



Kingdom of Cambodia
Nation – Religion – King

ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA

NATIONAL POLICY

ON

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

During early childhood, from the conception to age 6, children experience physical and emotional development, which is their fundamental need. This development always takes place in a simultaneous and inter-connected fashion.

Rapid brain development occurs during the early years of life. The experience showed that in the early years, young children require care, support from their families and society so that they can have access to various services such as nutrition, health care, learning opportunities, protection from risks etc. Such work can be successfully undertaken when children and their families are supported by a policy and sufficient investment.

The Royal Government of Cambodia recognizes the importance of early childhood care and development (ECCD), the value for the future of the children who will be pillars of the country. Early childhood care and development is a priority and indispensable element of Education for All (EFA) and Poverty Alleviation Strategy of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

According to the population census conducted in 2008, the total population of Cambodia was 13.4 million, 51.36% of them were women. About 19.5% of the population live in the urban areas and the remaining 80.5% live in the rural areas. The poverty rate was reduced from 47% in 1993 to 34.7% in 2004. Although a primary estimated poverty rate would further decrease to 30.1% in 2007, the poverty in rural areas remain high. The Royal Government of Cambodia has tried to improve the welfare of the people, in particular the poor, women and children. As a result, infant mortality rate declined from 95 to only 66 per 1,000 live births in 2005, while mortality rate among children under 5 decreased to 83 per 1,000 live births in 2005. But, the maternal mortality rate is still high at 472 per 100,000 live births. In 2005, more than 69% of pregnant women were provided with health care by health practitioners at least once before birth delivery.

There is growing evidence that children who experience malnutrition, underweight and unhealthiness are less likely to perform well at schooling. Early childhood enrolment rate increased from 10.8% in 2005 to 15.6% in 2008. Based on a number of surveys, children who experience preschools

usually start their primary education at the age of 6 and the majority of them manage to complete their primary levels without repetition and school dropout.

The constitution, laws and policies of the Royal Government of Cambodia highlights the attention on children care and education of children. Article 48 of the constitution, for instance, states “The State shall protect the rights of the children as stipulated in the Convention on Children, in particular, the rights to life, education, protection during wartime, and from economic or sexual exploitation. The State shall protect children from acts that are injurious to their educational opportunities, health or welfare.”

In order to reach the goal and strategies of the early childhood care and development, monitoring system for progressive evaluation of policy implementation is needed.

Chapter 1

VISION

I. Vision

All Cambodian children, from conception to aged under six, especially disadvantaged, vulnerable and poor children, shall be provided with care and development services, in line with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

II. Goal and Objectives

1. To ensure that all women are provided with care, health education services and nutrition during pregnancy;
2. To ensure that all children have their births registered, are provided with regular care and health checkup, have access to adequate immunization and nutrition and early learning;
3. To ensure school readiness of all Cambodian children to start grade 1 at age six;
4. To ensure that there will be technical staff, care givers, parents and guardians with appropriate knowledge on early childhood care and development;
5. To ensure that all relevant ministries/institutions work together closely to address the issues concerning early childhood care and development; and
6. To ensure that children from birth to schooling age shall enjoy physical, cognitive, mental and emotional development at both home and centers, providing quality and sustainable health services, nutrition and education.

Chapter 2

STRATEGIES

Major strategies to realize above goal and objectives are as followings:

1. Prepare legal framework, standards and mechanisms to effectively support and implement the policy, by identifying cooperation and duties of main stakeholders;
2. Improve existing or newly-established monitoring and evaluation system with participation from ministries/institutions, communities