



IN BRIEF...

Early Childhood Care and Education

This reference paper presents a brief overview of the field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) within the framework of international development cooperation and states Sida's views on the subject.



School children of the Queen of Rosary primary school, Thika, Kenya.

Photo: Olof Sandkull

Different terms

The subject has many names. Depending on the emphasis given to different aspects of the concept, different agencies and countries have given it different designations. A list of the most

common terms used is provided below.

Today, there is no clear international agreement on the nature and scope of ECCE as a discipline. This makes international comparisons difficult. Following the World Declaration on

Education for All, Sida has chosen to use the term Early Childhood Care and Education, while recognising that all the other terms are valid.

The Jomtien Declaration and Framework of 1990 represented a major break-through for the importance of early childhood care and education. The Jomtien Declaration stresses that "Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities or institutional programmes, as appropriate".

Experience in poor countries

The Education for All 2000 assessment states that, in the 1990s, there was an increase in the awareness and understanding of the significance of learning in the child's early years. However, the same assessment reports that the overall progress in enrolment in ECCE was marginal in the decade. In 1998, there were an estimated 104 million children enrolled in ECCE activities. This represents a five per cent increase compared to 1990, when 99 million children were enrolled in ECCE.

The variations across regions and across countries are considerable. While there were considerable improvements in enrolment in the last decade in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and South and West Asia, countries in Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe showed substantial declines in enrolment in ECCE. Most of the countries

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)
Early Childhood Care for Survival,
Growth and Development (EC-SGD)
Early Childhood Development (ECD)
Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)

UNESCO
OECD

UNICEF
World Bank
The Consultative Group on ECCD

in Sub-Saharan Africa face low enrolment in ECCE (the Seychelles and Mauritius are two exceptions), and the continent as a whole only had a marginal increase in enrolment.

General tendencies in ECCE in poor countries are (EFA Assessment 2000):

- Children living in urban areas are more likely to attend ECCE than children in rural areas.
- Most attention is given to pre-primary schooling of children in the ages of four to six years. Very few children under the age of four are enrolled in ECCE.
- Rich families are more likely to enrol their children in ECCE than poor families.
- Government funding for ECCE is very low, often less than two per cent of the total education budget.
- The major responsibility for ECCE is left to families, communities and NGOs.

The Swedish resource base

Sweden as a country has a long tradition of an integrated approach to ECCE in Swedish society. In very general terms, this would indicate potential Swedish expertise in the ECCE field.

However, Sida has not been directly involved in supporting ECCE in partner countries. Support has mainly been provided through Swedish non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

At present, the Swedish resource base (mainly researchers, consultants and NGOs) in ECCE is small within the framework of international development cooperation.

Strategy for Sida

Sida's experience of supporting ECCE programmes is very limited. Traditionally, Sida's main focus has been on providing support for primary and adult education. However, with the gradual move towards sector programme support (SWAp), the framework of development cooperation is changing. It is now more important for Sida to analyse and discuss the whole education sector, together with the countries concerned and the other donors. In this context, Sida should advocate greater integration of ECCE as part of the education sector.

As there are other donors who have more experience of ECCE, Sida does not intend to undertake special initiatives in the field. However, as it is important to have expertise in ECCE in order to make analyses of the education sector as a whole, there is a need for Sida to be able to conduct a professional dialogue on ECCE. One possibility is to identify some key persons who, within the framework of sector programmes, could study the structure and relevance of ECCE activities. The purpose would be to identify key ECCE issues for Sida to consider in the dialogue on the devel-

opment of the education sector in Sida's partner countries.

To build up expertise in the field of ECCE and international development cooperation, Sida would consider the recruitment of Swedish JPOs to work with ECCE, preferably at UNICEF. Sida would also consider identifying Swedish researchers, especially at Swedish teacher training colleges, who are active in this area of research. It is also important for Sida to improve its knowledge of Swedish NGO experience in this field.

References

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- International Consultative Forum on Education for All (2000) Education for All. 2000 Assessment: Statistical Document
- International Consultative Forum on Education for All (2000) Education for All. 2000 Assessment: Global Synthesis

Main areas of Sida's development cooperation

Sida has developed action programmes in the following areas

- Poverty reduction
- Justice and peace
- Equality between women and men
- Environmental care

The action programmes can be ordered through www.sida.se

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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