

Myanmar Policy for Early Childhood Care and Development

Policy Brief

Early Childhood Care and Development is a high-priority national goal of Myanmar

Multisectoral collaboration for ECCD means that all activities for education, health, nutrition, sanitation and protection are designed for the holistic development of children from pre-pregnancy to 8 years of age.



Myanmar must invest in the holistic development of young children

Many leading economists point out that investment in ECCD is the most cost-effective way for governments to invest in national development because it brings great benefits for the entire society. Investment in ECCD yields a higher rate of return on investment and greater benefits for children and parents than any other form of social or economic investment.

(Rand, 2008)

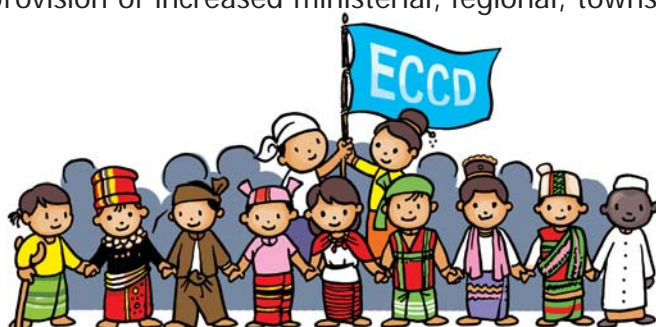
Vargas-Barón also pointed in 2005 that in countries where a multisectoral coordination approach is used to invest in children, they and their parents gain the greatest benefit.

Leading provisions of the ECCD policy

All ECCD sectors, such as education, health, nutrition, environmental sanitation and child rights and protection will join together to form an Early Childhood Care and Development system to provide comprehensive, effective and sustainable services for the holistic development of young children.

The ECCD Policy of Myanmar promotes the basic rights of children – rights to survive and develop well, rights to good health, nutrition, care and education, protection rights, and participation rights, all of which are highlighted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

At the national level, the Government will establish an ECCD system that involves all relevant ministries and institutions of civil society and the private sector in the provision of high-quality ECCD services and activities. The Policy calls for the expansion of investment in ECCD through the provision of increased ministerial, regional, township and community budgets for ECCD services and activities.



The Policy underlines the importance of achieving high-quality services through improving and expanding pre- and in-service training. The ECCD Policy will be fully accountable through ensuring services are monitored and evaluated. The results will

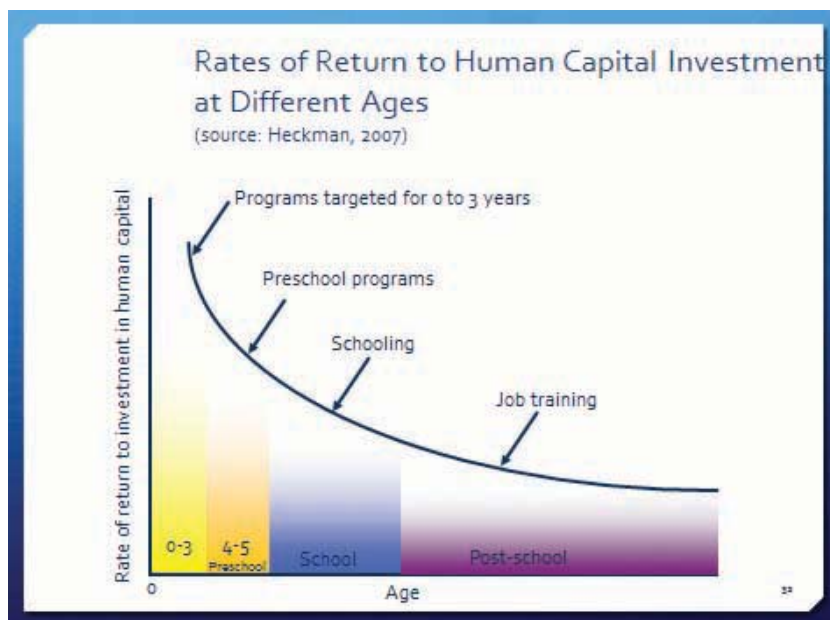
be used for future planning. Special emphasis is given to ensuring quality, culturally appropriate and accessible ECCD services to be provided in ethnic minority regions using their languages. The Policy also focuses on peace education, conflict prevention and emergency preparedness for young children, their parents and their ECCD services.

Economic return of investment in ECCD

Research evidence from many countries reveal that ECCD provides a very high return on investment ranging from \$3 to \$17 US dollars for every \$1 invested in ECCD. (Heckman, 2006)

Dr. James Heckman, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2000, studied the economic rate of return on investment of ECCD with investments in other areas. He found that investment in children from 0 to 3 years of age yields the highest return, followed by preschool education for older children.

Because investment in ECCD is very important, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is planning by 2020 to devote at least 28% of its total budget to ECCD services. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and other related ministries are also planning to use greater proportions of their budgets for ECCD services.



Benefits of investment in ECCD and Child Protection activities

The President of The Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein on 25th June 2012 stated, “Based on requirements of multiple classes and sectors including social protection projects for children, the vulnerable, the aged, women and the disabled, we must adopt a Myanmar Social Protection System.”

Investment in ECCD can help children to be healthy from birth and ECCD services will progressively overcome problems relating to malnutrition and developmental delays. Through a new Early Childhood Intervention system covering the whole country, early signs of malnutrition, developmental delays and disability in children will be detected and necessary services provided. Thus, social protection activities will be carried out in a timely manner.

Fulfilling the rights of disabled children and those who need special protection, reintegrating them with their families, providing family-based and community-based care service to children rather than placing them in institutional care will help to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The provision of nurturing early childhood intervention services for children from birth to 5 years of age through home visits will greatly reduce expensive costs for health care, rehabilitation and special education.

Therefore, investment in ECCD services for children from birth to 8 years of age forms the foundation of the President's Myanmar Social Protection System.

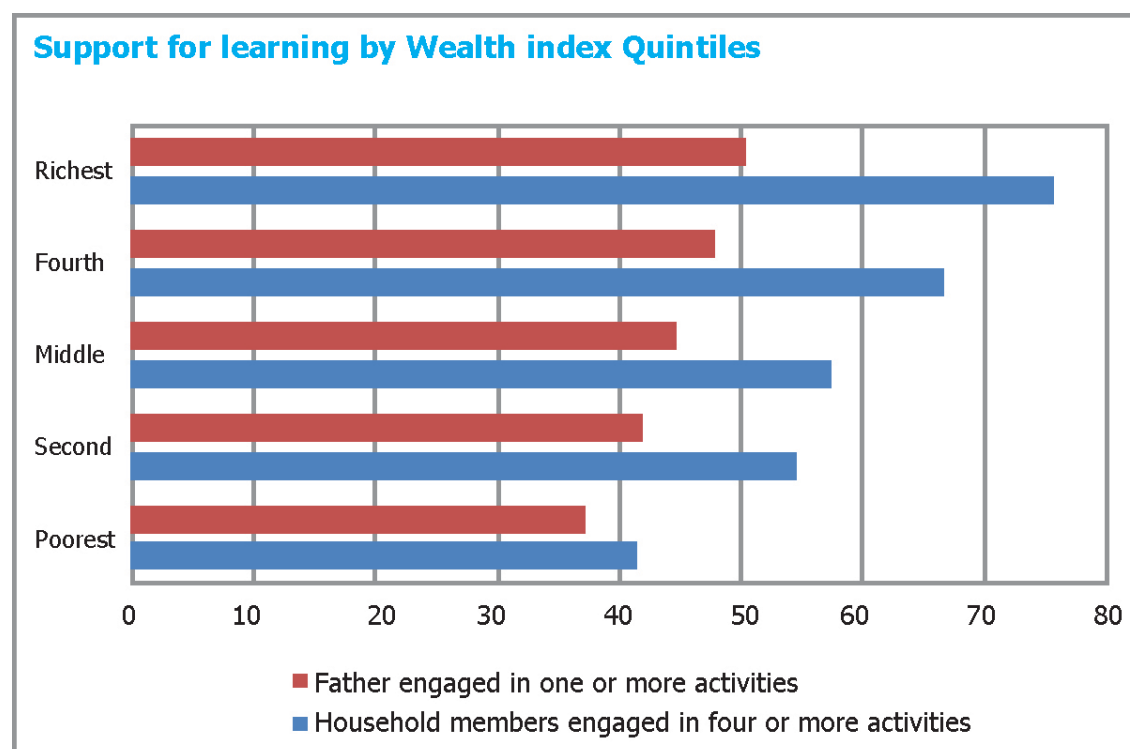
From investment in ECCD to the realization of human rights

“Child rights are human rights”.

That child rights are human rights is enshrined in the Convention on Human Rights. CRC committees have been formed at regional/state and township levels throughout the country, and child protection activities are being carried out. Regional or state, district, township and community ECCD Committees will work with CRC committees wherever they have been established.

ECCD services will provide parent education and support

Safe and warm family interactions with stimulating learning environment are essential for good child development. Quality ECCD activities contribute to ensuring good brain development in children during the critically important 0 to 3 year old period when children’s brains grow the fastest.



Source: MICS 2009- 2010

In the graph above, a comparison is presented of family support between the poorest and the richest families. Even in the richest family, family support meets only 75.70% of children’s needs, indicating that all families need parent education and support services to ensure their infants and toddlers develop well. Research has shown that the most vulnerable children and those from families living in poverty benefit the most from ECCD services.

ECCD Policy Provisions

To achieve the aims and objectives of the ECCD Policy, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in collaboration with the MoH, MoE and other relevant Ministries will help to implement the following policy strategies:

1. Provision of necessary services before and during pregnancy, delivery and after delivery.
2. Provision of critically important ECCD services for children from birth to 3 years of age, including parent education and support, Mother Circles and child development activities.
3. Assist with the development and implementation of the early childhood intervention system for children with developmental delays, malnutrition, chronic illnesses and disabilities.
4. Implementation of preschool activities for children from 3 to 4 years of age, including technical support for the improvement and extension of the nation's community-based and home-based ECCD activities.
5. Provision of protection services for children from birth to 8 years of age who need special protection and timely intervention to ensure their rights are observed.
6. Provision of quality protection and ECCD services for children in conflict situations and natural disasters, refugee camps, living in places with displaced persons and children affected by abuse, neglect or disease.
7. Provision of pre-service and in-service training for ECCD related professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers.
8. Establishment of an accountable and quality ECCD database and information system.
9. Use of communication for development activities to expand public knowledge about and support for the ECCD Policy and ECCD services.
10. Establish an ECCD system that features the full collaboration of all relevant ministries, levels of government, and institutions of civil society and the private sector.

Policy Development Process

To develop the ECCD policy, MoSWRR, the lead ministry for ECCD, established a Multisectoral ECCD Steering Committee and Task Force. They decided to conduct a highly participatory planning process in order to ensure all major stakeholders, including parents and ethnic minority groups, were involved in the preparation of the Policy.

They first commissioned an extensive Situation Analysis regarding the needs of young children and their parents, ECCD services and relevant sectoral and multisectoral policies. Consultation workshops were also held in 3 state and regions, 2 cities, 6 townships and Nay Pyi Taw, in order to learn about the needs, requests and recommendations of the public regarding the ECCD Policy. In addition, high-level interviews were conducted to secure views and suggestions from national leaders.

Based on this information from stakeholders, a draft ECCD Policy was prepared. The Task Force and Steering Committee reviewed the draft carefully four times, and it has been revised and prepared for adoption.

Policy Guideline

"For the holistic development of the child, health care of mother during pregnancy is important and hygienic family environment is also essential. Only then will children be born healthy, both physically and mentally strong, well-nourished and contributing towards an improved national health standard. A stimulating environment, caring parents, strong and supportive family members and community, sustainable economic conditions and the preparation of children to be ready for school, are also necessary conditions. Therefore, in developing the ECCD policy, different periods such as before and during pregnancy, the early period after birth, from birth to 3 years of age, from 3 to 5 years of age (pre-school years), from 5 to 8 years of age and the transition from home to school, should be covered, and multiple sectors should be involved actively in the development of this ECCD policy."

(From the speech of the Director General of the Department of Social Welfare, MoSWRR at the Third Steering Committee Meeting for ECCD policy development on 11 October 2012 at Nay Pyi Taw)