well established standards for number of children; staff training and qualifications; cleanliness; safety and security and handling of emergencies
2. Regular monitoring of standards
3. Information on the quality of services provided in the different day cares and child minding services e.g. the licenses and certificates
4. Parent education programmes starting from post natal visits
5. Government finance to assist private owners in creating right environment
6. A common programme of educational activities for child development
7. Financial support/subsidies for needy parents
8. Maternity leave of 5 months
9. Training and supervision of child minders
10. Tax rebate on milk and baby products
11. Day Care facilities at places of work especially for mothers breastfeeding

PART 2: THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE and EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

4.0 National ECCE Vision for Children

4.1 Education Mission, Goals and Principles

The Mission, Principles and Goals of Education of the different education cycles and Teacher Education and Professional Development are contained in the Policy Statement of the Department of Education 'Education for a Learning Society' developed in 2001.

The mission of the Department of Education is to build a coherent and comprehensive system of quality education and training, reflecting shared universal and national values which will promote the integrated development of the person and empower him/her to participate fully in social and economic development.

Goals of Education

The goals of early childhood (3½ - 8 years) as defined in the Policy Statement of the Ministry of Education 'Education for a Learning Society' read as follows:

Early childhood will lay the foundations for further attainment and learning by ensuring that the child:

- Grows in self esteem, acquires a sense of personal identity and develops appropriate social behaviours and cooperative attitudes towards others
- Approaches new experiences and settings with confidence, acquires skills of effective verbal communication, and learns to express his needs and feelings freely and appropriately
- Refines his/her gross motor and fine motor skills and learns to use his/her senses with increasing discrimination as tools for learning
- Acquires basic concepts and information leading to a fuller understanding of his/her immediate environment
- Acquires skills of logical thinking and problem-solving and develops his/her creativity , imagination, and sense of observation
- Develops an awareness of the arts and learns to express himself/herself through various forms of artistic creation such as drama, music dance etc.
- Acquires appropriate moral and spiritual values and behaviours
- Learns to read with understanding at a level appropriate to his/her age and interests, acquires a love of books and demonstrates an interest in using writing for a purpose
- Acquires an understanding of numbers as well as the elementary computational skills in arithmetic necessary for functional numeracy at this foundation level.

Principles

The Policy Statement of the Ministry of Education 'Education for a Learning Society' identifies three principles related to the operational goals of the education service. They are **Equity**, **Quality** and **Accountability** and a further four principles related to the terminal goals of education programmes; Education **for Empowerment**, Education **for Productivity**, Education **for Social Cohesion** and Education **for Global Participation**.

These goals and principles relate to the whole of the education system and are equally applicable to early childhood care and education.

Equity is described as a necessary condition for a society such as Seychelles founded on the dignity of the person, the maintenance of social harmony and the recognition of the right of every citizen to contribute in a meaningful way to national development. In Seychelles, equity has been largely achieved in terms of access to schools and programmes of education and training. The concept of equity needs to be extended to provide programmes which will enhance the conditions for optimum achievement by every group including the gifted, the slow learner, the learning disabled and the physically disadvantaged. Emphasis must be put on redressing gender imbalances in performance in general education and providing equal chances of success for both genders at post secondary level.

The concept of Equity in relation to early childhood care and education will be used to expand access, inclusion and early intervention for all vulnerable groups of children.

An ongoing commitment to high standards in professional competence, teaching and learning programmes and service delivery define the second principle of **Quality**. The quality of learning in schools and institutions determine the quality-of-being that we enjoy as Seychellois and our capacity for thought and invention. Quality will be developed through critical self evaluation by competent professionals, a commitment to life-long learning, institutions acquiring the capacity to evaluate their own performance and take appropriate action, and a national Quality Assurance System. This commitment to quality ensures that the system remains dynamic and responsive to the changing demands of society.

Quality of workforce, programmes, infrastructure and services, measured by national standards, will be the hallmark of developments in ECCE.

The third principle of **Accountability** recognizes that Education is a major beneficiary of government expenditure and must show that it has clear processes for evaluating outcomes by becoming more open and transparent, providing regular feedback to those served by education including students and parents and sharing responsibilities for improvement among its partners.

The four principles related to the terminal goals of education also have relevance for ECCE. **Education for Empowerment** will allow every individual to experience a sense of achievement, personal worth and empowerment which is the basis for the creation of an enterprising society,

oriented towards action and problem-solving. Education will prepare young adults to take their place confidently in the world of work but also to exercise their faculty for choice and self determination in every aspect of their life.

Education for Productivity recognizes that the strength of a small vulnerable economy such as that of Seychelles rests on the capacity and determination of its work force to generate the wealth that can sustain programmes of social and economic development. The process of wealth creation in Seychelles relies on the eradication of attitudes of passivity and dependency and the development of habits of self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and industriousness in both the private and public sector. Productivity will be enhanced through the education system which sets high standards, accustoms young people to hard work, exposes them to both manual and intellectual work in their formative years and cultivates skills and attitudes for effective team-work.

Education for Social Cohesion recognizes that a sense of community and solidarity with others is one of the most precious legacies of our tradition as an island state characterised by racial and religious harmony. Education in Seychelles will help the young person mould a distinctive identity which combines tradition with critical openness to change and the wider world which is another strong feature of our island identity. In preparing young people for life in an increasingly pluralistic society, education will endeavour to develop their capacity to communicate effectively in the three national languages, to demonstrate empathy and to resolve conflicts and difference in a peaceful and constructive manner.

Education for Global Participation recognizes our country's contribution to two of mankind's most cherished aspirations, namely the twin achievements of world peace and sustainable development. These will be enhanced through an education which promotes our tradition as a society sensitive to environmental issues and committed to policies emphasizing the social/human aspects of development.

Our extreme vulnerability as an island nation has been highlighted by recent studies on the harsh consequences of climate change. Our ability to pursue development in a climate of stability will depend on the extent to which education can help to build resilience through understanding of the strengths and specificities of a small island state and consolidate a democratic ethos and culture of human rights which draws its vitality from vigorous critical discourse tempered by tolerance.

4.2 Beliefs and Values about Children and Early Childhood

According to Moss (2010) our image of the child is socially constructed and these constructions shape policies, provisions and practices. It is therefore important to openly discuss these constructions and their implications for policy making. What is the Seychellois conception of childhood? What are our views on children's abilities and their role in society? Unfortunately much of this knowledge is based on hearsay and there are no scientific studies in the field.



There is a common belief among parents and the general public that children of 0-8 years and in particular those of the pre-school years because of their total dependence on adults have very few rights especially where their affectivity is concerned. Their capacity to understand their surrounding is often underestimated. They should be seen and not heard. This belief very often leads adults either consciously or unconsciously to behave in inappropriate ways (speech or actions). There is also a strong perception that teaching children about their rights is harmful and undermines parental authority.

On the other hand, there is a lot of consensus among professionals and partners about what it means to be a child, the rights of the child and what adults need to do to ensure that these rights and needs are met. The image of the child that emerges from this discourse is one of an active and independent learner who learns through exploration and discovery and through making productive and enriching connections with adults and other children.

These contrasting views of children present potential tension which need to be carefully managed as we move towards a 'rights based' and 'child centred' approach to ECCE. Their implications on policy and the provision of ECCE need to be fully explored. EC professionals and teachers must be supported to make this transformation through good quality pre and in-service training programmes. Appropriate sensitisation programmes for parents must be reinforced.

4.3 Principles for Early Childhood Care and Education

Developments in ECCE will be guided by the following principles. Principles will provide the overarching frame from which ECCE will be developed and implemented. They will also provide benchmarks against which the indicators will be measured.

These principles are not all new. They have been extracted from existing education, health and social policy documents in Seychelles as well as being inspired by the CRC and international good

practice. They are not to be read in isolation but need to be considered together as a whole. They must also be read in conjunction with the broad principles of education outlined in ‘Education for a Learning Society’.

Principle 1: Centrality of the Child

This principle affirms that the child and his or her developmental needs must remain at the centre of all our planning and programming efforts. All our energies should be directed at nurturing the best possible outcomes for the child in all areas of development including the cognitive, physical, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions. The focus on children must be constant and not blurred by conflicting agendas and competition among those responsible for delivering services to children.

Principle 2: Child as a Right Holder

This is a new concept in educational planning and needs to be understood correctly. Children as members of society have a number of inherent rights which are guaranteed by our Constitution and international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CRC Committee’s General Comment (OHCHR, 2005) called ‘Implementing Childs Rights in Early Childhood’ gives clear understanding of the rights of all young children and the obligations of parties to fulfill them. These rights are not negotiable. It is the duty of adults and all professionals who work with children to champion these rights and treat all children with respect. We must ensure that we plan, act and evaluate in accordance with the best interests of the child. All child related policies, frameworks and programmes must be in compliance with the articles of the CRC.

Principle 3: Family Involvement

The family has a pivotal role to play in the care and education of young children. This is recognized in our Constitution, policy documents, interventions and structures we have established. This involvement is especially crucial at early childhood level in order to facilitate a smooth transition from home to ‘outside home care and education’. Parents have the right to be represented on school boards and councils, to have access to information related to the child, to be informed of what happens, to access premises and participate in organized activities.



Communities and partners will build family friendly environments and educate parents to enable them to discharge these roles meaningfully. Special efforts will be made to welcome, value and

support fathers in their parenting roles. Employers and businesses will support parenting responsibilities and provide child friendly incentives.

Principle 4: Coordination and Collaboration

The family, the school and the community have important and complementary roles to play in nurturing healthy, creative and self confident children who will become responsible and productive citizens in the future. The task is too complex for anyone to do alone. It is our firm conviction that the family remains the children's first educators. The school and the community will support the family and work together to make all children 'winners'.

Coordination is also important for the many agencies whose programmes affect young children. Services must be delivered in a coordinated and coherent manner in the best interest of the child. The sharing of professional information is a necessary prerequisite for smooth transitions and continuity in programmes. However, because of the very confidential nature of health information, it is important that strict protocols are followed and parental consent for sharing of information sought. All partners must work collaboratively to promote the growth of happy, healthy, and self-confident children.

Principle 5: Long Term Sustainability

In order to sustain the growth and development of EC initiatives, there needs to be national awareness of the importance of early childhood care and education and firm commitment to funding from both the state and the private sector on a long term basis.

Long term sustainability will be enhanced by sharing experiences nationally and internationally and building on existing resources, relationships and support systems. We have many examples of good practice in the delivery of ECCE in Seychelles. We do not need to reinvent the wheel in all areas.

Principle 6: Value of Play

New Research is constantly reinforcing the value of play for learning. Our curriculum frameworks recognize the important of play and active learning in the early years. The constant pressure to move towards early structured and rigid learning programmes however jeopardises this principle. We need to ensure that parents, EC professionals and all partners have a common understanding of the contribution of play in building learning, confidence and social competence.



This principle also places an obligation on Governments, communities, private sector and all providers of service to ensure that EC settings are well resourced and provide stimulating play based experiences.

Principle 7: Accountability

Children are vulnerable at this age and need to be protected. High quality standards in all aspects of EC provision are needed to safeguard all children. These standards must be age appropriate, consistent and comparable across the whole range of EC provision.

Accountability also assumes that these standards are implemented and not left on the shelf. This requires the setting up of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and training to ensure compliance and public reporting of results.

Principle 8: Evaluation and data collection.

Data and evidence are needed to monitor outcomes, advance understanding of local situations and guide effective policy response. Data on early childhood is gathered at different sources using diverse indicators. There are currently many gaps in information and inconsistent collection and reporting of data across the different services. There is also very little research on how the different services are impacting on children outcomes.

An integrated and comprehensive information system is one that will provide reliable and up to date data on all indicators and evidence of how programmes and services are impacting on children outcomes. It will provide the information platform for evidence based policies.

Principle 9: Cultural Appropriateness

Good early childhood programmes must take into account the realities of the Seychellois culture and parenting practices. It must build on the positive aspects of care and nurturing that takes place in the home so that all children experience a smooth transition to more structured out of home settings.

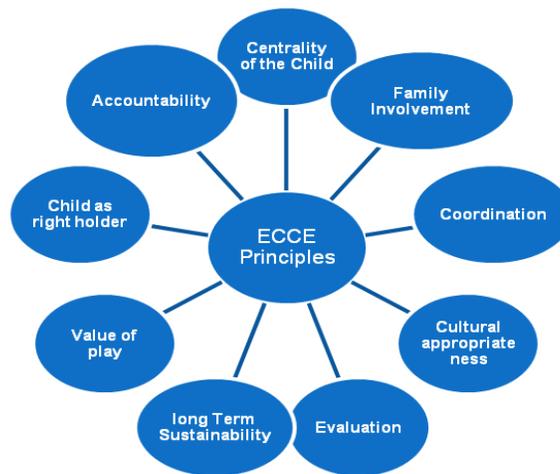
As we move towards an increasingly pluralistic society, all early childhood workers must be trained to be sensitive to the child's socio cultural background, to respect diversity by valuing all types of families, to be respectful of cultures while challenging harmful practices that go against the best interests of the child.

The use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in crèche, Primary 1 and Primary 2 provides children with the opportunity to develop their self esteem while learning a second and third language. The use of the mother tongue will also ensure that the child's adaptation to school takes place smoothly and naturally and that no child is disadvantaged in using language as a tool

for formal learning. Its value and efficiency need to be recognized and demonstrated through research and comparative studies.

The use of the mother tongue is also an important vehicle for strengthening communication with parents and encouraging their participation in their children’s learning.

Figure 2: Principles for ECCE



4.4 Vision for Early Childhood Care and Education

OUR VISION

A winning start in life for all children in Seychelles



Winning start= The right to a high quality, comprehensive and integrated system of Early Childhood Care and Education from conception onwards

OUR VISION FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Confident and knowledgeable parents who engage constructively with professionals in the best interest of the child.

OUR VISION FOR OUR WORKFORCE AND PARTNERS

Valued and skilled professionals working together innovatively for the greater success of all children and families.

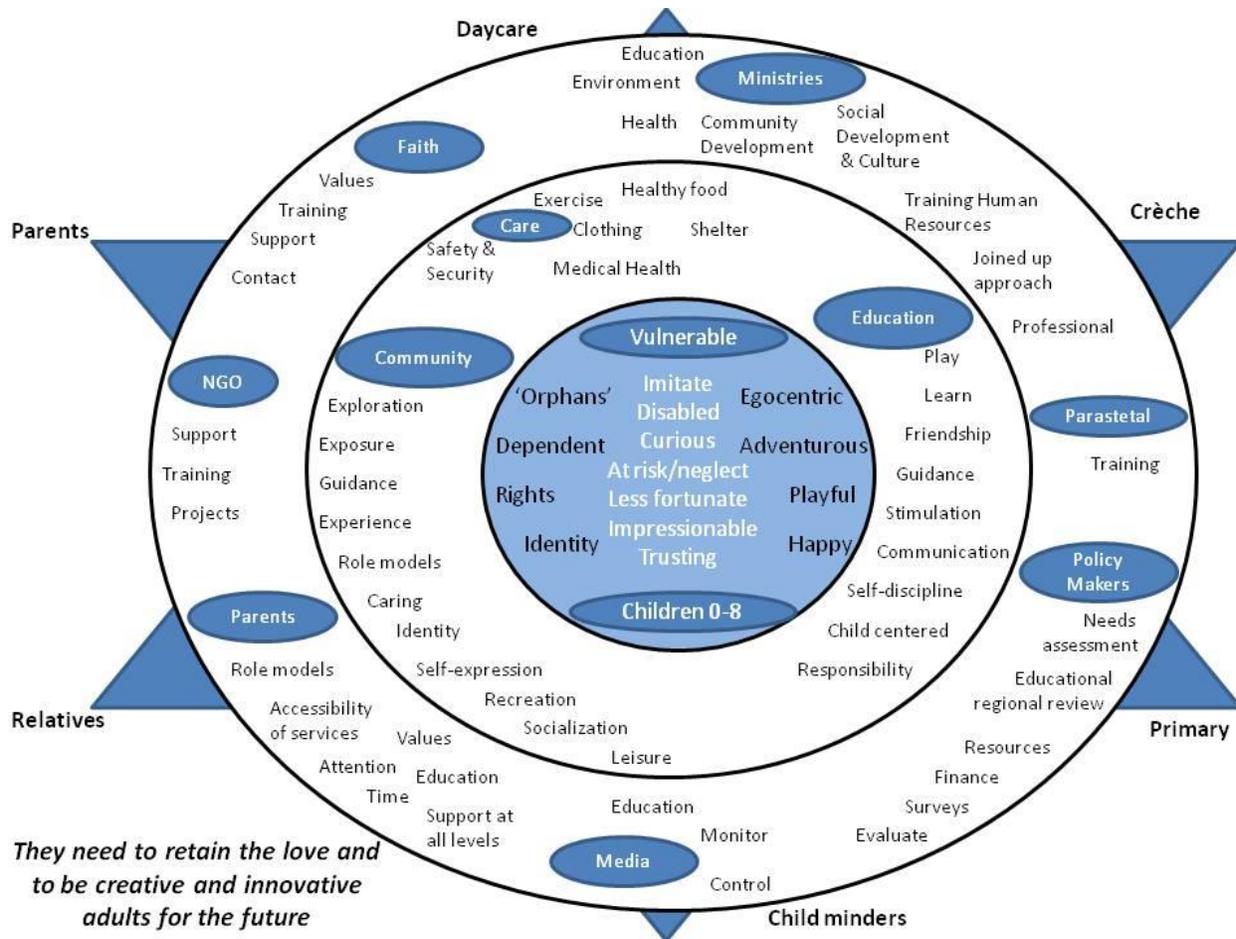
OUR VISION FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Committed and vibrant communities providing strong family support and enabling environments for children's overall development.

OUR VISION FOR OUR SOCIETY

A 'caring' society characterized by a high degree of social, racial, religious and intergenerational harmony- a melting pot of cultures and a model of peace and integration for the whole world.

Figure 3: Chart depicting stakeholders' views on children



4.5 National Policy Goals and Strategies

OUR GOALS

1. Realign ECCE policies and programmes to respond to new research and international recommendations on the holistic needs of children from birth to 7+years
2. Progressively expand access to a variety of affordable, developmentally appropriate and family responsive ECCE facilities especially for children aged 0 to 3
3. Introduce new financing mechanisms to increase investment and resources in ECCE (public and private)
4. Improve and expand training, accreditation and professional development of ECCE professionals
5. Review and strengthen mechanisms for early detection and intervention to reduce educational and social inequalities
6. Improve accountability and service delivery in ECCE
7. Build family and child friendly communities
8. Provide comprehensive quality parenting programmes accessible to all parents from conception onwards
9. Promote research in ECCE

Strategies

These strategies give broad directions. They will need to be further prioritized with measurable and time-bound targets.

Strategies for Priority 1: Realign ECCE Policies & Programmes

- a) Review existing legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines to provide an integrated vision and approach to the needs of the age group 0-7+ years (List attached in appendix.)
- b) Review terminology to ensure consistency and clarity in official documents and break down barrier between formal and non-formal early childhood education
- c) Review appellations of different EC services such as child minding, day care, crèche etc to reflect new roles and dispel erroneous connotations
- d) Ensure that priorities and strategies identified for the early childhood are fully integrated into the ongoing Education Reform Action Plans and other national and sectoral development plans
- e) Develop/revise curriculum frameworks for all early childhood care and health providers and teachers to ensure continuity in provision for development and early learning from 0 to 7+ years and a convergence of care and education
- f) Improve curriculum and methodology privileging 'child-centered' and 'rights based' approaches
- g) Increase public awareness on importance of and new developments in ECCE

Strategies for Priority 2: Expand Access

- a) Conduct a comprehensive survey to determine parents' childcare needs in relation to care provision and education in every district
- b) Build at least one day care centre in each district where necessary
- c) Provide range of different options to meet the needs and expectations of the parents. (child minding, Daycare, Pre schools, after school clubs, playgroups, holiday clubs)
- d) Develop local and community- based responsive solutions to support families including co-locating services
- e) Encourage large businesses and organizations to set up day care centres at work places and to introduce other family friendly measures such as facilitating breast feeding
- f) Support the work of NGOs and other partners providing services to ECCE
- g) Strengthen communities and families to provide enabling environments for raising children.

Strategies for Priority 3: New financing mechanisms to increase Investment and Resources

- a) Sustain the Early Childhood Trust Fund by sourcing new avenues of funding in partnership with the private sector
- b) Ensure adequate resourcing and financing of ECCE from state budget based on improved statistical information
- c) Disaggregate EC data in order to accurately benchmark and monitor progress in funding allocations
- d) Review funding allocations under the Children's Fund
- e) Pro-actively source international funding through cooperation with UNESCO and other agencies
- f) Provide subsidies to encourage the establishment of quality ECCE services e.g. reduced import tax, training, reduced rental of premises, assistance in purchasing resources, etc. (glue, paint, sand, outdoor play equipment, paper)
- g) Subsidise daycare by paying fees directly to the operators
- h) Involve private sector in contributing towards resources e.g. adopting, sponsoring a child or Day Care, providing workers with child-care benefits
- i) Extend 'dedicated fund' to assist needy cases in Day Care Centres
- j) Manage allocated funds in a transparent manner

Strategies for Priority 4: Improve and Expand Training and Professional Development

- a) Improve and expand training, accreditation and professional development of ECCE professionals in health, education, social and all other sectors impacting on Early childhood
- b) Upskill current practitioners in delivery of both care and education services
- c) Review workforce structure and training, conditions of service and career opportunities for all ECCE staff
- d) Encourage more male staff to join ECCE programs to provide good role models and break cycle of male underachievement
- e) Facilitate and strengthen in-service professional learning opportunities related to the early years;
- f) Ensure relevant training that focus on meeting current challenges e.g. gender disparity, sharing and collaboration among service providers
- g) Encourage the setting up of Early Childhood Association that can advocate for EC
- h) Review current curricular of early childhood courses at University of Seychelles (UniSey) to support a holistic ECCE framework

- i) Review current curricular of health and social workers courses to ensure convergence of health, care, protection and education
- j) Introduce diploma level courses in maternal and child health
- k) Develop partnership/mechanism between Department of Education and UniSeey to provide ongoing relevant and high quality ECCE training to respond to the needs of society.

Strategies for Priority 5: Mechanisms for early detection and intervention

- a) Strengthen the early Intervention Centre in the Ministry of Health
- b) Maintain appropriate profiles from birth onwards (record of development, care and intervention pathways) on children that can be shared with professionals and parents at appropriate times
- c) Reinforce and extend profiling system to include aspects of health
- d) Establish system for health and education review and sharing of information on children needing intervention.
- e) Conduct mental, psychological and psycho-motor screening for all children entering crèche and P1 followed by appropriate early intervention
- f) Establish clear channels for parents seeking advice and help for children
- g) Strengthen ante natal programmes

Strategies for Priority 6: Improved Accountability and Service Delivery

- a) Develop/revise core standards and suitability checks to regulate all areas of ECCE e.g. infrastructure, facilities, management, curriculum and staff qualifications
- b) Reinforce and streamline quality assurance and licensing regulations.
- c) Establish core competency entry requirements for service providers working with children and families
- d) Conduct health and police criminal screening for all EC workers
- e) Develop operating frameworks and codes of ethics for all professionals in ECCE
- f) Design built in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- g) Develop a coordinated data management system (EMIS)
- h) Clarify and strengthen governance and administration for ECCE under the leadership of the Ministry of Education.

Strategies for Priority 7: Build Family and Child Friendly Communities



- a) Conduct surveys to determine childcare and education needs of parents in every district
- b) Collect reliable data on all services available in the district
- c) Facilitate growth and expansion of Day Care Centres and child minding services through innovative planning and partnerships
- d) Expand innovative holiday and after school programmes for children in liaison with NGOs
- e) Ensure that all districts are child friendly (green spaces/safe zones)
- f) Set up an early childhood committee/council in every district
- g) Set up family resource centres with information on EC in all districts
- h) Provide more homely and child friendly environments in existing services such as the pediatric ward

Strategies for Priority 8: Provide Quality Parenting Programmes

- a) Develop comprehensive and culturally derived community based parenting programmes with special focus on parents of children aged 0-7 years
- b) Review existing parenting programmes to ensure compliance with CRC
- c) Provide relevant training to NGOs, Faith - based organizations, Community Workers, nurses, teachers and all those involved in delivering parenting programmes from antenatal to 7 years
- d) Develop comprehensive media programmes on positive parenting highlighting role of fathers
- e) Ensure that all programmes are father friendly
- f) Encourage the development of support groups and networks for parents in communities and workplaces
- g) Design ECCE websites and other tools to provide parents and ECCE workforce with relevant information on early childhood issues

Strategies for Priority 9: Promote Research

- a) Encourage and disseminate research in new areas of early childhood development in Seychelles by providing grants to both governmental and nongovernmental individuals and institutions
- b) Generate evidence based delivery services effective in Seychelles context
- c) Establish a research base for the early years
- d) Share effective and promising practices in ECCE
- e) Establish links between the private and public sector for sharing of best practice
- f) Train stakeholders in data collection and research for evidence-based policy making
- g) Regularly update and strengthen data bases

PART 3: IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK

5.0 Implementing Strategies

5.1 Governance and Administrative Structures

An integrated approach will require a new governance and administrative structure. The Ministry of Education will hold the portfolio responsibility for ECCE in order to ensure continuity and coherence in service delivery from birth to primary education and beyond. This is in line with international trends which recognise Ministries of Education as being best positioned because of capacity and resources, e.g. in staff training and quality assurance, to assume this leadership position. Education Act 2004 already provides the legal framework for this development.

A high level **ECCE Policy Committee** (See no. 1 in Figure 4) will be set up to administer and oversee the implementation of the Framework. Since responsibilities for ECCE are shared amongst various key ministries, the Committee will be chaired by the Vice President who will have the capacity to drive the strategy collaboratively across the various portfolios. The committee will include Ministers/high level executives with portfolio responsibility for Finance, Education, Health, Community Development and Social Services. The committee will ensure adherence and commitment to the ECCE vision and ensure that ECCE is mainstreamed in all national and sectoral plans. It will develop a plan of action and allocate responsibilities and finances for implementation of strategies/tasks to the different Ministries/agencies. It will receive timely reports on the implementation of the plan from various Ministries/sectors. The committee will produce a biennial report on the state of ECCE which will map out the progress being made in relation to the agreed goals and priorities. It will identify bottlenecks and raise concerns in the implementation of the policy.

An '**Early Childhood Advisory Council**' (See no 2 in Figure 4) will be established. The Council will be made up of university academics, researchers, educators, representatives of childrens' NGOs, parents and early childhood service providers who will advise the committee on new developments in ECCE and share research work and good practice. Representation will be sufficiently large to provide guidance on the broad social and environmental factors that influence a child's health, education, development and well being. The council will examine reports produced by the technical teams and offer advice and evidence based solutions to bottlenecks and problems identified as requested.

Each Ministry involved will appoint an **ECCE technical team** (See no 3 in Figure 4) that will be responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating action plans in their allocated area of work. The teams will report on progress to the Policy Committee through their Ministers.

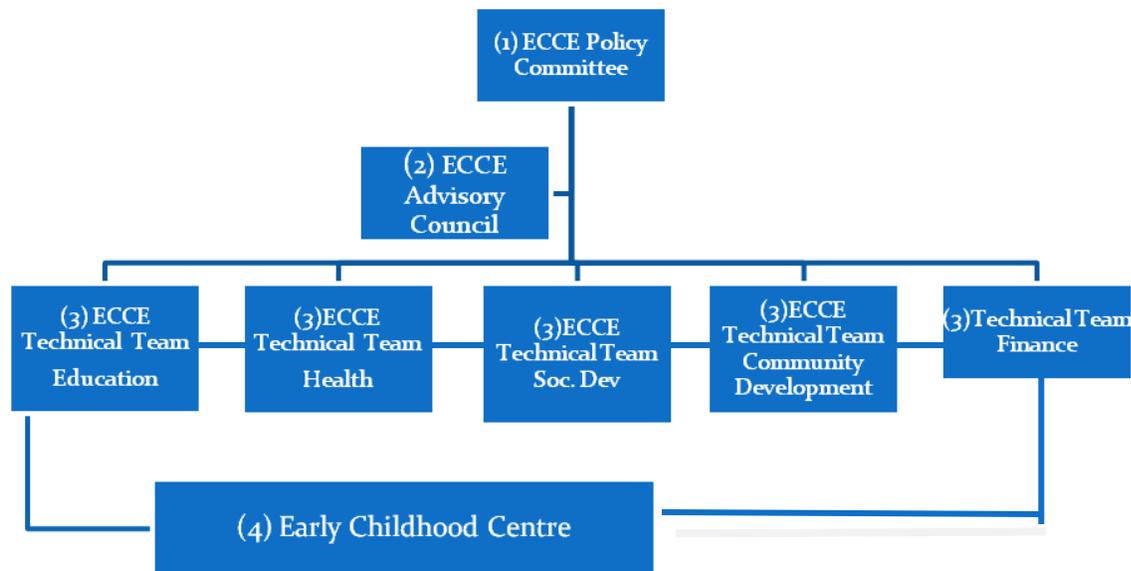


An Early Childhood Section headed by a director has been set up since January 2011 within the Schools Division of the Ministry of Education, Employment and Human Resources. Because of expanded responsibilities under the new ECCE Framework viz a) need for a holistic approach to the care and education of children aged 0-7 years and b) close collaboration with other Ministries and agencies providing services and support to EC, it is recommended that a new more autonomous structure, an **Early Childhood Centre** (see no 4 in diagram) is set up. The Centre will report directly to the Principal Secretary for Education.

The Centre will provide leadership and strategic direction for developments in early childhood and strengthen linkages between day care and child minding services in the community, and crèche and primary schools. The detailed responsibilities and roles of this new Centre will need further elaboration. However some of the broad functions will be to i) promote ECCE and ensure circulation of information to stakeholders and public at large, ii) provide quality support to early childhood professionals and institutions so that they meet established standards, iii) develop curriculum and guidelines for all age groups, iv) develop the EC workforce strategy and liaise with the University and other training institutions for flexible and innovative training and upgrading programmes, v) promote development of environments conducive to children's holistic well-being and learning, vi) develop productive relationships and coordinate the work of all ministries and agencies providing services to EC.

The Centre will assist the Inspectorate Section of the Department of Education and Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) in developing and streamlining age appropriate standards for quality assurance and accreditation.

Figure 4: Administrative Structure



5.2 Communication Strategy

It is important that ECCE remains highly visible as a national priority. The framework will be supported by a strong communications strategy. The main aims of the strategy will be to:

- 1) raise public awareness on the importance of early childhood education
- 2) sensitize legislators and policy makers on the benefits of early childhood
- 3) convince businesses and the private sector of the long term benefits of investing in early childhood programmes
- 4) Encourage parents and partners to become effective advocates for ECCE.
- 5) Advocate for mainstreaming of ECCE in all national and sectoral plans

A special unit consisting of two or more trained communication professionals will be set up within the Early Childhood Centre in the Ministry of Education, Employment and Human Resources. The role of the unit will be to develop, implement and monitor the communications strategy and media plan.

5.3 Funding

Investing in ECCE pays off

Accurate expenditure on ECCE is difficult to obtain because of the fragmented nature of service delivery and the large number of agencies and government ministries involved in providing these services. Approximately 19% and 23% of the national budget is allocated to Education and Health respectively. Government spending on one child at crèche, Primary 1 to Primary 3 based on recurrent expenditure, is calculated at SR12,731 compared to SR 13,274 for a child in Primary 4 to Primary 6 (Ministry of Education.)

Precise figures on money spent by households on ECCE is also hard to establish. The Household Budget Survey 2006/7 gives some information on average monthly expenditure for education but does not provide disaggregated information related to children in the 0-8 years age bracket.

In state schools, families contribute to the costs of school uniforms, transport, school meals school stationary and equipment and bear the full costs of fees for the early years 0-3. Needy families are assisted by the Social Welfare Agency.

Improved statistical information is needed to accurately determine expenditure on the full range of ECCE services, set new realistic targets for implementation of the policy and make more effective use of scattered funds and resources.

An investment plan is being prepared which will provide more details of costs involved and how government and the private sector propose to fund ECCE.

5.4 Professional Development Plan

Research shows that qualified early childhood professionals are the corner stone of high quality programmes. The early childhood workforce in Seychelles is made up of around 700 to 800 staff and includes a vast array of professionals, semi-professionals, trained and untrained staff working as

- Health service providers
- Social service providers
- Family and child care providers
- Day Care Centre operators and assistants /child minders
- School based administrators, EC teaching staff, assistants and other school personnel
- Other partners, NGOs, police
- Community workers

There are many highly committed staff working in these areas. Over 85% of early childhood teachers in primary and crèche have teaching qualifications and all practicing nurses and social workers are qualified. In most cases however they have followed separate education and training pathways leading to distinct certification and qualifications with little collaboration or integration in training. There are also high proportions of untrained staff or staff with minimal qualifications working in Day Care Centres and as child minders.

Although government has invested considerably in the training of teachers and nurses, these two professions are plagued by severe recruitment and retention problems and attrition rates are high.

In order to drive the early childhood agenda forward, and to provide every child with the best possible chance to succeed, the system will need a highly trained and skilled workforce that can support children's health, learning and development needs. Government will also need to build new partnerships with the University, training institutions, NGOs and the private sector to satisfactorily meet demands in new areas.

The ECCE framework will therefore be supported by a comprehensive early childhood workforce strategy that will map out the immediate and long term plans for building this new workforce and meeting need challenges. The strategy will also address issues of professional standards, career pathways, enumeration, leadership, and financing of professional development.

The strategy will respond to four important priorities:

- 1) Meeting the increased demand for early childhood provision especially for the 0-3 years range
- 2) Improving the quality of early childhood education and support at all levels
- 3) Reinforcing the use of appropriate pedagogy that respects the natural rhythms of individual children in the place of highly structured and controlled learning activities
- 4) Building Integrated practices

ECCE is a right for all children and is the basis for development

The strategy will also aim at building a new culture and ethos among professionals working at that level; that of confident professionals aware of the limits of their own competencies and reaching out to other professionals in order to provide total support to the child.

5.5 Monitoring, Research, Data Plan

There are numerous sets of outcome indicators relevant to Seychelles in areas of health, education and child well-being which have been developed through research and consultation over the years and used as benchmarks to monitor development in specific areas of child development. Two of the most comprehensive sets of indicators are the child well being indicators developed through the Project Child Well being conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Development in 2009 and the performance indicators developed by the External Quality Assurance in the Ministry of Education to look at the quality of schools in key areas. Robust maternal and child health indicators are also routinely used to track progress in health and report on international commitments.

In order to determine a new set of indicators to measure developments in early childhood development and provision specifically for 0-7+ years, it will be necessary for people from relevant ministries and agencies to meet and agree on the most relevant indicators that will be used to chart progress in line with priorities and strategies mapped out in the framework.

UNESCO is developing a Holistic Child Development Index (HCDI) as a monitoring and benchmarking instrument that can be used to report progress by 2015 and beyond. It is recommended that Seychelles also uses the instrument to help it make final decisions on appropriateness of indicators. The quality and availability of statistics will also need considerable improvement. Coordinated and EC disaggregated data management systems will have to be established to allow for free exchange of regularly updated statistics among professionals and people working in the area of early childhood.

Since the Department of Education already has an Inspectorate Unit, it is recommended that this Unit be given the responsibility for developing indicators and standards in liaison with the Early Childhood Centre, the National Statistics Bureau (NSB) and other ministries. The Inspectorate Unit will gradually develop capacity to evaluate and inspect services for the age group 0-3 years. The Unit could also consider outsourcing some of its monitoring and inspection responsibilities in the short term to for example retired teachers, nurses and social workers.

6.0 Conclusion

The framework for Early Childhood Care and Education has been developed as a result of collective effort from different ministries and organizations involved in the provision for ECCE. It will serve as a tool to all stakeholders to ensure better coordination and harmonization in programme development and implementation. As depicted in the framework's motto, 'Winning for Children: A Shared Commitment', success will only be achieved through full engagement and participation of all partners involved.

Documents Consulted

Legislation

1. Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, (2004) Chapter 42.
2. Children's Act, (1982)
3. Social Welfare Agency Act, (2008)
4. Education Act 2004, (Act 13 of 2004)

International Treaties/Commitments

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child, (CRC)
2. Implementing child rights in early childhood: Convention on the Rights of the Child, General Comment, No 7: (2005)
3. Education For All Goals (EFA)
4. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Policies

Ministry of Education

1. Education for a Learning Society: Policy Statement of the Ministry of Education, Seychelles (2001).
2. The Zoning Policy
3. The Language Policy
4. Policy Regulations and guidelines for Admission to and transfer within State Schools, (2005)
5. Nutrition Policy in collaboration with Ministry of Health, (2008)

Ministry of Health

6. Seychelles Infant Feeding Policy; Baby Friendly Hospital initiative, (2010).
7. Day Care Centres, Policy and Strategy (undated)

Ministry of Social Development and Culture

8. Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs (1997) *Working Together: Interagency Cooperation for the Protection of Children.*

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2. Ministry of Health, Environment Health Section. *Draft Guidelines for Child Minding Services in Seychelles*, (2007).
3. SENPA. *The National Standards for Child Minding*, (undated).
4. Ministry of Education. *‘Looking at our School’*, (second edition, 2010).

Plans of Action

1. Ministry of Education (2007), *Education Sector Development Plan (2007-2011)*
2. Ministry of Education, Schools Division, Early childhood Education Section, *Development Plan 2008-2010*
3. *Seychelles National Plan of Action for Children (2005-2009)*
4. Ministry of Education , (2007) *Education Sector Development Plan (2007-2011)*
5. Ministry of Health and Social Services (2006), *National Plan of Action on Social Development (2005-2016)*.

UNESCO Background Documents

1. UNESCO: Division of Basic Education (2010), *Concept Paper, the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): Building the Wealth of Nations*
2. UNESCO: Division of Basic Education (2010) *Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation, Harnessing the Wealth of Nations*
3. Country Paper, Republic of Seychelles for the World Conference on Early childhood Care and Education 27th-29th September, (Moscow, 2010).
4. Closing Speech delivered by Mr. Danny Faure, Vice President of the Republic of Seychelles at the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, (Moscow, 2010).

Other Background Documents

Report on the First Ladies’ Summit “A Child Today, A Leader Tomorrow” (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, October, 2010).

UNESCO Policy Briefs

1. UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood No.18 Nov/Dec 2003; *Role of Early Childhood Care and Education in Ensuring Equal Opportunity.*
(<http://www.unesco.org/education/eef/briefs>)
2. UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood No. 26 September, 2004; *Curriculum in Early Childhood Education and Care* (<http://www.unesco.org/education/eef/briefs>)
3. What is your image of the child? unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001871/187140e.pdf
4. UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood N° 6 , September 2002 *Home-Based Early Childhood Services: The Case of New Zealand*

Other Countries' Quality Frameworks/Regulations

1. Oregon Commission on Children and Families, *Early Childhood Matters: Oregon's Framework for a statewide birth-through-five early childhood system* www.oregon.gov/OCCF.
2. Caricom Secretariat, *Regional Guidelines: For Developing Policy, Regulations and Standards in Early childhood*
3. Early Childhood Iowa, *A Policy Framework for an Early Childhood Iowa Professional Development System, 2009*
4. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2001) *Starting Strong: Early childhood Education and Care, Paris OECD*
5. Policy Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet Tasmania (2005) *Whole Government Policy Framework for the Early Years*
6. Report of the Expert Advisory Panel on Quality Early Childhood Education and Care, Australia (2009) *Towards a national quality framework for early childhood education and care*
7. Council of Europe *Council of Europe policy review on child and youth participation 2010-2011: Framework for the policy review process.*

APPENDIX

List of child related legislation, policies, standards and plans.

1. Legislation

Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, Chapter 42. (2004)	Articles 29-33 are especially relevant. Provisions for free primary health care and compulsory education as well as special measures to protect the maternal functions of women and the rights of children and young persons.
Children's Act 1982	Provides for well being of children 0-18 years compulsory measure of care
Social Welfare Agency Act 2008	Provides for financial assistance for families and children
Education Act 2004	Provision for compulsory and non compulsory education

2. International Treaties and Commitments

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Ratified in 1989.
Optional Protocol	
Education For All Goals	Goal 1: Increase Access to EC
Millennium Development Goals (MDG)	Goals 2, 4 and 5 especially relevant to EC

3. Policies

'Education for a Learning Society" (2001)	Policy statement of the Ministry of Education. Develops the philosophy and values of the education system and the broad goals of education at different levels.
The Zoning Policy	Provides for each child to attend school in his/her own district where he/she is residing . It is only in exceptional cases that the MoE approves exemption from zoning.
The Language Policy	Clarifies the role and use of the three national languages in education. Creole (Kreol) is the mother tongue of the majority of Seychellois. EC children in the formal system learn basic literacy and numeracy in the mother tongue. English and French are considered as second languages and are also on the EC curriculum.
Policy Regulations and Guidelines for Admission to and transfer within State Schools (2005)	Specifies compulsory school age for admission to primary school

Nutrition Policy (2008)	Developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. It prescribes guidelines for all school meal providers (for lunch) and school tuck shops. The policy ensures that children are provided with a balanced meal for lunch and the also that the tuck shops sell nutritious snacks and drinks.
Seychelles Infant Feeding Policy (2010)	Part of the baby friendly hospital initiative, the aim of the policy is to improve through optimal feeding the nutritional status, growth development and health of infants in Seychelles.
Working Together (1997)	Guidelines for interagency cooperation for the protection of children developed by Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs. Includes adoption procedures and procedures for placements in homes.

4. Standards

Day Care Centres –Policy, Strategy and Standards, Regulations, Guidance Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (2005)	Standards and Guidelines produced by the Ministry of Education under mandate provided by Education Act (2004) to supervise and monitor Day Care Centres.
The National Standards for Child Minding (undated)	Standards for child minding developed by Child Minding committee. Status and implementation unclear.
‘Looking at our School’(2 nd edition, 2010)	Standards and performance indicators on 6 key areas of the work of a school developed by Inspectorate Unit in the Department of Education. To be used as a tool for internal and external evaluation of school performance.

5. Plans of Action

Seychelles National Plan of Action for children (2005-2009).	Twenty goals and targets to ensure sustained development and well-being of Seychellois children.
Education Sector Development Plan (2007-2011).	