Association for the Development of Education in Africa

Biennale on Education in Africa
(Libreville, Gabon, March 27-31, 2006)

Parallel Session C-5
Coordination and
Sustainability of Integrated
ECD Provision

Integration: Actions at National Level
the Eritrean Experience

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DOC C-5.2

• Original version in English •

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Contents

I. INTRODUCTION

- **Eritrea** –is located in the horn of Africa and has an area of 124,000 sq. Km. with a costal line of 1,200Km and more than 350 islands in the Read Sea.
- Population-- 4 million- there are nine ethnic groups speaking nine different languages.
- Eritrea, a former Italian colony, under British rule and later under Ethiopia occupation won its independence in 1991 after 30 years of armed struggle.
- Recognized by UN as an independent state in 1993 after a referendum was conducted where 99.8% of the people voted for independence.

- **The main objective of the program**
- The Integrated Early Childhood Development Program- began in 2000 -with World Bank loan. It is a   five years program and has the following objectives:
    a) To promote the basic needs for a health growth and holistic development of
      children under six years of age, children, in primary school age, and children in
      need of special protection up to the age of 18; through the provision of services
      and support in health care, early education, cognitive stimulation, protection and
      affection.
    b) To meet the obligation for EFA and MDGs
    c) To fulfill our commitment to the global and regional conventions and treaties
      that recognize the importance of ECD-such as- CRC- African Charter on Rights
      and Welfare of the Child—Constitution of WHO-Convention on the Elimination
      of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women-UNESCO Constitution-etc.
    d) To meet our objectives in the national laws such as the Constitution, the Macro
       Policy and other sectoral policies
- **The program comprises of five major components**: Early Childhood Education and Care, Child Health, Child and Maternal Nutrition, Socioeconomic support for children in need of special protection, and strengthening of the EECD Program Management, Supervision, and strategic Communication.
- **This presentation covers**-the conceptual understanding of holistic approach, the institutional arrangement, communication and advocacy strategy, resource centre, monitoring and supervision and major achievements and lessons learned

II. The Conceptual Understanding of the Holistic Approach.

- The Eritrean Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy defines Early Childhood Development as a "comprehensive approach to policies and programs for young children, their parents, caregivers, communities, … "
- Secondly it refers to the holistic well being of the child where it says "the opportunity for the child to grow in an environment of love and nurturing that

caters for nutrition, health, water and sanitation needs of the child in homes, communities and institutions; facilitates child protection and participation; and enhances early stimulation and learning through an interaction with people and environment."

- Thirdly, the Policy Document specifies the nature of sectoral relationship where it reads" Policy program activities will be integrated and coordinated at all administrative levels…While preparing for integration through unification, use will e made of a combination of the convergence model…and the model where integration takes place at National and Regional level…"

There are three important things mentioned here.

.The first is related to certain target area, the second to the nature of the integrated package of service delivery to the child and the third to the institutional arrangements needed for the proper delivery of these services.

1. **The target**. These are the child, parents, caregivers, communities, institutions such as health centers, schools policy makers, donors, etc. We can only bring the desired result if we influence the various contexts holistically in which children are brought up and make them supportive to their overall development.

2 **Secondly**, all these interventions must be integrated, packaged and centered towards the child so that it could have an impact. The child is a whole entity and his different basic needs are closely tied together.

- This approach is totally different from the "limited problem-fixing programs" where only one aspect of the child's need is addressed separately without being supplemented with other needed interventions. To address one or more problems in isolation cannot make a breakthrough.

The third refers to the mechanisms for coordination. In a holistic approach, there are

various techniques or models in use such as Coalition, Complementary, Convergence, Coordination, Collaboration full integration or Unification etc.

- We are aiming for integration where there will be one administrative organization that provides all the services. As it is indicated in the Policy, while we are preparing for full integration through unification, use will be made of combination of models such as convergence, and at National level, sectors are organized to have equal status, plan common goals, coordinate strategies and monitor activities as a team coordinated by ECD Management Team and ECD Policy Technical Support Committee.

- In brief, the Eritrean ECD project is a multi-sectoral and multi-faceted approach where the needs of the beneficiaries and their environment are addressed holistically.

- Integration takes place at different levels, activities and interventions. First, at the level of policy, strategy and planning. Secondly, it is implemented in the provision of services for the basic needs of the child. Thirdly, in activities such as training, developing guidelines and manuals, messages for sensitization, monitoring and evaluation etc.

III. Mechanisms for Ensuring Convergence/ Coordination/Integration at National Level

- The policy document among other things clearly stipulates the institutional arrangements at National, Regional and Local level for the implementation of the program. In this presentation we will only discuss the institutional arrangements made under the Policy Document at National level.
- At National level the integration of ECD programs is co-coordineted and its successful implementation ensured by four important bodies. These are the Policy Steering Committee, Technical Support Committee, the Management Team and the National Working Group. We shall see their structure, roles and responsibility.

A) National ECD Policy Steering Committee

- The National ECD Policy Steering Committee is the highest authority that ensures successful implementation of ECD policy and its program. It comprise of ECD Stakeholders Ministries, namely: Education, Labor and Human Welfare, Health, National Development.
- Currently the Minister of Education is the Chairperson of the ECD Program.
- It is supported by the National ECD Policy Technical Committee and ECD Management Team.
- The specific roles and responsibilities of the Policy Steering Committee are to advice Government on policy matters, establish and supervise a National ECD Policy Technical Committee and the Management Team, provide guidelines for implementation of ECD Policy programs and advocate for and mobilize funding for ECD .The Committee meets quarterly.
- Its composition enables it to investigate and supervise to what extent each minter's sectoral intervention is horizontally integrated to meet the holistic development of the child.

B) National ECD Technical Support Committee
- This Committee consists of Directors Generals of ECD stakeholder Ministries mentioned above.
- It ensures the horizontal integration and coordination of activities at the national level.
- It enhances common understanding on an integrated and holistic approach to the ECD program and strengthens interrelationships between the various sectors including the communities.
- It works closely with the PMT (Project Management Team) to assist in the implementation of the planning in the context of refined policies and guidelines set up by the Policy Steering Committee, and provides technical advice related to program functioning, supervision, monitoring and overall activities. It convenes monthly.
- .There is a similar Technical Support Committee at each Zone (the country is divided into six administrative Zones) chaired by the Governor of the Zone. It

carries duties similar to that of the National Committee in its respective Zone. This Zonal Committee is responsible to the National Technical Support Committee.

C) ECD Policy Management Team

- This is an autonomous unit and the staffs are outside and independent from the stakeholder's ministries.
- It works as a neutral body coordinating all the stakeholders' activities and taking care of the overall management and implementation functions.
- It carries out the day to day implementation task of the program. It coordinates all sectors activities and carries tasks such as fund flow to all sectors, procurement, planning and budgeting, financial management and accounting, program monitoring, evaluation, advocacy and communication.
- It has Regional Offices at all the six Administrative Zones of the country to perform similar activities at the Regional level.

D) National Working Group on Integrated Package

- It is composed of technical people from the stakeholders' ministries and institutions. They are officers and specialist from the Early Childhood Education and care, Growth and Monitoring Promotion, Nutrition specialist, Child health, Home Economics, Child protection, ECD Communication, ECD Monitoring and Evaluation.
- It provides technical guidance in terms of planning, implementation, monitoring and supervision of ECD intervention of integrated package in the selected villages at National level.
- It is accountable to the National Technical Support Committee.
- The Chairpersonship of the Group rotates monthly among the members to assert ownership of the program.
- There is a Zonal Working Group in each of the six Administrative Zons to coordinate, plan implement, monitor and evaluate the interventions at the administrative Zone. It prepares plans of implementation of integrated package activities for its respective Zone and jointly carries out its implementation. This Working Group is accountable to the ECD Technical Committee of the Administrative Zone.

- There is also Village Working Group in each of the selected 116 ECD villages across the country to implement ECD integrated Package. In each Zone there are 12-22 selected villages.
- The objective is to focus the intervention and make an impact.
- In each of the 116 ECD Villages there is a permanent staff that coordinates all of the ECD intervention together with the Village Working Group. This Working Group is chaired by the village coordinator and is accountable to the village Administrator. It also submits its report to the Zonal Working Group.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Various Institutions at National Level

- In addition to these institutions the Policy Document lays down the general and specific roles and responsibilities of all ECD stakeholders' institutions.
- The common responsibilities are: to raise awareness, establish Basic Requirement Standards for the provision of services, develop capacity, implement an inclusive approach, contribute to the development and implementation of an integrated Parenting Enrichment and Resource Centre strategy to implement the holistic development approach, promote environmental health and hygiene, collaborate with all ECD stakeholder Ministries, National Union of Eritrean Women, National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, and other ECD partners to develop and implement ECD services, and develop and utilize multi-media Information Education Communication for behavioural change.
- The roles and responsibilities of the following stakeholders Ministries are spelled out in detail in accordance with their sectoral mission: Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Information.
- The policy addresses in general other government ministries, institutions and associations whose work impact on ECD to incorporate ECD program activities into their work and participate in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Communication and Advocacy Strategies at National Level

- An integrated Communication and Advocacy Strategy that includes all ECD components is developed and implemented. The strategy targets actors whose behaviour directly influences child growth and development, protection and welfare.

- The following are some of the major activities carried in this regard:

(1) Communication Resource Manual was developed. It carries 33 ECD messages.

(2)The Ministry of Information Mass Media (radio, television and newspapers) and

the Ministry of Education radio sensitize on the issue regularly

(3) Parenting Enrichment Strategy is developed and functioning.

(4) Cultural Troops carry ECD messages through out the country in various forms.

(5) Seminars, workshops and training are constantly conducted.

The National Resource Centre Strategy

The ECD Resource Centre is a learning institution that contains a wealth of ideas in form of information, knowledge, skills, and experience about ECD that facilitate sharing of these ideas. The ultimate goal of the Centre is to contribute towards a change in behaviour.

There is one National Resource Centre and six Regional Centres performing the following activities:

i. promoting holistic parenting of mothers; holistic service development and delivery by different stakeholder ministries and partners

ii. Linking sources of information with individuals or groups within the structure right from the National Level to village level.

iii. Organizing and facilitating networking between Resource Centres to ensure wide sharing and dissemination of ideas.

Monitoring, Supervision and evaluation

- This process involves close follow up of program implementation, progress and impact at different levels, ensures compliance with given guidelines and program implementation documents.
- The Policy Document states as its Guiding Principle "Monitoring and Evaluation of programs for their effectiveness, and efficiency furnishes critical information for making policy decisions and to improve practice."
- This is carried at two levels—by each sector and in an integrated manner by the Project Management Team.
- Evaluation of implementation process, progress and impact is done at regular intervals by PMU —annual, mid- term and at the end of the project. There is a quarterly review of the planned activities.

Major Achievements and Lessons Learned

The program executed projects worth US45.4 million in the last five years out of its

total budget of US$ 49 million. In order to assess the impact the program is now

extended to one year. Some of the major achievements are:

1. In Early Education and Care-- 105 KGs and 6 Resource Centers were constructed and 291Community Care Giving Centers opened. 650 persons were trained as KG teachers, assistants and Community Care Givers. The School Health and Nutrition Programs were implemented in schools through out the country by the adoption of the internationally recognized RFESH (Focusing Resources for Effective School Health) framework. All the interventions resulted in increment of rate of enrolment in pre-school by 80% and the retention rate decreased by 37% for students in grade one who attended pre-school.

2. In the social protection component 31,895 orphans were successfully reintegrated in 11,668 host families, 10 group homes were constructed accommodating 96 orhpans and 56 Group Home Mothers and social workers were trained. 366 street children were given vocational training and turned to be productive citizens. 262 families with street children were given economic support. The psychosocial studies conducted for the reintegrated orphans indicate that the children are well adjusted, no psychological problems, confident and perform well in school.

3. In the child health area medicines, equipments and vitamins worth more than US$ 7.4 million were procured and distributed. 123 latrines and 112 different water and sanitation interventions for schools and health facilities were constructed. 602 Health Workers for IMCI and 2,239 for Growth Monitoring Promotion were trained. ECD intervention assisted in the survival progress of the country. According to the Human Development Repot 2004 for UNDP Eritrea recorded far better than the sub-Saharan Africa region in the survival progress record. Life expectancy is 52.7, Infant Mortality Rate is 47/1000, Under 5 Mortality Rate is 89/1000 and Maternal Mortality Rate is 630/100,000. An impact assessment for the Growth Monitoring Promotion was also conducted and it indicated a very encouraging result.

4. Communities began to realize the importance of immunization and nutrition for their children. During immunization families assist medical officers in providing camels and donkeys for transportation and supply as much as possible nutritious food for children attending pre-school.

5. About 3000 mothers were trained in food security, more than 10,000 smokeless stoves and 130 water pumps were distributed to needy mothers. This proved to be good income generating source for the beneficiaries.

6. Parenting Enrichment, an Integrated Communication and the Resource Centre Strategies contributed in bringing behavioral change in the community.

7. ECD Policy document was prepared.

8. Decentralization is proved to be an effective system. In addition to the National institutions discussed above, there are various institutions, organs and committees from the region down to the village entrusted with task of planning and implementing the integrated approach. This system also helped to remove the barrier to good decision-making. There is no distance between a decision and an effect and no time spent between a decision and an effect.

9. Strengthening horizontal linkage of all ECD stakeholders, emphasising on advocacy and awareness rising to make ECD part of the life of every citizen and introducing cost sharing by the beneficiaries are some of the efforts made to guarantee the sustainability of the program once the World Band fund is over.

10. There is a favourable atmosphere that guarantees the success of the program.

    a) The strong political will, commitment at all levels of leadership and a system
       free from corruption are the major advantageous factors.
    b) The presence of an effective organizational structure that is characterized by a bottom- up participatory process and clear Policy Document no doubt will contribute to the proper implementation of the program.

11. Continuous and regular meeting of the stakeholders at various levels strengthened
    coordination and provided excellent experience. Best practices were shared within
     and among the six Administrative Zones.

12. Integration is not an easy task and more needs to be done. The modest experience
    we have is a good start towards full integration and a fair experience is gained in
    the holistic approach.