

THREE HOURS A WEEK: REDUCING DISPARITIES AND SCALING ACCESS TO QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION IN GUYANA, SURINAME AND ST. LUCIA

WORKING PAPER



DIVISION OF
POLICY AND PLANNING
MAY 2007

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**THREE HOURS A WEEK:
REDUCING DISPARITIES AND
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QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY
EDUCATION IN GUYANA,
SURINAME AND ST. LUCIA**

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May 2007

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3 UN Plaza, NY, NY 10017
MAY, 2007

This is a working document. It has been prepared to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and to stimulate discussion, and has benefited from the support and comments of the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance at Maastricht University, in particular Chris de Neubourg, Academic Director of the School, and Franziska Gassmann, Senior Researcher.

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List of Acronyms

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COHSOD	CARICOM Council on Human and Social Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA-FTI	Education For All – Fast Track Initiative
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
IDB	International Development Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MINOV	Ministry of Education and Community Development
MINRO	Ministry of Regional Development
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MTSP	Medium Term Strategic Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WB	World Bank

Executive Summary

Strong evidence suggests that pre-primary education substantially improves a child's ability to make the transition into compulsory primary and secondary schooling and continues to positively impact a child's development into adolescence and adulthood.¹ This paper aims to discuss and analyse viable policy options to scale up access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia with a special focus on the reduction of disparities between different geographical locations and socio-economic groups in those countries.

The reasons for the considerable disparities in access to pre-primary education in the Caribbean region are analysed from the supply side (the duty bearer) and the demand side (constraints experienced by the rights holder). But access to services alone is not enough. Quality of services is paramount for the optimal development of the child and sustainability of pre-primary education services. This paper thus identifies the policy measures that contribute the most to improving access of marginalized groups to ECE and the major gaps in the policy framework that jeopardize universal access to ECE

Developing viable alternative ECE policies is the overall aim of this paper. To ensure the feasibility of any ECE policy options considered, it is imperative to ask why children from certain marginalized areas in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia are not attending pre-primary school. The main reasons in all three countries would seem to be:

- a lack of awareness of parents/carers of the importance of ECE; and
- the high cost, either in cash (fees, materials and books), time or effort (long distances) for both the parent/carer and the provider/teacher.

A successful policy option to realistically scale up access to quality pre-primary education for these disadvantaged children should therefore consider the following criteria: affordability; convenience and safety; and parental participation.

The 'Three Hour A Week' Option Based on the data and analysis contained in this paper, 'Three Hours a Week' seems a viable, alternative ECE policy option. It aims to provide a high-quality early childhood learning experience for at least three hours every week for all children of pre-primary school age in disadvantaged and/or under-served communities. Key to the success of this option is the:

- quality of the teacher/facilitator;
- valuation and appreciation of the teacher/facilitator; and
- involvement of the parents/family.

This paper emphasizes that the 'Three Hours a Week' model cannot replace the provision of access to full-time pre-primary education. Rather, it offers a simple and affordable policy option to initiate the process of scaling up access to quality pre-primary education for disadvantaged children in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia.

¹ Schweinhart, 2004.

Resumen Ejecutivo

Los indicios más sólidos indican que la educación preprimaria mejora considerablemente la capacidad del niño de realizar la transición hacia una escolarización obligatoria primaria y secundaria, y sigue afectando positivamente el desarrollo del niño en la adolescencia y la edad adulta². Este documento tiene por objetivo analizar opciones viables de política para ampliar la escala en el acceso a una educación de calidad en la primera infancia en Guyana, Surinam y Santa Lucía, con un hincapié especial en la reducción de las disparidades entre los diferentes lugares geográficos y los grupos socioeconómicos de esos países.

Las razones que explican las considerables disparidades en el acceso a la educación preprimaria en la región del Caribe se analizan con respecto a la oferta (el detentor de obligaciones) y la demanda (los límites que experimenta el sujeto de derechos). Pero el acceso a los servicios por sí solo no es suficiente. La calidad de los servicios es fundamental para el desarrollo óptimo del niño y la sostenibilidad de los servicios de educación preprimaria. De este modo, este documento especifica las medidas de política que contribuyen más a mejorar el acceso de los grupos marginados a la educación en la primera infancia y las principales disparidades en el marco de políticas que ponen en peligro el acceso universal a la educación en la primera infancia

El objetivo principal de este documento es restablecer políticas alternativas viables de educación en la primera infancia. Para asegurar la viabilidad de cualquier opción de política para la educación en la primera infancia que se examine, es imprescindible preguntarse por qué los niños no acuden a la escuela preprimaria. Las principales razones parecen ser:

- un desconocimiento por parte de los progenitores/cuidadores de la importancia de la educación en la primera infancia; y
- el costo elevado, ya sea en efectivo (cuotas, materiales y libros), en tiempo o en esfuerzo (largas distancias), que representa para el progenitor/cuidador y el prestador/maestro.

Cualquier opción de política que tenga éxito para ampliar de manera realista el acceso a la educación preprimaria de calidad para estos niños desfavorecidos debe por tanto tomar en consideración los criterios siguientes: disponibilidad de recursos, conveniencia y seguridad; y participación de los progenitores.

² Schweinhart, 2004.

La opción “Tres horas a la Semana” “Tres horas a la semana” parece una opción de políticas viable y alternativa para la educación en la primera infancia. Su objetivo es proporcionar una experiencia pedagógica de alta calidad en la primera infancia durante por lo menos tres horas a la semana para todos los niños en edad escolar preprimaria en situación desfavorable y/o en comunidades que no reciben todos los servicios necesarios. Para el éxito de esta opción es fundamental:

- la calidad del maestro/facilitador;
- la valoración y apreciación del maestro/facilitador; y
- la participación de los progenitores/familia.

Este documento hace hincapié en que el modelo “Tres horas a la semana” no puede sustituir el acceso a una educación preprimaria a tiempo completo. Más bien, ofrece una opción en materia de políticas simple y asequible para iniciar el proceso de aumentar la escala del acceso a la educación preprimaria de calidad para los niños desfavorecidos de Guyana, Surinam y Santa Lucía.

Résumé Analytique

Bien des preuves montrent que l'éducation préscolaire améliore considérablement la capacité qu'a un enfant de faire la transition entre la scolarité obligatoire primaire et secondaire, et continue à exercer un impact positif sur le développement d'un enfant jusqu'à l'adolescence et l'âge adulte³. Ce rapport cherche à analyser les options stratégiques viables pour généraliser l'accès des enfants à une éducation préscolaire de qualité en Guyane, au Suriname et à Sainte-Lucie, en mettant spécialement l'accent sur la réduction des disparités entre divers emplacements géographiques et divers groupes socio-économiques dans ces pays.

Les raisons des considérables disparités d'accès à l'éducation préscolaire dans la région des Caraïbes sont analysées du côté de l'offre (le débiteur d'obligations) et de la demande (les contraintes auxquelles est soumis le détenteur de droits). Mais l'accès aux services ne suffit pas à lui seul. La qualité des services a une importance primordiale pour l'optimisation du développement de l'enfant et la durabilité des services d'éducation préscolaires. Ce rapport identifie ainsi les mesures stratégiques qui contribuent le plus à l'amélioration de l'accès des groupes marginalisés à l'éducation préscolaire et les lacunes principales du cadre décisionnel qui entravent l'accès universel à l'enseignement préscolaire.

L'élaboration d'alternatives viables aux politiques d'enseignement préscolaire est l'objectif global de ce rapport. Pour assurer la faisabilité de quelque option que ce soit, il est impératif de demander pourquoi les enfants de certaines régions marginalisées de Guyane, du Suriname et de Sainte-Lucie ne suivent pas un enseignement préscolaire. Il semblerait que les raisons principales, dans les trois pays concernés, en soient les suivantes :

- la méconnaissance de l'importance de l'enseignement préscolaire chez les parents et ceux qui les gardent ;
- le coût élevé, en argent (droits de scolarité, matériel, livres), en temps ou en effort (éloignement), à la fois pour les enfants ou ceux qui les gardent, et pour le prestataire de service ou l'enseignant.

Pour réussir, une option stratégique qui a l'ambition réaliste de généraliser l'accès à une éducation préscolaire de qualité pour ces enfants défavorisés devrait donc tenir compte des critères suivants : la modicité du prix, la commodité et la sécurité et la participation des parents.

³ Schweinhart, 2004.

L'option des « Trois heures par semaine » Sur la base des données et de l'analyse contenues dans ce rapport, « Trois heures par semaine » apparaît être une alternative stratégique viable. Il s'agit ici d'assurer une expérience d'apprentissage préscolaire de haute qualité pendant trois heures au moins par semaine à tous les enfants d'âge préscolaire demeurant dans des communautés défavorisées ou sous-équipées. Les clés du succès sont les suivantes :

- la qualité de l'enseignant ou de l'animateur ;
- l'évaluation et l'appréciation de l'enseignant ou de l'animateur ;
- la participation des parents ou de la famille.

Ce rapport souligne que le modèle des « Trois heures par semaine » ne peut pas se substituer à l'octroi d'un accès à l'éducation préscolaire à plein temps, mais offre plutôt une option simple et abordable pour initier le processus de généralisation d'une éducation préscolaire de qualité en Guyane, au Suriname et à Sainte-Lucie.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to discuss and analyse viable policy options to scale up access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia with a special focus on the reduction of disparities between different geographical locations and socio-economic groups in those countries. Working towards this target is in line with both the UN Millennium Development Goal 2 – achieving Universal Primary Education – and UNICEF’s Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) focus areas 2 and 5.

1.1 The Policy – Universal Access to Early Education

Early childhood education (ECE) or pre-primary education is defined in this paper as any form of institutionalised education, recognized in a country, providing for a child’s early learning and development in the period immediately before the child enters into the formal, compulsory educational system.⁴ Access to ECE is therefore of great importance for all children and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds where the family may not be able to provide the most conducive environment for development.

The policy of universal access to quality pre-primary education is a human rights issue. It is a focus area highlighted in many international, regional and national conventions, frameworks and policy papers as will be further discussed in section 3. National programming for ECE has naturally developed unevenly across the Caribbean region in accordance with changing demographics and political, economic and social fluctuations. Successive national poverty assessments have increasingly recommended quality early childhood servicing as especially important for children affected by poverty. Access to quality ECE therefore becomes a social equity and economic issue.

1.2 The Context – Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

The main reason this paper focuses on access to ECE in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia is that there exists strong evidence (which will be presented in section 2) that not all children in these three countries are able to complete a full course of quality pre-primary education. This negatively impacts their performance at primary level and is an indication of the political will (or lack thereof) and resource related challenges faced by these countries. Additionally, the countries offer an interesting comparison because they represent a variety of historical perspectives, management policies and differing scopes of effort by the respective governments, civil society and private sectors in catering for the educational needs of young children in the Caribbean. This comparison will be further discussed in sections 2 and 3.

1.3 The Key Issues and their Indicators

Key issues in this study are the quality of, scaling up access to and reducing disparities between groups in terms of their accessibility to Early Childhood Education. Problems regarding existing ECE policies will be analysed from the demand side and the supply side. Using a human-rights based approach, the demand side of the problem deals with the rights holder (parents of pre-school children) and the barriers they face in claiming their children’s right to pre-primary education, while the supply side focuses on the duty bearers (government, communities, parents) and the issues that prevent them from providing access to quality, pre-primary education.

⁴ The age group for which pre-primary education caters varies slightly by country: in Guyana, ECE caters for all children aged between 3 years 9 months and 5 years 9 months and in St. Lucia children aged 3 and 4 and Suriname children aged 4 and 5.

The main indicators that will be used here to measure quality and access to early childhood education (ECE), as well as disparities between levels of and efforts towards scaling up access, are displayed in the table below. Numerous other indicators could be used to measure access to ECE⁵ and quality of ECE⁶ but as no data was available for the three countries under study, such indicators could not be considered.

Table 1.1: Indicators used to measure progress

Theme	Indicator
Access to Early Childhood Education and disparities between different countries/districts/regions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for students of pre-primary age, disaggregated by country/district/region, by gender, by age and by special educational need. 2. Estimated school fee in US\$ per year per child attending pre-primary school.
Quality early childhood (pre-primary) education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practitioner-child ratio. 2. National minimum ECE standards for establishing a school - in place and in force

This policy paper is written with policy makers and implementers in the field of ECE in mind, such as governments, NGOs, CBOs, the media, churches and the private sector. There is a general realization that care, support and education for the young child is everybody’s business and each of us has a role to play, a word to say, a commitment to make or a dollar to give. Hopefully, this paper will contribute towards discussion on universal access to quality, pre-primary education in the Caribbean and intensifying and accelerating efforts to find practical and workable solutions to scale up access to quality ECE for all, with particular priority given to families and communities where children are “at risk” or of delayed or debilitated development.

⁵ Suitable indicators to measure access would include: ECE attendance numbers; the numbers of children living in poverty and/or vulnerable situations, children with identified special educational needs, children affected and infected by HIV.

⁶ Suitable indicators to measure quality would include practitioner level of training and qualification in ECE, % of those children completing primary education who entered primary school following at least one year of ECE.

2. Accessing ECE in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

This Section reinforces the importance of Early Childhood Education for all before focussing on the countries concerned in this study: Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia. Ownership models of ECE facilities in the three countries are analysed before the existing access to ECE is assessed and disparities highlighted.

2.1 The Importance of Early Childhood Education

International research proves the great importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE) or pre-primary education for all children and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds where the family may not be able to provide the most conducive environment for development. The quality of the environment in which children learn is a key indicator for developmental outcomes. Strong evidence suggests that pre-primary education substantially improves a child's ability to make the transition into compulsory primary and secondary schooling and continues to positively impact a child's development into adolescence and adulthood. In his Perry Preschool Study of 2004, Schweinhart showed the effects of high-quality early care and education on low-income three and four year olds. He found that 40 year old adults, who participated in a preschool programme, were more likely to have graduated from high school, have higher earnings, hold down jobs and commit fewer crimes than those who had not.

Children who were part of the Perry Preschool Study, were taught each weekday morning in 2.5 hour sessions by certified public school teachers, with at least a bachelor's degree. The average child-teacher ratio was 6:1. The curriculum emphasised active learning, in which the children engaged in activities that (i) involved decision making and problem solving, and (ii) were planned, carried out, and reviewed by the children themselves, with support from adults. The teachers also provided a weekly 1.5-hour home visit to each mother and child, designed to involve the mother in the educational process and help implement the preschool curriculum at home. The programme's cost was approximately US\$10 300 per child per school year (in current US\$). Overall, the study documented a return to society of more than US\$17 for every tax dollar invested in the early care and education programme.

2.2 ECE Ownership in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia were selected as the countries for this paper because they represent the same Caribbean region, yet interestingly diverse contexts and therefore case studies. Historical precedent has greatly impacted the three different models of ECE as have the differing scopes of effort by the respective governments, civil society and private sectors to cater for the educational needs of the very young.

Table 2.1: GDP per Capita and Population Data

	Guyana	Suriname	St. Lucia
GDP per capita (in US\$)⁷	1039 (2005)	2637 (2005)	4693 (2005)
Total population	Ca. 750 000	Ca. 470 000	Ca. 170 000

⁷ IMF (2006), World Economic Outlook Database.

Ownership of ECE facilities in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

Guyana - Majority government owned

Strong participation of the State in the early childhood sector in Guyana originates in the socialist agenda of the 1970s: an agenda that placed considerable emphasis on State-provided, institutionalised childcare. Today in Guyana, with a population of over 750 000 and a GDP per capita of about US\$1000 (table 2.1); Government maintains a pre-primary education sector that is (almost) fully funded and provided by the State.

Suriname - Mix of government and private (church) owned

Until the ravages of civil war in the 1980s, the advanced pace of Suriname's economic development afforded an impressive array of social programmes, including pre-primary education. At present in Suriname, population of 470 000 and GDP per capita ca. US\$2500 (table 2.1) the responsibility for the ownership of ECE facilities is shared by Government and denominational organizations (mainly the Roman Catholic and Moravian Church).

St. Lucia - Completely privately (church, community and individually) owned

St. Lucia offers a quite different model of ownership. Organised early childhood provision was initiated by the NGO sector – Save the Children Fund, the Salvation Army and the Carmelite Services. Today in St. Lucia, population of 170 000 and a GDP per capita of over US\$4500 (table 2.1), all the ECE facilities remain privately owned. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that many 3 and 4 year olds attend state-run Day Care Centres, one of the more extensive provisions in the Caribbean. However, as these centres were primarily designed to cater for the day care needs of children less than 3 years old, their service is not routinely described as ECE, even though, over time, they have haphazardly adapted programmes to cater to the 3 to 4 year olds.

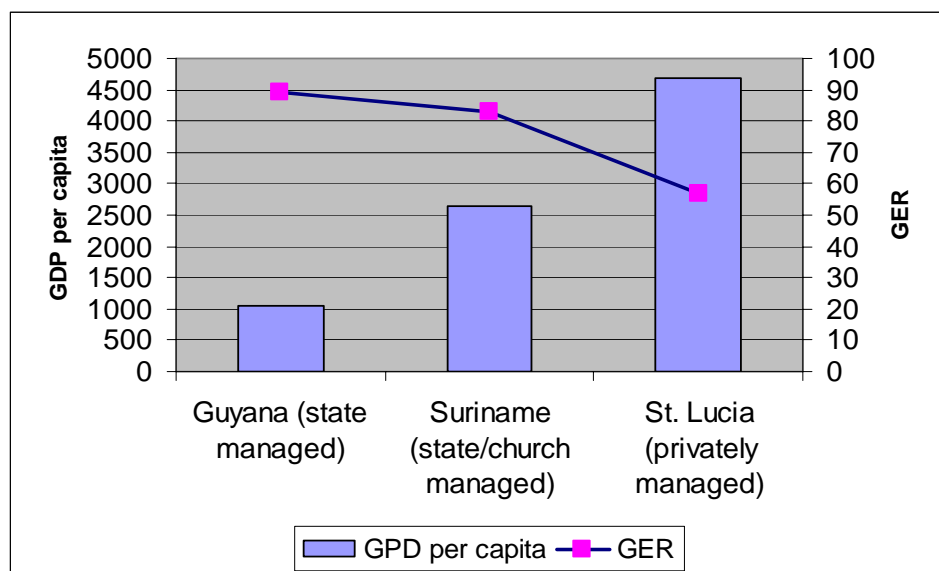
2.3 Disparities in Access to ECE in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

Table 2.2 provides an overview of differences in access to pre-primary facilities measured by the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) indicator broken down per district or region (in the case of Guyana and Suriname) and by country (in the case of the OECS). The average Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the OECS, Guyana and Suriname are quite similar and would not give rise to any major concern. However, the intra-country disparities between St. Lucia and the rest of the OECS and between the districts and regions of Guyana and Suriname reveal a rather more concerning scenario.

Table 2.2: Pre-Primary Gross Enrolment Ratios

Indicator	Guyana ⁸ (Government owned ECE facilities)		Suriname ⁹ (Government & Church owned ECE facilities)		OECS ¹⁰ (St. Lucia) (Privately owned ECE facilities)	
	Region	GER	District	GER	Country	GER
Access: Gross Enrolment Ratio (%)	1 (remote interior)	33	Paramaribo (coast urban)	88	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	89
	2 (coast rural)	94	Wanica (coast urban)	86	Anguilla	79
	3 (coast rural)	93	Nickerie (coast rural)	86	Montserrat	111
	4 (coast urban)	91	Coronie (coast rural)	116	Grenada	95
	5 (coast rural)	96	Saramacca (coast rural)	92	Antigua	61
	6 (coast rural)	105	Commewijne (coast rural)	95	British Virgin Islands	92
	7 (interior)	75	Marowijne (interior)	93	St. Kitts & Nevis	81
	8 (remote interior)	42	Para (rural/interior)	80	St. Lucia	57
	9 (remote interior)	57	Brokopondo (interior)	90	Dominica	83
	10 (interior)	86	Sipaliwini (remote interior)	37		
	Average	89%	Average	86%	Average	83%

Graph 2.1: Comparison of per capita GDP and Gross Enrolment Ratio



⁸ Calculated from enrolment data from 2002/2003 school year (MOE, 2003). Digest of Education Statistics of Guyana 2002-2003) and census data of number and 3 and 4 year old from ABS, 2002.

⁹ ABS, statistical yearbook 2004 and ABS, census report 2005; see Table G6 for details on the calculation.

¹⁰ UNESCO (2006) EFA Global Monitoring Report for the Caribbean: Early Childhood Development.

Important observations can be made from the data presented in Tables 2.2, 2.3 and Graph 2.1. Firstly, as indicated earlier, State involvement in the delivery of ECE in both Guyana and Suriname has a strong historical precedent. Even as resources diminished over time, both governments managed to sustain reasonable access to ECE. It is interesting to note that St. Lucia, considered a middle-income country, affords less state-provided ECE services. The presupposition that a higher GDP per capita translates into an equitable distribution of national income, social goods and services, including health, water, sanitation, nutrition and education is not always accurate as the case of St. Lucia proves.

Table 2.3: Access (estimated cost for parents) and Quality of Early Childhood Education

	Guyana (Government owned ECE facilities)		Suriname (Government & Church owned ECE facilities)		St. Lucia (Privately owned ECE facilities)	
	Pre 2000	Post 2000	Pre 2000	Post 2000	Pre 2000	Post 2000
Access: Estimated cost to send a child to pre-primary school (school fee in US\$ per year per child at current prices)	0	0	\$5.75 (1998) ¹¹	\$3.70 (2005) (Gov. School) \$18.50 (2005) (Roman Catholic or Protestant School ¹²)		\$666 (2003) ¹³ (lowest quality) \$2450 (2003) (highest quality)
Quality:	Pre 2000	Post 2000	Pre 2000	Post 2000	Pre 2000	Post 2000
Teacher-student ratio		1:57 (2002)	1:25 (1985) 1:25 (1990) 1:29 (1994) ¹⁴	1:22 (2000) ¹⁵ 1:23 (2001)	1:15 (1996) 1:13 (1999) ¹⁶	
	National standards for school yet to be established		No national standards in place – practitioners use their own set of standards.		National Standards are not in place. ¹⁷	

¹¹ IDB, 1998. Suriname: Education Sector Study.

¹² IDB, 2005.

¹³ MOE, Draft Early Childhood Policy.

¹⁴ IDB, 1998. Suriname: Education Sector Study.

¹⁵ Ministry of Education, 2002. Surinaams Educatief Plan.

¹⁶ UNESCO (2005).

¹⁷ A pilot project is testing the performance of children in Grade K and Grade 1 against new national learning outcomes - standards will be determined.

Table 2.4: Disparities between regions of Guyana regarding access to ECE

Region	Total (US\$)	Total enrolled in ECE (2002-2003)	Total number 3, 4 year olds	GER	Gov. outlay per child (US\$)	Teacher-pupil ratio
1 (remote interior)	\$129 603	592	1 771	33%	\$73	1:63
2 (coast rural)	\$388 217	2 298	2 447	94%	\$159	1:27
3 (coast rural)	\$772 217	4 469	4 819	93%	\$160	1:32
4 (coast urban)	\$1 342 567	12 658	13 941	91%	\$96	1:28
Georgetown	\$1 438 895					
5 (coast rural)	\$387 385	2 643	2 749	96%	\$141	1:41
6 (coast rural)	\$768 114	6 575	6 269	105%	\$123	1:47
7 (interior)	\$91 609	718	960	75%	\$95	1:36
8 (remote interior)	\$20 391	268	639	42%	\$32	1:118
9 (remote interior)	\$156 338	771	1 357	57%	\$115	1:160
10 (interior)	\$595 807	1 898	2 195	86%	\$271	1:21
	\$35 611 229		37 147	89%	\$164	1:57

ECE Access Disparities in Guyana

In Guyana, considerable disparities exist in access to ECE between the coastal regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 and the remote interior districts 1, 8 and 9, populated mainly by indigenous people. Table 2.4 shows the ECE access disparities between the regions of Guyana. The average Gross Enrolment Ratio for the Guyana Nursery Education programme for the school year 2002/2003 was 89% but varied between 33% for Region 1 and 105% for Region 6. The disparities for the remote interior Regions of 1, 8 and 9 can be explained by the fact that many hinterland families engage in farming done away from home. In many cases parents take their younger children with them as there is no facility for child care after the half day nursery school programme. In addition, the language of instruction in these schools is English, which is not the first language of many of the children and there are long distances to walk to get to school.

In the year 2002/2003, Guyana spent approximately 0.08% of its GDP (a bit over US\$6 million) on ECE. Table 2.4 shows that the Government expenditure in US\$ per child is lowest for Regions 1, 8 and 9. On average, the Guyana Government spent US\$164 per child per year to provide ECE. For Region 8 this was as low as US\$32. The teacher-pupil ratios are also lowest for these regions: up to 160 ECE students to one teacher in Region 9 as compared with the country average of 57 students to an ECE teacher. The inequity in the distribution of resources, both human and material, across the regions of Guyana affects the levels of quality and access to ECE.

The goal of reaching 100% enrolment and attendance of children in nursery education programmes is still a major concern for Guyana. The Strategic Plan 2002-2006 of the Ministry of Education in Guyana states that “while the goal of equity in education is to provide all citizens of Guyana, and especially the young ones of school age with an educational experience of comparable quality, it is recognised that this is not an easy task and the results of efforts are not as encouraging as they are in the matter of coverage.”

ECE Access Disparities in Suriname

The greatest disparities exist between the coastal and rural districts and the hinterland district of Sipaliwini (GER of 37% for Sipaliwini compared with a national average of 86%) populated mainly by indigenous people and the Maroons.

ECE Access Disparities in OECS

Of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), St. Lucia has the lowest GER at 57% compared with the 83%. The GER for St. Lucia is also considerably lower than the figures for Suriname and Guyana. While there is no data on the GER per district in St. Lucia, data reveals that poverty is generally a rural phenomenon (with poverty prevalence rates in excess of 35%). Nevertheless, with ever increasing urban migration towards the city of Castries, there is also a significantly under-served population in and around the city centre. It is estimated that there are approximately 1800 3-4 year olds in rural areas and a further 900 children in urban Castries without access to quality preschool education.¹⁸

Analysis of Disparities from a Supply and Demand Perspective

Discussing the disparities in the quality of and access to ECE facilities from both a supply and demand perspective helps clarify key issues of access inequality. An important question from the supply perspective is why do duty bearers (e.g. parents, the state, NGOs, private organizations) fail to provide essential ECE services for young children? From the demand side, why is it that rights holders (parents and/or care givers/takers of pre-primary age children) fail to effectively demand ECE facilities that would greatly assist them fulfil the rights of their young children to quality early childhood education?

Table 2.5: Supply and Demand Constraints jeopardising Access to Quality ECE

	Guyana (Government owned ECE facilities)	Suriname (Government and church owned ECE facilities)	St. Lucia (Privately owned ECE facilities)
Supply constraints (of the duty bearer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children with disabilities rarely access ECE as neither facilities nor teachers can cater to their special needs. Low density of pre-primary facilities in interior locations. Limited supply of qualified teachers who are willing to work in challenging circumstances. Limited supply of developmentally appropriate materials and health/nutrition services Parents struggle to provide the most basic supplies for their child such as clothes and shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited safe and affordable transportation in the interior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient facilities accessible to vulnerable groups (e.g. through government subsidized places) as all ECE facilities are privately owned and economic forces determine the costs and spread of ECE facilities.
Demand constraints (of the rights holder)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and communities cannot demand ECE in their village, since pre-primary education is not compulsory by law. Limited demand for quality ECE as some parents in marginalized areas are not fully aware of the importance of early childhood education. High parental contributions. Exclusion or limited access as a result of standards and regulations not always being enforced. 		

¹⁸ CDB (2006), The Assessment of Poverty in St. Lucia.

Supply side problems in Guyana and Suriname

- a) The low density of ECE facilities in remote interior locations – hence long distances between communities and the nearest ECE facility. In Suriname, for instance, only 26% of the 226 communities in the interior of Suriname have their own pre-primary school.¹⁹ The density of pre-primary and primary schools in the interior of Suriname is therefore rather low and students have to cover long distances to reach the nearest school. The constructions of ECE facilities in the remote interior regions of Guyana and Suriname is extremely costly because most materials and personnel required must to be flown in or transported over rivers and sub-standard roads. Table 2.4 summarises the challenges faced by Guyana in trying to supply all children in all districts with access to quality ECE. Budgetary allocations fail to release sufficient funds for all children in the remote interior regions.
- b) Limited supply of qualified teachers willing to work in challenging circumstances – qualified ECE teachers available to work in remote interior locations are in short supply for a number of reasons. First of all, the capacity of the teacher training institutions to upgrade teachers from these areas is limited, even in Guyana where methods of distance learning have been put in place to speed up the process. Additionally, the cost of living in these areas is high (most goods have to be flown in); the health risks (such as malaria) are considerable; and the compensatory measures that the Government has put in place (such as the provision of hardship allowances, the provision of housing etc.) are insufficient to attract and retain teachers.
- c) Limited capacity of parents to supply the most essential items for school – some parents in the remote interior regions of Guyana and Suriname keep their children home because of poverty and their inability to supply the most essential supplies (clothes, shoes, books, lunch kit). Most people in the interior of Guyana and Suriname are subsistence farmers with minimal incomes. The men often work in gold-mining activities to supplement funds, but do not always send money home to enable children to attend an ECE facility.

Supply side problems in St. Lucia

- a) As ECE facilities are privately owned, market and economic forces determine the supply – although the Ministry of Education in St. Lucia is responsible for regulating and facilitating pre-school education, all existing pre-schools are privately owned. As a result, economic factors determine access to ECE facilities. The draft National Policy document notes that a lower percentage of preschool age children in the lowest quintile are enrolled in preschool, 34% as against a national average of 48% in 2003. The parents of these children cannot afford the cost of the private early childhood services which currently ranges from US\$55 per month to US\$200 per month.
- b) There are no purpose built facilities for children with disabilities, thereby limiting the possibilities of access for such children.

Demand side problems in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

On the demand side, the factors that limit access to pre-primary education for all children in Guyana, St. Lucia and Suriname are very similar:

¹⁹ MOE, 2004.

- a) Pre-primary education is not compulsory by law – parents and communities are not in a position to claim the right for their child to receive a pre-primary education as the age of compulsory education in Suriname is from 6 to 12 years. A law to change this to 14 years has been drafted but has not yet been accepted. Likewise in St. Lucia, the age of compulsory education is from 5 to 16 years old and in Guyana, education is compulsory from age 6 until age 16.
- b) Limited awareness of the importance of ECE – in Suriname (as in Guyana and St. Lucia) it has been noted that many parents in the interior have limited awareness of the importance of early childhood education, as there are insufficient programmes to expose them to its benefits.²⁰
- c) High parental contributions – the relatively high ‘parental contribution’ that parents in the Indigenous and Maroon communities in Suriname have to pay are a major barrier to sending their children to pre-primary schools. Indigenous and maroon parents are required to pay more for the education of their children than parents who live in urban or rural areas. The reason for this is that more than 50% of the schools in the interior of Suriname are denominational schools (Roman Catholic and Protestant) and these schools require parents to pay a fee which is significantly higher than public schools. In 2004, for example, parents paid SR\$10 (US\$3.70) per child per year for a public school, while the Catholic schools requested SR\$50 (US\$18.50) per child per year.²¹ According to Table 2.2, parents in St. Lucia had to pay between US\$666 and US\$2450 to get their child into an ECE facility in 2004. The Government offers only very limited subsidy options at the day care level.
- d) Exclusion or limited access for children with disabilities – as a result of standards and regulations not being enforced. The 2002 Survey of Quality in Early Childhood Environments in preschools and day care centres in St. Lucia found very little provision for children with disabilities.²² Anecdotal evidence suggests the same is the case for Guyana and Suriname. There also seems to be a concern regarding children infected with HIV. Between 1985 and 2004, there were 33 reported cases of children (up to the age of five) diagnosed with HIV in St. Lucia. There has been at least one reported case of a child being denied entry to an ECE centre because the mother was confirmed as a person living with HIV/AIDS. With the HIV infection rate on the rise, this trend signifies a particular problem.

3. ECE Frameworks and Policies

Access to quality pre-primary education is a human rights issue, but also a social equity and economic issue. It is a focus area that is highlighted in many international, regional and national conventions, frameworks and policy papers as will be discussed in this section.

The foundation principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child²³ are non-discrimination, right to life, survival and development and that the best interests and the views of the child are taken into account. More specifically Article 28 and 29 of the Convention focus on the right to primary education for all children. Article 28 focuses on access to equal opportunities and Article 29 emphasises the quality of education, ensuring “the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.” Moreover, the United Nations CRC Committee interprets the right to education

²⁰ MINRO, 2004.

²¹ IDB, 2005.

²² A UNICEF survey on childhood disabilities reported the incidence of moderate and severe disabilities at approximately 2.2% of children in the birth to four age range in the Caribbean including Guyana, St. Lucia and Suriname.

²³ <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>.

during early childhood as beginning at birth and closely linked to a young child's right to maximum development.²⁴

3.1 International Policy Frameworks

In 1990, representatives from 155 countries and 150 organisations pledged to provide education for all by the year 2000 at the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand).²⁵ Their intention was that children, youths and adults "benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs". Article V of the Declaration specifically aims to broaden the means and scope of basic education, stating that learning begins at birth and calling for the development of early childhood care and initial education programmes. The EFA commitments were reaffirmed during a conference in 2000 where six specific goals were defined: goal 1 focuses explicitly on the expansion of early childhood care and education.

UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 focuses on achieving Universal Primary Education. Towards achieving this goal, target 6 aims that by 2015; pre-school age children have universal access to early childhood education. UNICEF's Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP), focus area 2 deals with Basic Education and Gender Equity, with key result area 1 specifically focusing on the improvement of children's developmental readiness to start primary school on time, especially in areas where large disparities in education are evident. Focus area 5 deals with policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights. Relevant areas under this focus area are i) the collection and analysis of strategic information on the situation of children and women and ii) policy advocacy, dialogue and leveraging.

3.2 Regional Policy Frameworks

In the Caribbean Region, the Caribbean Plan of Action for Early Childhood Education, Care and Development was drafted and adopted by over 20 Caribbean countries, including Guyana, St. Lucia and Suriname, in 1997. In the same year it was adopted by CARICOM Heads of Government as part of the region's Human Resource Development Strategy, which was noted as essential to the economic fortunes of the region: making access to quality ECE an economic issue. The aim of this plan was to establish a framework for the development of early childhood education programmes at the national level in CARICOM countries and to initiate a plan of action to guide this development.

CARICOM Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD) adopted a regional action plan to strengthen national level development in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in October 2002. In response, the CARICOM Secretariat formed a Regional Early Childhood Working Group of donors, regional organisations and civil society partners in the same year. In March 2006, with the requisite staff in place at the CARICOM Secretariat, the Working Group was revived to support, as a partnership, initiatives at the regional level following the Regional ECD Policy Forum.

3.3 National Policy Frameworks

National programming for ECE has developed unevenly across the Caribbean region, in accordance with changing demographics and political, economic and social fluctuations. Most of the policy frameworks pertaining to pre-primary schooling and ECE existing in the Caribbean countries were drafted, finalised or

²⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 7, Implementing child rights in early childhood (40th session, 2005), U.N. Doc. CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1 (2006).

²⁵ http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/background/jomtien_declaration.shtml.

adjusted after the release of the 1997 publication – The Caribbean Plan of Action for Early Childhood Education, Care and Development.²⁶

National frameworks have also been impacted by international developments including the Education for All (EFA) 2000 processes and the United Nations Special Summit on Children. Successive national poverty assessments have increasingly recommended quality early childhood servicing as especially important for children affected by poverty. Access to quality ECE therefore becomes a social equity issue. Refer to Annex, Table 6.4 for an overview of the existing policy frameworks of Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia pertaining to the provision of access to quality pre-primary education.

National Care Quality

Much international research points to the importance of the quality of the environment in which children learn as a key indicator for developmental outcomes. National surveys of the quality of environments in centres across the Caribbean show that in general, learning environments are not structured to best reflect how children learn at a very young age; caregiver qualification and adult-child ratios are inappropriate; and there is no standard curriculum guide in use. This paper considers it critical for children’s optimal development and sustainability of pre-primary education services, for countries not to lose sight of the quality equation.

Observations of the learning environments in Caribbean preschool and day care centres were undertaken as part of research studies on representative samples (in the Bahamas, Dominica, Grenada Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines) and on the whole sector (including Montserrat and Grenada) between 1998 and 2005²⁷. Broadly speaking, results were similar across the region in terms of relative strengths and weaknesses. Early childhood learning environments, especially those run by the low-end private operators, had insufficient space, materials (notably books),²⁸ furniture and a sub-standard programme structure. The data in Table 6.6 of the Annex illustrates the inadequate levels of spending on nursery education in Guyana.

Framework Policies of Guyana

Guyana officially launched their Nursery Education Programme in 1976, catering for all children from 3 years and 9 months to 5 years and 9 months. Though not compulsory, nursery education in Guyana is free (funded by the government) and there is additionally a two year “readiness programme” preparing children for formal education. This programme is designed to bridge the gap between the home and compulsory formal schooling which begins at age six for the primary level. Only a very small proportion of the children (447 out of a total of more than 37 000 children or about 1.3%) are enrolled in private ECE facilities.

A structured Nursery Education Training programme exists at the Teachers Training College and an under graduate degree programme in Nursery Education at the University of Guyana. Nursery education curricula, complete with cumulative record cards and entry profiles of children, have been developed. Furthermore there is a good awareness about the creation of child friendly classrooms (including child-

²⁶ In Guyana various developmental instruments such as the National Development Strategy, the Strategic Plan for Education, the EFA-FTI initiative, the PRSP, conditions for HIPC facilities recognise and highlight quality education as one of the national priorities. In St. Lucia, the Education Sector Development Plan 2000-2005 noted as a major priority “increasing access and quality of pre-school provision by working in partnership with the community and private sector”.

²⁷ Williams, S. Reports of National Quality Surveys in the Caribbean (Unpublished).

²⁸ Exposure to books and the process of being read to is considered crucial to the development of pre-literacy skills.

sized furniture), especially in terms of teacher-child, teacher-parent and child-child relationships and cooperative learning environments.

Framework Policies of Suriname

In Suriname, pre-primary education for children aged 4 and 5 is not compulsory. However, many pre-primary schools have been established over the years, with 38% of all pre-primary schools being fully funded by the Government. 57% of the pre-primary schools are owned and partly funded by the Protestant and Roman Catholic Church and 4% of the schools are funded and managed by private groups.²⁹ There is an official ECE curriculum, which was developed in 1999 and is being implemented by the Ministry of Education.

Framework Policies of St. Lucia

In most of the Eastern Caribbean States, including St. Lucia, the initiation of programming in pre-primary education has been reliant upon the initiative of concerned citizens and/or organisations such as UNICEF, the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) and religious groups. With the exception of Barbados, Grenada and St. Kitts-Nevis, this predominance of private/charitable initiative is still a dominant feature of ECE programming in the OECS. Interestingly, the earliest record of early childhood care and education programming in the region can be found in St. Kitts-Nevis where it predates the abolition of slavery³⁰ and was linked to the Church. Private individuals began to offer formal childcare services outside the home in 1818. At this time, some community members started small preschool care and education centres in their homes. In 1850, legislation was passed to provide infant schools in rural areas and by 1900, 112 infant schools had been established.

In most Eastern Caribbean countries today, the private sector (churches and community organisations) operates the large majority of the day care and preschool institutions. Governments play a fairly minor facilitating and coordination function. There is currently no State delivery of preschool services in St. Lucia where the philosophical approach centres on a tripartite partnership comprising the state, parents and community/private enterprise. Nevertheless, with the support of UNICEF, governments are examining national ECE policy frameworks. They have established national standards for the operation of ECE centres and are currently planning their implementation including staff training programmes, institution accreditation and a sub-regional curriculum development process.

3.4 Gaps in Policy Frameworks of Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

The Governments of Guyana, St. Lucia and Suriname have all acknowledged that providing early childhood education activities (including family and community interventions) is important to the learning foundation of their young citizens. However, the approaches used to deliver the services are very different, as previously mentioned. In Guyana and Suriname, the State ostensibly provides a comprehensive free service, while in St. Lucia there is only the private service for which you must pay. Policy intentions may all be noble, but do not necessarily translate well into practice. In this section, the effectiveness of these different policy frameworks and their shortcomings will be discussed (refer table 3.1), with a special focus on legal, budgetary, programmatic, social and political issues.

²⁹ MINOV, 2004.

³⁰ Submission by Early Childhood Unit – St. Kitts-Nevis.

Table 3.1: Gaps in the Policy Frameworks of Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

Guyana (Government owned ECE facilities)	Suriname (Government and Church owned ECE facilities)	St. Lucia (Privately owned ECE facilities)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited attention and funding for ECE teachers of interior areas. Limited awareness of ECE importance in marginalized groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of an approved policy and mandated national standards for ECE – the draft policy document was produced in 2003. Preponderance of small, undercapitalised operators - many unable to improve the standard of service provision, even if they wanted to do so.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited resources to offer teacher upgrading services through distance learning. Limited incentives being offered to teachers to go and teach in marginalized areas. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient numbers of trained ECE personnel in spite of on-going programmes. Some children are thus left in the hands of adults with little or no understanding of ECE.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of attractive payment packages and career opportunities for persons working in or interested to work in ECE. ECE not compulsory for children aged 3 and 4. Lack of clear mechanisms to plan, implement and monitor change. No mechanisms in place to enhance cooperation between Government, private sector and civil society to upscale access to ECE. No approved standards of care quality and weak or absent licensing system. Lack of clear budgetary allocations and planning processes to access and implement the funds. Lack of awareness and political will amongst high-level policy makers and politicians of importance of ECE. Far from optimum learning environment for the young child in ECE facilities. 		

ECE Policy Framework Gaps in Guyana

In Guyana, a picture of persistent programming emerges, albeit with diminishing returns on efforts. One of the key problems experienced in Guyana and Suriname is the under valuing of teachers in general, but particularly ECE teachers. This factor restricts any major interventions to bring about educational reform. Although hardship allowances are offered to teachers in the interior, there are no attractive payment packages and career opportunities available for persons working, or interested to work, in ECE.

Nevertheless, Guyana is the only country of the three able to effectively track the financial input into the sector by region and thereby accurately analyse areas of progress and challenges faced. Policy framework gaps are therefore less obvious. Guyana has also been quite successful in its efforts to scale up access to ECE facilities because of the effective partnerships with international organizations (mainly WB, IDB and EU) and resultant realisation of programme initiatives. Concurrently, the capacities of the Ministry of Education to plan, implement and monitor change was enhanced.

Measures that seem to have contributed most towards improving access to pre-primary education (especially in the interior district 9 - the Rupununi) can be summarised as:

- use of community-based techniques to provide nursery school education such as the “Where there is no nursery school” and “Hopeful Steps” programmes implemented by the Community Based Rehabilitation Programme in Region 9 in the 90s with funding form the EU and technical assistance from UNICEF,³¹

³¹ O’Toole et al., 1995; O’Toole and McConkey, 1995; O’Toole et al., 1996.

- improvement of teacher training programmes for nursery school in the interior, using distance and continued learning;³² and
- large scale up of ECE facilities in the 1990s, using loans and grants from international funding agencies.

ECE Policy Framework Gaps in Suriname

Significant reflection and planning of ECE policy on paper has not yet translated into universal access to pre-primary education in Suriname. Many policy options to improve access to pre-primary education for the disadvantaged interior districts have been drafted, but not yet implemented. This is, in part, a result of the interior war, which caused great economic and social disturbance in Suriname from 1985 until 1992. A large number of people (including trained teachers) migrated to French Guiana and the capital, Paramaribo. In addition, important infrastructure (including schools and health centres) was destroyed during the war.

The main reason for the lack of policy implementation in Suriname, however, is the limited structural capacity of the MOE and NGOs to plan, coordinate, implement and monitor educational change.³³ The Government of Suriname has designed a comprehensive Sector Plan to improve the quality of education³⁴. The total cost of this programme is US\$45 million, which will be mainly financed from the national budget, an IDB loan and grants from the Dutch Government. However, limited funds have been allocated for ECE and implementation of the Sector Plan has been very slow.

The creation of a strong cadre of trained and qualified teachers from the interior (as is the case in Guyana) is seriously jeopardised by the low quality of primary education in the interior. Graduates fail to meet the entry level criteria of the teachers training colleges in the city.

ECE Policy Framework Gaps in St. Lucia

The unwritten policy of the Government of St. Lucia is to facilitate a private sector led service and perform only a regulatory and limited training function. Evidence proves this policy option does not help reduce disparities in terms of access to and quality of ECE. In addition, the informal environment in which the ECE provision developed has fuelled political indecision regarding approval of the draft standards of quality care and enforcing a licensing system. In this context, efforts towards the creation of the Roving Caregivers programme and initiation of the ECE Resource Moving Bus are to be especially applauded. Efforts must continue to optimise free space in primary schools for community-based ECE programming, substantially reducing rent and thereby reducing fees.

Progress has been stymied in St. Lucia by political procrastination to build the resolve to explore financially feasible early childhood development programmes. The public fears that any improvement of the ECE sector will require financial input from their own pockets and the politicians are therefore cautious with any new policies. It is the most at risk population who end up suffering from both the government and public's lack of commitment. Skeptics must be convinced of the capacity of the State and its partners to conceive and implement financially feasible early childhood development programmes. ECE programme integration, community support and high quality services to disadvantaged children and their families will not be achieved without the will of both the public and the State.

³² This was done with technical and financial help from CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) in the GBET project (<http://www.sdn.org.gy/cpce/General/GBET.htm>).

³³ UNCT, 2006.

³⁴ MINOV, 2004. Suriname Education Plan.

Summary of ECE Policy Framework Gaps in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

ECE policy framework gaps that jeopardise the availability of, access to and delivery of ECE in all three countries are:

- 1) a lack of facilitation mechanisms to enhance cooperation between Government, private sector and civil society;
- 2) no approved standards of quality care and a weak or absent licensing system meaning that existing facilities are often far from the optimum learning environment for young children;
- 3) a lack of clear budgetary allocations and planning processes to access and implement the funds; and
- 4) a lack of awareness and political will amongst high-level policy makers and politicians of importance.

4. An Alternative ECE Policy Option

This section will draw from the lessons learned in previous sections, assess the results and introduce an alternative policy option to scale up the number of children in certain marginalised areas in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia attending pre-primary school.

4.1 Assessing Lessons Learned

An analysis of the policy options that exist in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia reveals that Guyana has been most successful in its efforts to scale up access to ECE, although disparities between regions still exist. Identifying the key factors that have helped Guyana improve access to ECE for some of the most disadvantaged regions might possibly help other countries in their efforts. Similarly, the challenges still faced by Suriname and St. Lucia might also be of use.

Lessons from Guyana and Suriname

The following key factors that have helped Guyana and Suriname (to a lesser extent) ensure access to pre-primary education in some of the most disadvantaged regions might help the other countries in their efforts:

- establishing Community-based initiatives to create a demand for ECE;
- strengthening the capacity of the MOE to plan for change, using disaggregated data;
- creating systems to structurally integrate new techniques and lessons learned into key educational institutions (such as teacher training colleges and curriculum development units);
- providing a package of incentives and/or career opportunities for teachers to ensure they are and feel valued and appreciated; and
- involving the parents so that quality learning continues in the home.

Challenges for Suriname

The main challenge in Suriname would be strengthening the limited capacities of the MOE to successfully plan and implement the programme.

Challenges for St. Lucia

In St. Lucia, teachers are already employees of the MOE so the transition from primary to the ECE sector, should not be difficult. A marketing strategy would require careful crafting to ensure that recipient families do not perceive the new model of service as inferior to the existing. A community-based communications strategy would underpin the strategy, informing parents how quality services can

greatly affect opportunities in life. Additionally the free space in primary schools could be offered at no cost to private-sponsored services which meet the required standards and cater to under-served communities. Private enterprises could be encouraged (through tax reductions for example) to sponsor such services and to view such a subsidised service as a part of their social responsibility.

Important lessons learned pertaining to the scaling up of access to quality pre-primary education for Guyana and Suriname can be summarised in the following three main points:

- Education change can start with community-based initiatives,³⁵ which can help create a demand for pre-primary education and will (when done properly) enhance the capacity of the community members to put simple pre-primary facilities in place in remote locations with very limited outside funding and with optimum use of local human and natural resources.
- Key in scaling up access to ECE is a strong planning division of the Ministry of Education (MOE), which, supported by a comprehensive system to gather, analyse and disseminate educational data should be able to write and implement comprehensive project proposals. These proposals can then in turn be submitted for funding by international funding agencies.
- New techniques for providing ECE in disadvantaged areas should be structurally integrated into the educational system from the very start. Techniques designed and implemented for the provision of quality pre-primary education should be integrated, most importantly, into teacher training colleges, the departments that deal with curriculum development, monitoring and inspection and the production of educational resource materials.

Developing possible Alternative ECE Policy Options

Developing viable alternative ECE policies is the aim of this paper. To ensure the feasibility of any ECE policy options considered, it is imperative to ask why children from certain marginalized areas in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia are not attending pre-primary school. The main reasons in all three countries would seem to be:

- a lack of awareness of parents/carers of the importance of pre-primary education and
- the high cost, either in cash (fees, materials and books), time or effort (long distances)
- for both the parent/carer and the provider/teacher.

A successful policy option to realistically scale up access to quality pre-primary education for these disadvantaged children should therefore consider the following criteria:

- 1) affordability – both from the point of the parent/carer and the Government;
- 2) convenience and safety – the venue must be close to home and offer a safe environment;
- 3) parental participation – the option should actively involve parents in order to create demand from family/community level and thus build their lobbying capacity.

Any feasible alternative ECE policy option to provide quality, universal pre-primary education for the countries of Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia should be orientated around the above criteria. Additionally, the lessons learned from past efforts in Guyana and Suriname to scale up access to ECE

³⁵ O'Toole and McConkey (1995) suggest that the model of mobilising communities can be duplicated elsewhere under similar conditions, given that the promoters of the innovation have a belief in the potential of the people they are serving, the active participation of the recipients of development is achieved at all phases of the development process, the community has a desire for change and the developers and implementers of the programme are willing and capable to listen to people who may not be articulate.

should be considered along with the analysis concerning access disparities from both the demand and supply sides.

4.2 Alternative ECE Policy Option: ‘Three Hours a Week’

This alternative policy option focuses on providing three hours of quality pre-primary education every week and targeting all children of pre-primary school age that are not presently attending any form of pre-primary education. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to this as the ‘Three Hours a Week’ model.

In this model, which has proved successful in Venezuela and Cuba under the name ‘Educate Your Child,’³⁶ a home and community-based programme of instruction is directed to all children from 0-6 years of age who are not enrolled in institutional programmes. It focuses on the family as the unit of learning and is community-based. The programme uses two modalities:

- 1) Individual attention at home focusing on the youngest children; and
- 2) Sessions with small groups of children and their parents in the community facilitated by professional, skilled and trained pre-school teachers.

Zimmerman (2005) gives numerous examples of small, community-based initiatives in various parts of the world, often from underprivileged urban, rural or even more remote locations. One of the observations that he makes in his book “Small ideas that work” is that programmes for education or stimulation of young children should not be narrowly focused on the child alone or more broadly focused on community development. Rather they should be focused on the child, the parents and, especially, the family.

The impact of this short weekly session on the development of a young child might be questioned, but recent studies, such as the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project in the UK³⁷ have shown that any pre-school experience, compared to none, substantially enhances all-round development in children.

The EPPE study also concluded that full-time attendance led to no better gains for children than part-time and that disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences, especially when they are with a mixture of children from different social backgrounds. High quality pre-schooling, the study concluded, is related to improved intellectual and social/behaviour development for children. Higher qualified staff means students make better progress. For all children, the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. What parents do is more important than who parents are.

Key Elements of the ‘Three Hours a Week’ programme

- The target group – all pre-primary aged children not attending any form of pre-primary education.
- The programme duration – three hours per week of high quality education would be provided to the target group for a minimum of three hours per week. The long-term goal would be to provide more than three hours of quality learning but the minimum three hours offers a good start and should encourage faster results in terms of scaled up access.

³⁶ Centro de Referencia Latino Americano Para La Educacion Preescolar Havana, 1999.

³⁷ Sylva et al, 2004, The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project: Findings from the early primary years.

- The quality of the teacher/facilitator – the most important condition to ensure quality learning is that the teacher/facilitator must be a quality teacher and must feel rewarded, valued and motivated. Payment may be in cash or kind, or through the provision of a package of incentives and/or career opportunities. Provisions may need to be put in place to transport the teacher around (in the Venezuelan highlands the teacher moves around on a donkey).
- Parent and Community Participation – parents and other community members are encouraged to join in and learn.
- No need for the construction of a building – learning can, if need be, take place under a tree, in a community centre or a church or, if available, in free space in a primary school. If the activity takes place in an open public manner, it might just inspire other people to follow suit.³⁸ A building might, however, be an option to consider for the longer term.
- No expensive learning aids required – there is no urgent need to spend extravagant amounts on learning aids, as in principle, the facilitator will focus on the use of locally available materials to stimulate children.

4.3 Analysis of ‘Three Hours a Week’

The ‘Three Hours a Week’ option addresses both supply and demand perspectives and constraints from all three countries of the study. For Guyana and Suriname, it addresses the supply constraints of the low density of pre-primary facilities and the limited supply of qualified teachers who are willing to work in challenging circumstances. As for St. Lucia, it addresses the constraint of limited affordable facilities available for vulnerable groups (as all ECE facilities are privately owned and economic forces determine their spread and density).

On the demand side, this policy option deals with the limited demand for quality pre-primary education by involving the parents in the education of their child. In St. Lucia it addresses the demand issue of the high cost of private ECE facilities and limited opportunities for parents to send their child to a subsidised facility. As this option requires no expensive pre-primary education facilities, costs will be significantly reduced.

For an ex-ante analysis of the possible effects and impact of this policy option refer below to table 4.1. The results in the table reveal that for all three countries, the ‘Three Hours a Week’ policy option would be viable, cost effective and relatively easy to implement.

Implementation of this model (without building) would cost an estimated US\$226 per child per year in Guyana, US\$320 in Suriname and approximately US\$700 in St. Lucia, which is very close to the annual cost per child of US\$713 that is spent at present, as calculated by Renard (2001). Alternate policy options involving the construction of a building would cost a minimum of US\$790 per child per year in Guyana and US\$1110 in Suriname. The US\$226 per child per year would mean that the Government of Guyana would need to increase the spending in US\$ per year per child for the most disadvantaged regions 1, 8 and 9 from US\$73 (Table 2.4) to US\$226 (increase of over 300%), from US\$32 to US\$226 (increase of over 700%) and from US\$115 to US\$226 (increase of almost 200%) respectively. Although the investment of US\$1110 per child per year in Suriname seems very high, it is still half of the average annual cost for a child in pre-school of US\$2140 as estimated by Menke (2000).

³⁸ Zimmerman, 2005.

4.4 Conclusion

‘Three Hours a Week’ is a targeted and cost-effective Early Childhood Education policy option that could help scale up access to quality pre-primary education, especially in the disadvantaged and under-served regions and districts of Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia. It is a viable option because it deals with the supply and demand perspectives and constraints of these countries and has been focused around criteria established after careful analysis of the relevant available data for these countries. Successful implementation of the ‘Three Hours a Week’ option would, as mentioned, depend on the quality of the teacher/facilitator employed, their being valued and the involvement of families.

The strength of this rather simple alternative policy option is that the programming is guided by the principle of social justice – prioritising those who need the service most. The model is flexible – it can be implemented on a large scale and/or can effectively co-exist alongside existing models. It can be adjusted to differing socio-cultural contexts in each of the three countries and because it utilises available resources, it is possible to implement the model within recognised resource constraints. ‘Three Hours a Week’ would not, of course, replace the provision of full-time pre-primary education, but offers a simple and affordable policy option to initiate the process of scaling up access to quality pre-primary education for disadvantaged children in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia.

Table 4.1: Assessment of the Three Hours a Week Policy

	Government owned ECE facilities (e.g. Guyana)	Government and Church owned ECE facilities (e.g. Suriname)	Privately owned ECE facilities (e.g. St. Lucia)
Legal considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special allowances and provisions for the high-quality teacher might require a legal assessment of contracts offered to trained and qualified teachers working in remote and difficult circumstances. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surplus primary school teachers re-trained to become highly-qualified, itinerant ECE teachers to work in under-served communities must be accorded benefits and/or career opportunities.
Budgetary considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A highly skilled ECE teacher to serve 3 communities (or 75 children) in the interior would cost approx. US\$17 000 per year or US\$226 per child/year.³⁹ (Table 6.9). The construction of a school to serve 100 children would cost US\$79 000 or US\$790 per child/year (Table 6.8). Finance might be possible through loan/grant packages of the EFA/FTI, the IDB or WB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A highly-skilled teacher to serve 3 communities (or 75 children) in the interior would cost approx. US\$24 000 per year or US\$320 per child/year.⁴⁰ (Table 6.9) The construction of a school to serve 100 children would cost US\$110 000 or US\$1110 per child/year (Table 6.8). Finance might be possible through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> renegotiating the allocation of unspent donor funds for implementation of the sector plans or a child-friendly budget analysis of the budget of MOE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A highly skilled teacher to serve 4 communities (or 100 children), would cost US\$700 per child per year.⁴¹ This is close to the annual cost for a child in pre-school of US\$713 (01)⁴². Teachers are currently on the state pay roll and the new Government, in accordance with the political commitment, would ensure that no teachers are retrenched, but are deployed to areas of need.

³⁹ Salary: US\$4,000; provision of hard-ship allowances: US\$1,000 a year; transportation and housing: US\$12,000 a year. At present, the Government of Guyana spends on average US\$164 per child per year (refer table 2.4).

⁴⁰ Salary: US\$4,000; provision of hard-ship allowances: US\$2,000 a year; transportation and housing: US\$18,000 a year.

⁴¹ According to the prevailing teacher salary scale.

<p>Institutional considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Hinterland Education of the MOE or the Regional Departments of the Ministry of Education to be involved. • The Teacher Training College will need to be involved and effective coaching structures put in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious challenges can be expected as the support structures in the interior (MOE) are very limited. • A new system might be needed involving the MOE, NGOs, the Ministry of Regional Development and the private sector. • Coaching for teachers could be provided by one of the 3 teacher training colleges and/or the University of Suriname 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOE will need to establish the Council on Early Childhood Education (provided for under the Education Act 1999) to coordinate with private sector. • New teacher capacity building could be undertaken by the Sir Arthur Lewis State College.
<p>Programmatic considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GOG has a well developed dept. for hinterland education, embedded in the division of planning. • Education management in Guyana is decentralized, giving considerable financial and programmatic responsibility to each region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational management is not decentralized and the general capacity to plan and implement educational change is very limited. • The creation of partnerships will be essential for The Ministry of Regional Development in each District to work with the numerous NGOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Childhood Education (Preschools) Unit of the MOE should assume supervision of this programme.

⁴² Renard, 2001.

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6. Annex

Table 6.1: Average Enrolment and Attendance by Education District and Sex

Education District	No. of Schools/Classes	No. of trained teachers	Average enrolment			Average Attendance			Percentage Average attendance		
			M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1	12	12	293	299	592	166	187	353	57	63	60
2	50	82	1 151	1 147	2 298	836	825	1 661	73	72	72
3	62	141	2 287	2 182	4 469	1733	1 653	3 386	76	76	76
4	67	243	3 444	3 280	6 724	2 426	2 330	4 756	70	71	71
G'town	36	212	2 966	2 968	5 934	2 125	2 235	4 360	72	75	73
5	35	68	1 353	1 290	2 643	988	956	1 944	73	74	74
6	68	136	3 385	3 190	6 575	2 342	2 223	4 565	69	70	69
7	27	24	375	343	718	254	237	491	68	69	68
8	15	3	130	138	268	85	91	176	65	66	66
9	29	5	376	395	771	227	327	554	60	83	72
10	25	84	981	917	1 898	720	698	1 418	73	76	75
Total	426	1010	16 741	16 149	32 890	1 902	11 989	23 891	71%	74%	73%

Table 6.2: Calculation of Gross Enrolment Ratios in Guyana

Region	Total enrolment ⁴³	Total number of 3 and 4 year olds ⁴⁴	Gross Enrolment Ratio
1	592	1 771	33%
2	2 298	2 447	94%
3	4 469	4 819	93%
4	12 658	13 941	91%
5	2 643	2 749	96%
6	6 575	6 269	105%
7	718	960	75%
8	268	639	42%
9	771	1 357	57%
10	1 898	2 195	86%
Total	32 890	37 147	89%

Table 6.3: Gross Enrolment Ratios - For St. Lucia and the OECS

	SVG	ANG	MONT	GRE	ANT	BVI	SKN	SLU	DOM
Gross Enrolment Ratio – Pre school (total)	89	79	111	95	61	92	81	57	84
Gross Enrolment Ratio Pre School – (Boys)	89	79	n.a	88	62	87	78	56	84
Gross Enrolment Ration Pre School – (Girls)	88	80	n.a	102	60	96	84	57	83

⁴³ MOE, Statistical Digest 2002/2003.

⁴⁴ Guyana Bureau of Statistics, Census Report 2002.

Table 6.4: Comparison of policy frameworks in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

	Government owned ECE facilities (e.g. Guyana)	Government and Church owned ECE facilities (e.g. Suriname)	Privately owned ECE facilities (e.g. St. Lucia)
Existing policy framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free school uniforms for needy children Nutritious snacks served by the ECE facility at mid-morning Programme Planning for nursery education and requisite teacher training in the Education Strategic Plan Child sized furniture to be provided The delivery of the nursery programme in separate primary schools, or, where it is not feasible, in primary schools. (This strategy works favourably for children who have to be accompanied to school and can be supervised by older siblings) The introduction of private nursery schools with regulations to adhere to the government's programming.⁴⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards of care and quality (approved but not implemented) Legislative amendments prepared to mainstream ECD and provide regulatory framework <p>Proposed Policies, not yet implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed adjustment and upgrading of existing ECE curricula (next 5 years). Proposed organization of in-service training options for teachers (next 10 years) Intention to spend at least 1% of total GDP on ECD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Education Act (1999) provides for the regulation of ECE services within the private sector. Standards of care and education drafted and endorsed through public consultation, 2002. Draft ECD policy completed. Quality Assessment Survey of ECE Care and Development Centres to inform ongoing teacher training programme. Monitoring of ECE Centres by the State and assistance to enable cluster groups to work collectively towards improving operations as per National Standards. Periodic training programmes for ECE personnel, including training for kindergarten to grade 2 teachers to support smooth transition from ECE to primary levels. Establishment of Associate Degree in ECE at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College. Re-furnished bus to serve as a mobile resource centres catering to children in poor, under-served communities.
Assessment of efforts to upscale access to ECE facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hardship allowances for teachers working in marginalized areas Use of innovative community-based ECE programmes such as the 'Where there is no demand, Partnerships with international organizations (WB, IMF) to upscale access in combination with the existing capacity of the MOE to plan for change. Establishment of programmes providing upgrading of ECE teachers through distance learning for remote areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of community based organizations that demand quality pre-primary education. The Government of Suriname has designed a comprehensive Sector Plan to improve the quality of education⁴⁶. The total cost of this programme is US\$45 million, which will be financed from the national budget (33%), an IDB loan (28%) grants from the Dutch Government (33%), UNICEF (4%) and the Flemish Government (2%). However, limited funds have been allocated for ECE and implementation of the plans has been very slow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanction the use of spare space in primary schools for use of privately operated preschools Activate a re-furnished bus to serve as a mobile resource centres catering to children in poor, under-served communities. Implement an innovative home visiting programme – Roving Care Givers Programme to supplement work at the ECE level with marginalized families. Refurbish and expand ECE centres through State assistance provided by the Poverty Reduction Fund

⁴⁵ It is to be noted that according to the Digest of Educational Statistics of Guyana (MOE 2002-2003), there are 449 children enrolled in 7 private schools with an average attendance of 89% in the Georgetown, the capital.

⁴⁶ MINOV, 2004. Suriname Education Plan.

Table 6.5: Estimated Pre-Primary Gross Enrolment Ratios by district and sex, Suriname

Source: ABS, statistical yearbook 2004 and ABS, census report 2005

District	Children in pre-primary 2004/2005 ⁴⁷			Children enrolled in ECE ⁴⁸	Estimated total number of 4 and 5 year olds 2005 ⁴⁹			Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) (ABS data)			Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) ⁵⁰
	boys	girls	total		boys	girls	total	boys	girls	total	
Paramaribo	4 149	3 950	8 099		4 675	4 501	9 176	89%	88%	88%	
Wanica	1 518	1 432	2 950		1 729	1 682	3 411	88%	85%	86%	
Nickerie	609	545	1 154		699	637	1 336	87%	86%	86%	
Coroné	80	63	143		66	57	123	121%	111%	116%	
Saramacca	310	287	597		332	315	647	93%	91%	92%	
Commewijne	432	428	860		465	444	909	93%	96%	95%	
Marowijne	473	433	906	692	487	486	973	97%	89%	93%	71%
Para	362	378	740		462	468	931	78%	81%	80%	
Brokopondo	342	372	714	588	397	399	796	86%	93%	90%	74%
Sipaliwini	385	395	780	944	1 053	1 043	2 097	37%	38%	37%	45%
Average							87%	86%	86%		

⁴⁷ source: ABS, Statistical Yearbook, 2004.

⁴⁸ source: MOE, Department of Hinterland Education..

⁴⁹ source: ABS, census report 2005.

⁵⁰ MOE data, source: Department of Hint. Education.

Table 6.6: Levels of spending on nursery education, by region in Guyana

Region	Level	Total Budget GDOL	Total (US\$)	% of total expenditure	Grand total per region on education GDOL	% of total expenditure on nursery education	% of 3 & 4 year olds by region	Total no. of 3 & 4 year olds per region	Cost US\$ per child	Teacher-pupil ratio	Region
1	Nursery	25 920 526	\$129 603	0.36%		2.13%	4.77%	1 771	\$73	1:63	1
	Primary	187 448 203	\$937 241	2.63%							
2	Secondary	56 512 345	\$282 562	0.79%	269 881 074						
	Nursery	77 643 302	\$388 217	1.09%		6.37%	6.59%	2 447	\$159	1:27	2
3	Primary	243 012 621	\$1 215 063	3.41%	613 724 639						
	Secondary	293 068 716	\$1 465 344	4.11%		12.68%	12.97%	4 819	\$160	1:32	3
4	Nursery	154 443 436	\$772 217	2.17%	774 180 107						
	Primary	378 291 820	\$1 891 459	5.31%		45.66%	37.53%	13 941	\$96	1:28	4
GT	Secondary	241 444 851	\$1 207 224	3.39%	1 046 068 846						GT
	Nursery	268 513 389	\$1 342 567	3.77%							
5	Primary	516 091 717	\$2 580 459	7.25%	1 980 058 423						
	Secondary	261 463 740	\$1 307 319	3.67%		6.36%	7.40%	2 749	\$141	1:41	5
6	Nursery	287 779 065	\$1 438 895	4.04%	443 041 783						
	Primary	580 467 799	\$2 902 339	8.15%		12.61%	16.88%	6 269	\$123	1:47	6
7	Secondary	1 111 811 559	\$5 559 058	15.61%	864 193 430						
	Nursery	77 477 090	\$387 385	1.09%		1.50%	2.58%	960	\$95	1:36	7
8	Primary	229 585 825	\$1 147 929	3.22%	191 202 219						
	Secondary	135 978 868	\$679 894	1.91%		0.33%	1.72%	639	\$32	1:118	8
9	Nursery	153 622 835	\$768 114	2.16%	74 711 865						
	Primary	391 051 140	\$1 955 256	5.49%		2.57%	3.65%	1 357	\$115	1:160	9
10	Secondary	319 519 455	\$1 597 597	4.49%	192 215 701						
	Nursery	18 321 760	\$91 609	0.26%	672 967 643						
10	Primary	103 045 046	\$515 225	1.45%	7 122 245 730						
	Secondary	69 835 413	\$349 177	0.98%		100.00%	100.00%	37 147	\$164	1:57	10
10	Nursery	4 078 118	\$20 391	0.06%							
	Primary	35 332 993	\$176 665	0.50%							
10	Secondary	35 300 754	\$176 504	0.50%							
	Nursery	31 267 674	\$156 338	0.44%							
10	Primary	111 552 485	\$557 762	1.57%							
	Secondary	49 395 542	\$246 978	0.69%							
10	Nursery	119 161 473	\$595 807	1.67%							
	Primary	309 640 155	\$1 548 201	4.35%							
10	Secondary	244 166 015	\$1 220 830	3.43%							
			\$35 611 229								

Table 6.7: Expenditure on Nursery Education as % of total expenditure – Guyana

	Total GY\$	Total US\$	percentage
Nursery	1 218 228 668	\$6 091 143	17.1%
Primary	3 085 519 804	\$15 427 599	43.3%
Secondary	2 818 497 258	\$14 092 486	39.6%
	7 122 245 730	\$35 611 229	100.0%

Table 6.8: Estimated cost (US\$ per child) of a pre-primary facility in Guyana, Suriname and St. Lucia

	Guyana	Suriname	St. Lucia
	cost in US\$ per child	cost US\$ per child	cost US\$ per child
Construction and Equipment			
number of children targeted	100	100	100
construction cost (materials, labour, transportation) (4 classrooms, 100 children)	\$45 000	\$75 000	
equipment school	\$30 000	\$30 000	
transportation equipment school	\$4 000	\$6 000	
Total	\$79 000	\$111 000	
Estimated total cost in US\$ per child	\$790	\$1 110	
	Guyana	Suriname	St. Lucia
	cost in US\$ per child	cost in US\$ per child	cost in US\$ per child
Management, Administration and Maintenance			
number of children targeted	100	100	
cost of 1 nursery head teacher for 1 year	\$3 600	\$3 622	
Cost of 3 trained nursery teachers for 1 year	\$7 200	\$9 124	
cost of hardship allowances 1 head teacher and three nursery teachers	\$504	\$4 051	
cost of maintenance and supplies for school for 1 year	\$40 000	\$40 000	
transportation cost materials	\$4 000	\$6 000	
Total	\$55 304	\$62 797	
Estimated total cost in US\$ per child	\$553	\$628	

Table 6.9: Cost of a trained ECE teacher in the interior of Guyana and Suriname

	Approx. salary in US\$ per month	Total per month	Total per year	Allowances for interior (US\$/mth)	Total allowances per year (US\$)
Suriname					
Nursery teacher – headmistress – trained	\$302	\$302	\$3 622	\$93	\$1121
Nursery teacher – ordinary teacher – trained	\$253	\$253	\$3 041	\$81	\$976
Guyana					
Nursery teacher – headmistress - trained	\$300	\$300	\$ 600	\$11	\$126
Nursery teacher - ordinary teacher - trained	\$200	\$200	\$2 400	\$11	\$126

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