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The Status of Implementation of the Education Sector Early Childhood Development Policy in Uganda

Dr Godfrey Ejuu
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FINAL REPORT

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Godfrey Ejuu, PhD.
Education Psychologist and Early Childhood Development Specialist
Department of Teacher Education and Development Studies
Faculty of Education
Kyambogo University, Uganda
Email: godfreyejuu@gmail.com

CLIENT
Uganda National Commission for UNESCO
2ND Floor Embassy House, King George VI Way,
P. O. Box 4962, Kampala-UGANDA

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Godfrey Ejuu, PhD,
Early Childhood Development,
Kyambogo University,
Kampala – Uganda.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BRMS	Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CCT	Centre Coordinating Tutor
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Children
DEOs	District Education Officers
DES	Directorate of Education Standards
DIS	District Inspector of Schools
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDE	Early Childhood Development and Education
ECDTIA	Early Childhood Development Training Institutions Association
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESR	Education Sector Reviews
FENU	Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GNP	Gross National Product
GWPE	Government White Paper on Education
IS	Inspector of Schools
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MDD	Music Dance and Drama
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MoGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MRC	Madarasa Resource Centre
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization of Economic Corporation for Development
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PPE	Pre-Primary Education
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
PS	Permanent Secretary
TDMS	Teacher Development and Management System
TRACE	The Right of All Children to Education
UCRNN	Uganda Child Rights NGO Network
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VHA	Village Health Activists
WGECD	Working Group on Early Childhood Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction
Effective implementation of efficient ECD programmes relies greatly on a comprehensive ECD policy. It was these convictions that inspired the development and launch of the Ugandan Education sector ECD policy in 2007 (MoES, 2007). It is now five years since the ECD policy was launched. Simply looking at one aspect and determining the success or failure of the policy would yield insufficient results towards findings steady headways to improve ECD in Uganda. Following these pursuits, this study set out to assess the effectiveness of the ECD policy in promoting quality early childhood service provision in Uganda as envisaged in the policy objectives. This study was guided by the following objectives:
1. To establish the extent to which ECD policy objectives have been achieved
2. To identify gaps in the policy that need to be filled to promote quality ECD service provision

Study design
This study was qualitative in nature employing a cross sectional survey design. Random and purposive sampling techniques were used to sample key policy implementers at national and district level. Open ended questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data from a total of 53 participants from central, western, northern, eastern and Far East regions of Uganda. A three phase system, beginning with secondary data review, primary data collection, and finally data analysis was employed.

RESULTS
General Achievements of ECD Policy
The policy has recorded the following achievements: Recognition of pre-primary as the first level of education in Uganda, increased funding to ECD from government, stimulated the need to a comprehensive ECD policy, improved coordination, increased awareness on the importance of ECD, more funding from private practitioners, uniformity in ECD provision, and catering for children with special needs.

Policy Gaps
- The ECD policy does not declare pre-primary education as compulsory preparatory stage for all children before they enter primary one.
- The ECD policy has no enforcement mechanism or sanctions to be applied to those who flout it.
- The ECD policy does not make provisions for implementation by the local government Act at district level.
- There are no particular coordination mechanisms to unite the stakeholders willing to do their part.
- The ECD policy has not been able to identify funding targets, or sources of funding for ECD related activities either at national or local level.

Challenges of Implementing the ECD Policy
Effective implementation of the ECD policy is being hampered by lack of adequate data on ECD, competent ECD personnel, adequate funding, adequate ECD structures, role conflict, language barrier, appropriate enforcement mechanisms, and inadequate support supervision.

Recommendations
- ECD should be made compulsory for all children before they enter primary one.
- There should be a good enforcement and coordination mechanism for different stakeholders.
- ECD should be taken up and sponsored by government to make all poor children benefit from it.
- More clarification on the roles of different stakeholders on ECD service provision must be done.
- Set funding targets for ECD at national and local level and separate it from primary education.

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

Uganda is one of the many African countries that still has majority of her people living in poverty. Although the share of Ugandans living in poverty decreased from 56.4 to 24.5 percent between 1992/3 and 2009/10 (MoFPED, 2012), there is substantial and growing urban-rural inequality and imbalance between regions. Despite the impressive growth, Uganda's Gini coefficient has been rising over the years, and stands at 0.426 (UNHS, 2009/2010), indicating a worrying trend towards increased income inequality (Kaduru, 2011). This inequality may mean that some children who are born into poor families are much more likely to have parents who have low levels of education attainment, low-quality jobs, and low wages, thus such children are more likely to have less access to public services, such as water and sanitation, health care, and education (Vegas & Santibanez, 2010). A number of interventions have been tried in terms of poverty alleviation such as NUSAF, SACCOs; Youth credit schemes, *entandikwa,* and PEAP. Even with these interventions, poverty still persists in many communities especially in the rural areas where they live on less than a dollar a day.

One of the ways of poverty eradication and reduction of inequality among people is through the use of early childhood development programmes which put children on equal footing prior to starting primary schooling, regardless of the different conditions in life such as poverty, neglect and ignorance (Kisitu, 2009). This notion is expressed in a number of international declarations and frameworks like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education for All (EFA) goal and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), all of which have provisions for inclusion of ECD as a priority area (UCRNN, 2010). In 1990 at Jomtien in Thailand, 155 nations of the world agreed on a joint plan of action to fulfill six Education For All goals. The first goal required nations to work towards the expansion and improvement of comprehensive ECD by the year 2015. Similarly, the Dakar Framework of Action adopted by the World Education Forum, Uganda, among other participants, committed herself to attain the goals pertaining to the child with emphasis on expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Therefore, any attempts to improve the status of ECD in the country will be an effort that is geared towards the fulfillment of the Education For All (EFA) targets and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Nearly half of Uganda's population (48.7%) is under 15 years of age; the largest percentage of this age group is between 0 and 4 years. The average fertility rate is seven children per woman and contraceptive use is estimated at 24% Plan Uganda, 2012). ECD interventions offer a particularly important tool for reducing income and social gaps between poor and non-poor populations that are becoming exceedingly difficult to bridge (Vegas and Santibanez, 2010). This is because significant investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) yields extraordinary returns that far exceeds the returns on most investments either private or public (Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003). This is because investment in ECD is investment in human capital (Heckman & Masterov, 2004), which breeds overall economic success for families, communities and the nation (Calman & Tarr-Whelan, 2005). At the macro level, investment in ECD pays back 87% in terms of higher efficiency in primary education (Jaramillo & Mingat, 2006). It has also been noted that investments that increase the average number of years children spend in education by one year raise a country's GDP by between 3 - 6% (OECD, 2005). This means that early childhood development outcomes play an important role throughout life, affecting one's income-earning capacity and productivity, longevity, health, and cognitive ability (Vegas and Santibanez 2010). For children, significant investment in ECD results into greater social cohesion (Young, 2000), better academic performance (Evans, Myers & Ilfeld, 2000), and increased capacity to adopt new technologies (Reynolds, 2001). Further, early gains in school readiness due to early childhood education have been shown to have enormous positive economic and social impacts lasting well into adulthood, from higher educational attainment and less chance of involvement in criminal activity, to higher status employment and higher earnings (Schweinhart 2007; Sparling, Ramey and

Ramey 2007). Therefore, money invested in ECD is more cost effective than money spent later to compensate for earlier disadvantages in several sectors (Heckman & Masterov, 2004). Failure by any nation to invest in ECD will lead to continued human wastage in the form of failed development, grade repetition and stunted growth of children (Evans et al., 2000).

It is however, critical to note that the importance of ECD has not caught the full attention of society in Uganda. This lack of awareness and the uncertainty of parents of the influence of ECD on the school readiness of their children lead many parents to place ECD far from the top of the education priority list. In fact, policy makers have relegated ECD to a much lower position and has not been backed with public funding (Li, 2006). If something has to be done, there must be a comprehensive ECD policy that can guide different stakeholders on their roles in promoting holistic child development through provision of quality early childhood development services (Kisitu, 2009).

1.2   Background to the Report

Effective implementation of efficient ECD programmes relies greatly on a comprehensive ECD policy. The policy is meant to guide different service providers on their roles, coordinate actors and guarantee government support for ECD. Before the launch of the Education sector ECD policy in 2007, a situational analysis had been done. In the analysis, it was established that childcare and development had shifted from being a family and community responsibility to more formal methods of caring for children (MoES, 2007). Social changes, urbanization, globalization, political instability and the HIV/ AIDS pandemic, had led to increased poverty at house hold level that created a need for families to work for longer hours instead of being with their children (MoES, 2007). The same study had established that there were very few pre-primary schools in Uganda with most schools in urban than in rural areas. Due to absence of Pre-primary schools (Nursery schools) in rural areas, parents were tempted to send underage children to primary schools where they were exposed to primary one work that was not appropriate to their age. The available pre-primary schools by then subjected children to inappropriate written examinations, used their own curriculum, or syllabi developed by individuals, some of which tended to cover primary one work (MoES, 2007).

Most of the nursery schools countrywide were neither licensed nor registered with inadequate supervision and inspection by the inspectorate as most District Inspectors of Schools did not feel it was their mandate to supervise these institutions (MoES, 2007, UCRNN, 2010). The training of nursery teachers/caregivers was not streamlined, most of the training institutions were private, with each institution offering training following its own curriculum, different entry requirements for trainees; and, certificates offered were not accredited to any recognized body (UCRNN, 2010).

The conclusion was that the lack of an ECD policy to guide stakeholders or direct government control over pre-primary education had led to undesirable trends with regard to the content and quality of the curriculum, teaching methods, facilities, entry age to primary one and quality of teachers and their training programs (MoES, 2007). This situation needed to be changed to provide a conducive environment for laying a firm foundation for the nation through ECD. A comprehensive ECD policy has many potential benefits for Uganda that include:

- To regulate the provision of services for infants and children
- To harmonize different sector-based ECD policies to operate in a coordinated manner
- To provide guidance to stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities in ECD service provision
- It is an instrument for advocacy, for ensuring provision of quality services and for harnessing resources and other support for young children.
- It is a legal instrument that all persons providing services for young children must adhere to.
- It guides the Government on how to commit resources to programmes for young children.

It was against this background that the Ugandan Education sector ECD policy was developed and launched. The aim was to use the policy to address the above challenges and ensure that ECD pedagogical and socio psychological principles of child development are professionally adhered to (MoES, 2007). The Ugandan Education sector ECD policy that is meant to guide ECD service provision in the country has the following specific objectives:

1. Clarify the role of government in the provision of and support for ECD services and indicate its commitment to the welfare of children
2. Consolidate and systematize existing programmes and activities related to ECD for the maximum benefit of all children
3. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the provision of children's learning and wellbeing
4. Provide guidelines and standards for those wishing to develop quality ECD programmes
5. Promote and strengthen the coordination mechanisms that foster partnership, networking and linkages in the provision of ECD services

It is now five years since the ECD policy was launched. It is assumed that many things have happened in the right direction, while there are others that may not be happening as expected. It will not be possible to simply look at one thing and determine the success or failure of the policy in order to improve it for better ECD in Uganda. Instead, concrete steps must be taken to evaluate the policy against its set objectives and also against international standards and other similar policies in the region from which we can learn. It is also provided in this policy that it should be reviewed after every five years so as to match with the global trends in ECD service provision (MoES, 2007). However, before any review can take place, it is prudent that a study be conducted to evaluate the performance of the policy against its set objectives and targets to see the extent of their achievement. It is also from this study that policy gaps may be identified so as to be used later in the policy review process.

It is against this background that this study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the policy use in promoting quality early childhood service provision in Uganda as envisaged in the policy objectives. The results of this study therefore may be used to inform the policy review process to cover those salient areas in which the policy may not have performed as expected in line with global trends in ECD service provision.

1.3   Objectives
This study was guided by the following objectives:
1. Establish the extent to which ECD policy objectives have been achieved.
2. Identify gaps in the policy that need to be filled to promote quality ECD service provision.

1.4   Study Design
This study was qualitative in nature employing a cross sectional survey design to learn how the ECD policy was disseminated, being implemented and its achievements since launch in 2007. Random sampling techniques were used to sample policy users in private practice, while purposive sampling was used to sample key policy implementers at national and district level. Open ended questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data from a total of 53 participants. These participants were drawn from the following regions: Central region (Butambala, Wakiso, Luweero, Buikwe) Western region (Kasese, Kabarole, Kiryandongo, Mbarara, Bushenyi), Northern region (Lira, Gulu, Apac, Arua), Eastern region (Kumi, Palisa, Iganga,), Far East (Moroto). Observations were made in six ECD centres focusing mainly on the learning environment.

1.5   Data Collection and Analytical Techniques

The review used both qualitative and quantitative data. The process involved use of a three phase system, beginning with secondary data review, primary data collection, and finally data analysis.

Secondary data review involved analyzing the Education sector ECD policy itself, review of existing ECD policy guidelines developed to support the ECD policy implementation, and departments' reports that give reports on different ECD activities. ECD policy documents from other countries were also reviewed for comparison purposes and to check ours in relation to the country's commitment to the MDG, and EFA.

Primary data was collected through Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA). This technique of data collection used experts from various ECD backgrounds who conducted a two weeks field visit to different regions of the country.

During the visits to different districts in the selected regions, courtesy calls were made to the DIS/ECD focal point person to have a chat on the dissemination and implementation of the policy. Later, key informants were identified with the help of the DIS and the available ones interviewed. In the ECD centres selected, Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with the caregivers together with head of the centres. In the training centres, FGDs were conducted with tutors/instructors who were available at the centre at the time of the visit. Further interviews were conducted with ECD NGOs programme officers who are in charge of ECD activities at the district.

At the ministry level, interviews were conducted with the education officers in charge of ECD at DES, TIET, Basic Education and the Commissioner Pre-primary Education.
Data analysis was done descriptively following thematically developed ideas.

1.6   Structure of the Report

This report is structured in such a way that first the executive summary is presented which gives a quick summary of what is in the report. After the executive summary, the introduction focuses on the background of the ECD policy and that of the study. The methodology follows and finally the results are presented. The results follow assessment of the ECD policy objectives, impact in terms of quality and access, achievements, best practices and challenges. Policy gaps, conclusions and recommendations are given.

COUNTRY PROFILE

2.1   Geographical Indicators
Table 1: Geographical indicators of Uganda
The geographical indicators of Uganda are as shown in Table 1.

Indicators	Units
Latitude	4º 12'N & 1º29'S
Longitude	29º34'E & 35º0'W
Altitude (minimum ASL)	620 metres
(maximum ASL)	5,110 metres
Total surface area	241,551 km^2
Area under land	199,807 km^2
Area under water and swamp	41,743 km^2
Temperature	12-32ºC
Rainfall	800 – 1,700mm/year

Uganda is made up of districts as administrative units. These districts are as shown in Figure 1, which is the map of Uganda.

Figure 1: Map of Uganda showing administrative districts
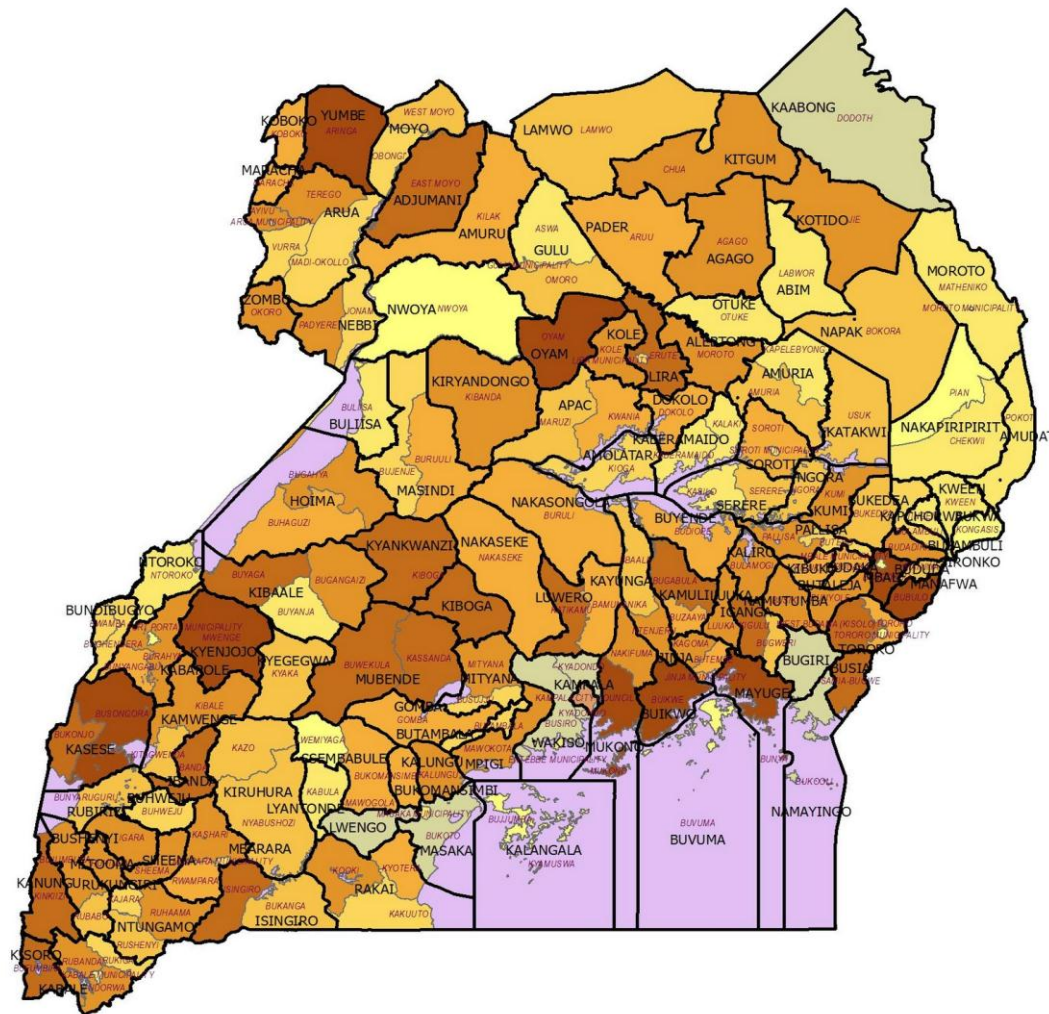
Source: ugandapicks.com2012.

2.2   Socio Economic Profile

Uganda's socio economic profile is shown representing its performance when the ECD policy was launched in 2007 and 2012 when the status of the policy implementation is being assessed. Details are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparing Economic Indicators 2007 versus 2012

Indicator	2007	2012
GDP	UGX 23,009 billion	UGX 45,607 billion
Per capita GDP	UGX 821,029	UGX 1,384,566
GDP growth rate	9.0 percent	5.9 percent
Per capita GDP growth rate	5.5 percent	2.2 percent
Inflation rate	6.0 percent	18.7 percent
National Budget deficit	11.7 percent	7.2 percent
ECD Budget	N/A	34,673,000

Source: UBOS, 2008; UBOS, 2012;

2.2   Education Profile

The system of education in Uganda has a structure of 3 years of pre-primary, 7 years of primary education, 6 years of secondary education (divided into 4 years of ordinary secondary and 2 years of advanced secondary school), and 3 to 5 years of post-secondary education. This system has been in place since the early 1960's when it was introduced after the recommendations of the Castle Commission report (1963). However, recognition of pre-primary as the first 3 years of education is a recent development ushered in by the Education Act (2008). Primary education, however, is still largely considered the first level of formal education by ordinary people since government has not established any pre-primary school for children. After a student has completed advanced secondary education, such a student can either join a tertiary institution or enroll in one of the 32 universities in Uganda that currently account for a student population of about 110,000, turning out over 30,000 graduates annually. The structure is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Structure of the Uganda Education System

Education level	Cycle	Award	Progress opportunities
Pre- Primary	2 Years	-	1. Primary Education
Primary Education	7 Years	Primary Leaving Examination (PLE)	1. Lower Secondary (O' Level) 2. Technical school
Lower Secondary (Ordinary Level)	4 Years	Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE)	1. Upper Secondary (A' Level) 2. Primary Teachers College 3. Technical Institute 4. Other Departmental Training Institutes.
Technical School	3 Years	Certificate	1. Technical Institute
Upper Secondary (Advanced Level)	2 Years	Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE)	1. University 2. Uganda College Of Commerce 3. National Teachers College 4. Uganda Technical College 5. Other Training Institutes
Primary Teachers College	2 Years	Certificate	1. National Teachers College
Technical Institute	2 Years	Certificate	1. Uganda Technical College
Uganda College of Commerce	2/3 Years	Diploma	1. University
National Teachers College	2 Years	Diploma	1. University
Uganda Technical College	2 Years	Diploma	1. University
University	3/5 Years	Diploma/Degree	1. Post Graduate Studies

Source: *Ministry of Education and Sports (Government White Paper on Education).*

2.3   Early Childhood Development Profile

Early childhood development that is also referred to as pre-primary education in Uganda has arms in other related sectors like health, welfare, and protection. The profile shown has a mix of issues from all these sectors as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Demographic and Socio-economic Indicators

Indicator	2007	2012
Under five child mortality	125 per 1,000 births	90 per 1,000 births
Stunted	N/A	33 percent
Wasted	N/A	5 percent
Underweight	16	14 percent
Anaemic	N/A	25 percent
Pre-school age going population (UBOS)	3,055,122	5,086,170 (2011 data)
Pre-school Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)	1.5	23 percent
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)	2.5	41 percent
Enrolment in Pre-primary schools	69,340	345,295
Number of trained Caregivers	1,029	8,479 (7,002 female representing 82.6%, 1,477 were male representing 17.4%)
Number of Pre-primary schools	703	2,361 (2011 data)
Number of ECD Caregiver Training Institutions	71	120
Classrooms	N/A	7,165
Latrine/toilet stances	N/A	14,554

Source: UBOS, 2012;MoES, 2012

Table 5: Distribution of ECD Services by Region in 2012

Service	Region						National Total
	North	East	Central	West	South West	North East	
ECD Centres	831 (11%)	1,640 (22%)	2,858 (39%)	1,098 (15%)	751 (10%)	190 (3%)	7,368
ECD Training Institutions	35(29.1%)	12(10.0%)	43(35.8%)	14(11.7%)	12(10.0%)	04(3.3)	120
Trained ECD caregivers	1,601(18.9%)	2,016(23.8%)	2,935(34.6%)	1,276(15.0%)	445(5.2%)	206(2.4%)	8,479
Enrolment of Children in ECD	42,812 (19.9%)	42,366 (19.7%)	70,798 (33.0%)	31,523(14.7%)	12,396 (5.8%)	14,902 (6.9%)	**214,797**

Source: MoES Annual School Census 2011, ECDTIA Report 2012

Table 6: Regional Distribution of Children in ECD by Gender in 2011

Region	Male	Female	Total	Distribution %
Central	35,098	35,700	70,798	33.0%
East	20,790	21,576	42,366	19.7%
N. East	6,889	8,013	14,902	6.9%
North	21,024	21,788	42,812	19.9%
S. West	6,187	6,209	12,396	5.8%
West	15,440	16,083	31,523	14.7%
National	**105,428**	**109,369**	**214,797**	**100.0%**

Source: Annual School Census 2011

EXTENT TO WHICH ECD POLICY OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED

3.1. Achievement of Individual Objectives

In this part, individual objectives of the ECD policy are assessed against what is on the ground as reported by different stakeholders in comparison with what is indicated in different policy documents. The assessment is as follows:

Objective 1: Clarifying roles of government in the provision of and support for ECD services and indicate its commitment to the welfare of children

In this objective, the policy has tried to clarify the role of government in the implementation of the ECD programmes. The policy identified different government departments and assigned them roles and responsibilities in promoting ECD in the country. Interviews with different officials from education related government departments like DEOs, ECD focal point officers, and District Inspectors of Schools showed that over 80% were aware of their roles. However, over 60% of respondents from other departments like welfare, Community Development and caregivers were not aware of their roles, while some had not even read the policy. At the national level, although the policy stipulated responsibilities of different departments, it was noted that the dissemination was done only with the education structures. The other departments like police, probation, and labour were not adequately sensitized during dissemination.

The findings also revealed that the role of government has not been explicitly identified in a particular section like it is done in other policies. If you looked at the Rwandan ECD policy, you will note that it has numerated what government will do for ECD first before embarking on the roles of different stakeholders including government departments. In this policy, the roles of government are distributed among different departments with no clear independent overall supervisor, thus making it difficult for the users to follow as shown in this excerpt from a DIS: *"I have read this policy, but I don't know what government is doing for ECD. This ECD has been left in the hands of private people. I wish government could come in and take over ECD"*. This excerpt shows that although the roles of government have been shown in the policy, they have not been made explicit enough for even the DISs to identify them clearly. What needs to be done is to identify different ECD service provisions, and then identify different activities and roles of government in them.

Objective 2: Consolidate and systematize existing programmes and activities related to ECD for the maximum benefit of all children

Before launching the policy in 2007, there were a number of different ECD programmes and activities going on. The role of the policy was therefore to take stock of what was being done, consolidate and systematize them. To a greater extent, this has been done in the following ways:

   a) **ECD Curriculum**

      By the time the policy was launched in 2007, the curriculum to be used in ECD centres (Learning framework for ECD) had already been developed. The process of developing other support materials and roll out was in progress. The policy put more emphasis on use of the framework that was not the case earlier as different ECD centre proprietors had not seen the need to use it. This stance during policy dissemination made the framework become a mandatory requirement for centres. It was noted that 60% of the ECD centres visited had a learning framework at the school and the caregivers were struggling to use it. Also, training institutions encourage trainees to buy personal copies, the only sole reliable reference to guide teaching. It should however, be noted that while many ECD centres have obtained the learning framework, most of the centres possess it for the sake of fulfilling MoES requirements, in case of monitoring checks, but do not use it for teaching and learning. Due to competition, pre-

primary schools have continued to use their own curricula often developed without making reference to the ECD learning framework, which is assumed to be substandard, out of failure to understand it.

Emphasis on use of the framework by the MoES during policy dissemination resulted in systematic programming, streamlined daily routines, and how children are guided in different centres. Centres now have what to use in form of a curriculum to guide children, although some of the caregivers in these centres may not be very competent to use the framework.

b) **ECD Caregiver Training**
Before the policy, only 23% of caregivers in different ECD centres had some form of training in ECD. The rest were untrained and lacked the required competence to enable them work with the children adequately (MoES, 2007). Since the introduction of the policy, more emphasis was directed towards training of caregivers. This effort led to an improvement in the number and quality of teachers in the centres. In the centers visited, 70% of the teachers had some form of training in ECD from local training institutions. Also, nationally, the number of trained caregivers has risen from 1,029 in 2007 (MoES, 2007) to 8,479 in 2011 (MoES, 2011).

The ECD policy strengthened the need to use a uniform caregiver training curriculum. Previously, each institution trained and assessed caregivers following its own standard, curriculum and interest. Currently, all training institutions are required to use the caregiver training framework that was developed by MoES with technical support from Kyambogo University. Also, as of 2012, most caregiver training institutions are coming together as regional groupings under their umbrella organization (Early Childhood Development Training Institutions Association (ECDTIA)) to have a unified assessment. Modalities to have a unified assessment for all caregivers nationally are in progress. The process of certification of the trained caregivers will also follow suite after having unified assessment. Currently, the ministry is finalizing licensing and registration of the first batch of ECD caregivers that submitted their papers to it.

c) **ECD Centre establishment**
ECD centres were mostly established in urban centres and offer services to the elite. In most of the rural communities there were no ECD centres. Also different ECD centres had been established in an informal way before the ECD policy inception in 2007. The reason for their establishment varied from commercial reasons to child welfare needs. The policy identified different ECD centres that can be established in order to categorize and systematize their establishment. Also, guidelines for ECD Centres and ECD training manual for management committees for nursery schools and community based ECD centres to be used for proper establishment, licensing and registration procedures. The nature of institutional structures established also changed to meet the set basic requirements and minimum standards (BRMS) to maintain standards. The policy put emphasis on the sub counties to mobilize and encourage communities to set up community based ECD centres.

d) **Parenting Education**
Parenting education is being done but not as explicitly as expected. The MoES is supposed to take lead in this area, but has not yet done much. There are however, NGOs that have taken it upon themselves to do parenting education especially in better parenting skills and child care. Some of these organizations are getting guidance from the policy, while others do their work following their own portfolios as reported by one ECD NGO programme officer in the following excerpt: *"we do not need to wait for government to tell us what to do. When we see a need, we use best practices from other countries and working in partnership with other sister programmes in other countries; normally one plan is made and is implemented in all participating countries"*. This excerpt implies that many ECD programmes that are run by

NGOs are not being managed according to the ECD policy, but by 'best practices' seen from other countries. The situation raises questions about Uganda's steadfastness to protect her own values and identity.

e) ECD Research

ECD research is still a grey area. Kyambogo University and other universities are supposed to take the lead in this area and use the policy to guide other groups in ECD research, but this has not really taken root. Individual lecturers have engaged in small-sized self-initiated research, which may not provide reliable empirical evidence as to inform and influence policy. One ECD lecturer noted that: *"we have the ability to do research in ECD but, we are constrained by lack of funds. Even when funds are available, the selection of beneficiaries is poor. We also still lack large numbers of competent ECD lecturers at higher level to go into big research projects".* This revelation means that more work is needed in this area to promote ECD so that future decisions are made from an informed position.

f) ECD Centre Management

Many ECD centres that had been established before the policy inception in 2007 had no clear management structure. The owner or initiator was the director, administrator, bursar, teacher, caterer and sometimes the driver. With the introduction of the centre management guide, management of ECD centres is now being systematized to have a management separate from administration. They are also being encouraged to have different functional committees, a move that has seen many centres establishing them now, although some are not very functional. It was noted that only 40% of the ECD centers had management committees and the 60% didn't have a CMC in place. Further analysis revealed that all the private schools don't have management committees. It's the director/proprietor who doubles as the management and policy making organ. The danger of putting decisions concerning Uganda's children in the hands of a sole proprietor with a personal vision that are unchecked may have irreversible repercussions.

g) ECD Advocacy

Different initiatives have come up for ECD advocacy. MoES has developed an ECD communication strategy to streamline how and what messages are passed on to parents from national to local level.
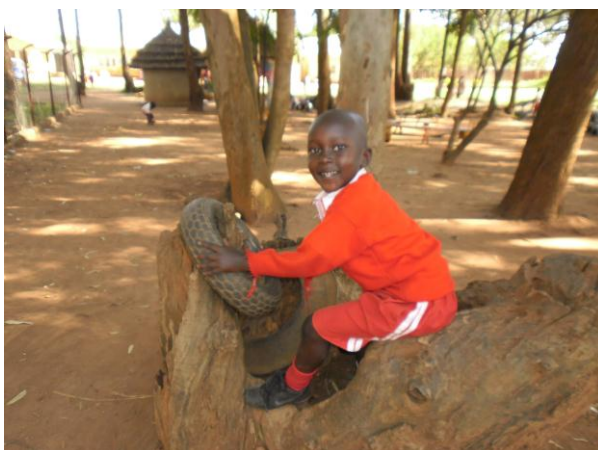
Improvised play materials for children in ECD centres

Objective 3: Clarify the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the provision of children's learning and wellbeing

The ECD policy identified different stakeholders who need to work together in order to promote different ECD programmes. The policy went further to identify the roles of individual stakeholders in ECD. Identification of such roles has helped the stakeholders to do their part on a point of knowledge and with confidence. For some however, the roles have not been made clear. In the case where a group of stakeholders have been identified and their roles specified, no guidance has been given on the working relationship between the members. This has led to confusion in the distribution of roles as revealed by one respondent from Kyambogo: *"we have our roles as Kyambogo and other universities, but the same roles are also for teacher education in the ministry. So we do not know when to act. Even we see the ministry training caregivers yet we thought that was our mandate"*. Conflicting roles have deterred the pace of implementing the articles of the policy that appear to belong to more than one institution. While the ministry does not train caregivers, its involvement in caregiver proficiency programs is mistaken for caregiver training.

Objective 4: Provide guidelines and standards for those wishing to develop quality ECD programmes

Guidelines have been developed to ease implementation of the ECD policy in many areas like caregiver training, ECD centre establishment, ECD centre management, curriculum, and standards. These guidelines are being used by different stakeholders to design, develop, establish, implement and manage different ECD programmes. Some of the important guidelines already developed include:

- Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS)
- Centre Management Committee Guidelines
- ECD Centre Establishment guidelines
- ECD Caregiver training framework
- Learning framework for ECD
- ECD communication materials
- Early Learning and Development Standards
- Community mobilization guidelines
- Inspectors guidelines

Those that need to be developed include: ECD Assessment guidelines, affiliation guidelines, parenting programmes guidelines, children's parks and play centre guidelines, ECD coordination system from sub-county to national level.

Objective 5: Promote and strengthen the coordination mechanisms that foster partnership, networking and linkages in the provision of ECD services

a) Coordination

While MoES is seen as the lead agency in implementation of the ECD policy, and guide other stakeholders on their roles, the MoES itself is in great need of better coordination. This is because the structure of the ECD policy is that its different aspects are mandates that fall under different departments that belong to different directorates. For example, caregiver training falls under Teacher Education which is in the Directorate of Higher Education, while ECD centres fall under Pre-primary division which is in the Directorate of Basic and Secondary Education. Each of these directorates is independent and sets its own priorities. It therefore means that no one directorate can dictate to the other what to do. In the event that two ECD aspects need to be implemented together for better effect, person to person cooperation is very important.

In the MoES, the Permanent Secretary (PS) is the overall supervisor who coordinates the implementation of the ECD policy because all directorates are answerable to his office. The challenge here is that the PS is already overwhelmed by different activities and would expect each

directorate to perform its mandate. The next alternative is the use of the Basic Education working group that is broader to coordinate the policy implementation. This is not yet working. Currently, another body called the ECD working group has taken up the responsibility of coordinating ECD activities including policy implementation in MoES. The body is chaired by the Assistant Commissioner Pre-Primary Education and comprises heads of departments in MoES that have ECD components in them. The body also incorporated representatives of development partners, associations, organizations and NGOs who are interested in and support different ECD activities. The role of the body is to coordinate implementation of different ECD programmes to avoid duplication. It also acts as a policy sieve for any issue coming from either government or grassroots so as to get the best approach to enhance its acceptability and implementation at either level. The challenge however with this body is that it has no full control over different directorates to make them implement those mandates. After all, the chairperson of the working group is a head of a division in the MoES and has no powers over other directorates. There is also no mechanism in place for the working group to enforce its recommendations beyond the MoES.

At the district level ECD related activities are supposed to be coordinated by the DEO, and supervised by the CAO. In most districts, the CAO relies on guidance stipulated in the Local Government Act to make decisions on which programmes to coordinate at the district level. The challenge here is that ECD activities as envisioned in the ECD policy are not clearly stipulated in the LG Act. The CAO therefore has no pressure from anybody to coordinate an activity that is not clearly spelt out for him. What they wait for is an activity from the headquarters that comes with its own funding for them to participate in while the officials who brought them are still around.

In the education office, the DEO relies on the ECD focal point officer or DIS given the ECD responsibility for ECD related activity work plans. The challenge here is that not all districts have nominated ECD focal point officers to be relied on. Secondly, although some districts may have a DIS in charge of ECD, these DISs have little or no qualification in ECD to enable them plan and coordinate different ECD activities from a point of understanding and competence. Taking initiatives at this level demands personnel with both interest and training in ECD, which is still not the case as some ECD focal officers are becoming only position holders.

At the district and county level, there is total lack of coordination of ECD activities. Different NGOs and individuals who are involved in different ECD activities carry on with little or no supervision at all. The nature of activities may not be classified as ECD but will be given the ECD name for their own reasons.

b) Mobilization
The ministry is working with different agencies and NGOs to mobilize and sensitize parents and communities against enrolling underage children in P1. The ministry has also started mobilizing communities to provide individual or community-based co-curricular programs. One such initiative is in the form of pre-primary Music, Dance and Drama (MDD) competitions that is done up to sub-county levels. The activity attracts parents and exposes them to a lot that children do while at the centre. Through these competitions, parents are getting more encouraged to send their children to ECD centres. For those who are not yet ready to send their children to ECD centres, such information is being used as advocacy for good early childhood development practices in families through use of mass media and other low-cost interventions to help families prepare children.

There is also an emergence of sports clinics for young children in areas of football, tennis and swimming. Programmes like the Edgar Kids football, Kampala Kids league and other junior soccer academies are good programmes for children and parents. Other mobilization drives includes the use of the ECD communication strategy pack that was launched by the first lady in April 2012 to raise awareness of parents on the importance of ECD so as to support it. This pack, launched in 2011 is being strategically used to inform the public about the need to take children to ECD Centres.

The pack, which contains DVDs, fact sheets and other advocacy materials, was developed by MoES with support from UNICEF, the National Council of Children (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development) and Plan International.

c) *Monitoring and Evaluation*

A monitoring and evaluation mechanism has been set in the ministry to assess how the policy is being implemented. The monitoring exercise draws a team of members from different MoES departments that have ECD components in them. Members from districts especially the DIS in charge of ECD is also involved in the monitoring process. During the process of monitoring, support inspection is also done and an on sport assessment report given to the centre being supported. This monitoring is done quarterly, with the hope that ECD focal point officers at the district will continue with the support. What however, is on ground is that for many centres, they never see the inspectors. Their chance to be supported only comes when the quarterly monitoring is done and a centre is lucky to be included among the sampled centres to be monitored. More planning should be done in this area so as to have an effective and meaningful monitoring system.

At the district level, monitoring of ECD is rarely done. A few inspectors go to the centres for the purpose of supporting the centres and not for critical monitoring. Collection of vital ECD statistics is also still a challenge as you may find outdated data in the offices if you are lucky to see any. Also, since some districts do not up to now have the ECD focal point officers, ECD activities are rarely put on any agenda for action in the education office. It should also be noted that for some districts, officials who are supposed to have the ECD policy do not have it despite availability of records that show such districts have the policy. At the centre level, over 90 percent of the ECD caregivers who are part of the implementation agents have no idea of the existence of the policy. One caregiver from an urban ECD centre noted: "*The ECD policy? Ah, I think we have it. Yes we actually use it for teaching our children, but scheming is a problem. The head teacher has it*". This excerpt shows the caregiver confusing the learning framework with the policy, although it is part of the policy guidelines. Also, the framework being kept in the head teachers' office is a sign that it is not being used in the centre for guiding learning.

d) *Collaboration*

The Ministry of Education and Sports is also collaborating with other ministries like the Ministry of Gender in the provision of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and other crosscutting programs, and seek the support of civil society organizations, associations, churches, and mosques for pre-primary and primary education. There is a current programme going on with the support of UNICEF in which different faith based groups in the country are being helped to establish ECD centres within their areas of control for children in those areas.

The ECD policy has also made it possible for different civil society groups, international and local NGOs and associations to work together in joint activities to promote ECD. One such example is collaboration through the umbrella organization called Forum for Education NGO's in Uganda (FENU) which is a national coalition of civil society agencies that demonstrates and stands for education rights for all people in Uganda. Members of the group include: Madrasa Resource Centre, AVSI, LABE, Child Fund, UNICEF, ECDTIA – U, CRO – Mbale, M&E Officer, Child Rights Empowerment and Development Organization, Compassion International, AVSI/PCE, Huys Link Community, Community Support for Capacity Development (CSCD), Health Child. The target for this collaboration among others is to ensure that the Early Childhood Development Policy for the Education Sector is fully disseminated, resourced and implemented and the wider ECD policy framework and strategic implementation plan is devised and implemented by government (FENU, 2011).

e) Partnership

Government – private partnership is vital for sustainable ECD programmes in different communities. Currently, there is limited government-private partnership in the area of ECD. What is clearly seen as partnership is government working with development partners. One of the major government partners in ECD in Uganda has been UNICEF, who has made it possible through technical and financial assistance to develop different ECD policy guidelines, standards, baseline data collection and capacity building. The partnership has also been extended to supporting ECD centres in selected districts that managed to increase enrolment in ECD from 2 percent in 2006 to around 15.5% of children in 2011.

f) Networking

Networking in the case of ECD helps countries to develop effective and efficient policies that will support the development of appropriate approaches and good practice in the field of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in participating countries (OECD, 2012). Uganda has made some initial attempt at networking with other countries in the area of ECD. This was seen when it was networking with Eritrea in the development of the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS). This networking helped the two countries to share their experiences and use it to enhance good practices that have promoted ECD. The networking has also made it possible for the two countries to make contacts among researchers, policy-makers and practitioners and among other international networks in related fields (OECD, 2012).
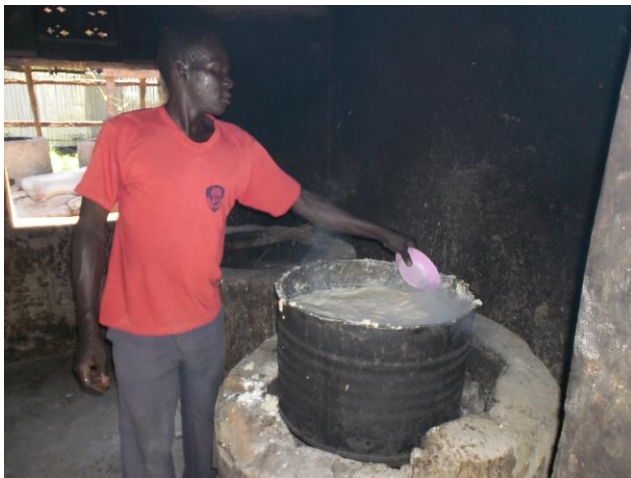
Feeding opportunity for children

Girls given chance to benefit from school activities

EMERGING ISSUES

4.1   Policy Dissemination, Implementation and Enforcement

a)   Policy Dissemination

A team of national Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) was identified from different MoES departments that participated in the development of the ECD policy. These ToTs were trained to use different dissemination materials and manual that had been developed for such purpose. The dissemination approach was a cascade in which a higher level was expected to disseminate to the lower level. The first level of dissemination was at the national level in which different stakeholders and line ministries that have child related programmes were called in a workshop and the policy given to them. Their roles were explained and they were empowered to start implementing it. The next level of dissemination was at the regional level in which regional officers and stakeholders were introduced to the policy and commissioned to implement it. One of the responsibilities of the regional stakeholders like DEOs, regional Directorate of Education (DES) officers and ECD focal point officers was to disseminate the policy further to their constituent districts and encourage its implementation. Finally, a district level dissemination was conducted by MoES officials in different districts.

At the district level, the education office was expected to disseminate the policy further to different stakeholders at the county and sub-county levels. For some districts, some dissemination took place, but in others especially the new districts, no dissemination had been done. The dissemination in some districts was done with support from UNICEF, while little or no funds at all have been availed for dissemination at levels lower than the district. An ECD focal point officer in Arua on this commented: "*for ECD? We have not seen funds, but you just have to be creative and reach ECD centres for the good of children. It is just a sacrifice*". The impact of this is that most people at the grass root including some Community Development Officers and ECD NGOs have no idea about the policy.

It was also established that dissemination of the policy is also being done as a preamble to other ECD related activities. Every facilitator of any ECD activity is encouraged to disseminate ECD policy position related to the area of concern being addressed in the given activity. One DIS in Kabarole noted that "*when you are out there and you have the love for ECD, you get some time to talk about it and tell people about the policy. But if you are not interested, nobody can force you to do ECD work*"

b)   Implementation and Enforcement

Implementation
The policy is being implemented via work plans, programmes and guidelines that help to translate policy positions into actions. The department of Basic Education, which is the ECD policy coordinating department has worked with different stakeholders to develop a number of work plans that it uses to implement the policy.

The ECD policy is also being implemented through direct support to encourage communities to establish, manage and sustain ECD centres. The MoES is doing this in partnership with UNICEF covering post conflict areas of north and western Uganda in the Rwenzori area. The ministry has also encouraged different international and local NGOs to directly support local ECD initiatives like ECD centre establishment and parenting education like ones being done by Plan Uganda, Child Fund, Save the Children and others.

The third approach is through use of different policy guidelines that are tailored towards specific ECD programmes to help stakeholders implement what is expected of them. Some of the policy guidelines developed include: Training manuals for ECD centre establishment, Centre management committees,

Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS), ECD caregiver training framework, and inspectors' manual,

Enforcement

In order for children to benefit effectively from different ECD provisions, different ECD policy positions related to specific provisions must be enforced to promote sustainability and standards. MoES expects different stakeholders to use provisions in their own areas to enforce the ECD policy provisions. This however, is not working as expected. Some departments, organizations and individuals are yet to implement the policy due to absence of an overarching enforcement mechanism. There is still evidence of ECD service providers openly practicing what is considered inappropriate in ECD with no body standing up to stop them.

Practices in ECD centres that need to be urgently addressed

4.2   Impact of the ECD Policy on ECD in Terms of Access and Quality

This section discussed the impact of the dissemination and implementation of the different policy objectives and guidelines on ECD in Uganda. The discussion is based on

4.2.1 Access

Increased number of ECD centres: According to the Education Management Information System (EMIS) data, the number of pre-primary schools has increased from 703 in 2007 to 7,368 in 2012 (MoES, 2012). This increase means that more children of parents who can afford the fees charged ought to be accessing these schools than before as they are in both urban and rural areas. The number of day care centres has also increased since the launch of the policy. Some of these centres have also sprung up in rural areas that were not possible some time back. It should however, be noted that while the establishment of the centres is welcome, some of them are starting to go overboard and introduce undesired practice like establishment of boarding nursery schools.

The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for pre-school in Uganda in 2007 was 2.5 percent and by 2011 it stood at 23 percent. Currently in urban areas, the NER is 53 percent, compared to 20 percent in the rural area. The NER for females is 24 percent versus 23 percent for males (UBOS, 2012). Kampala City area leads with NER of 62 percent, while West Nile and the northern region have the lowest NER of 5 and 6 percent respectively (UBOS, 2012). The overall Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), that is the total number of pre-school children expressed as a percentage of the official pre-school age population (3-5) is 41. The highest GER is in urban areas with Kampala toping at 82 percent, while Karamoja has 7 percent (UBOS, 2012).

Acceptability of children with special needs: Due to the increase in the number of trained caregivers in many centres, different ECD centres are now more open to children with special needs. Such children are allowed to be in class with other children, but also left to be on their own when they feel like because the caregivers understand the children's needs.

Catering for children with special needs: Introduction of the ECD policy has created conducive environments in ECD centres that has been able to welcome children with special needs. Such children who had been left out of school are now being encouraged to attend school. In the schools, children with special needs are now able to benefit from some form of care to promote their development. The care programmes also make the special needs children feel part of their community.

Children with special abilities in ECD centres

4.2.2. Quality

Increase in the number of quality ECD training institutions: The number of such ECD caregiver training institutions is increasing by the day. For example in 2007, there were only 71 training institutions. Currently according to MoES ECD training validation exercise conducted in 2011, the number of institutions has increased to 120 with more institutions being established by the day (MoES, 2012). Although MoES has not yet registered ECD caregiver training institutions, a number of them have been visited for assessment and are in the process of being registered so as to recognize caregivers from such institutions as being of quality. The institutions are mandated to use the caregiver training framework developed for that purpose, and have a unified regional assessment to maintain standards that took effect in 2012. This increase in the number of training institutions has also influenced the number of quality caregivers who have been trained to rise slowly but is in the right direction. For example, in 2007, the number of trained caregivers was not known. But by 2012, according to the 2012 EMIS data, 8,479 caregivers had been trained. This number however, can be an underestimation since there is no proper record of caregivers being trained from upcoming training institutions that are not recognized by MoES. The increase in the number of trained caregivers makes it possible for ECD centres being established to have at least one or two qualified caregiver in it to provide some form of quality.

Learning framework for ECD: Introduction of the learning framework for ECD, a kind of curriculum used to support children in ECD of birth to 3 years, and another one for children of 3-6years has brought some form of uniformity in the content children are supposed to cover. Previously, ECD centres were operating with no trained caregiver, while some used exercise books of children in other urban nursery schools as a syllabus in their own schools. The framework is however, not being implemented in all centres, although it is there for a start.

Interactive ECD classrooms: The design of classroom or learning spaces is changing greatly from fixed rows to more interactive group sitting arrangement that encourage communication among children and team work. More learning spaces or corners are also being developed instead of the overly academic environments that they used to be. The outdoor play areas have also been improved. More creativity is seen now in the use of local environments in providing children's play materials.

Diversity of ECD related services: Implementation of the ECD policy paved way for different stakeholders to initiate different ECD related services. These services range from Day care centres, Home or community based ECD centres, nursery/kindergartens and lower primary schools. All of these services are privately established since there is no government ECD centre in Uganda. Thus more services are more common in urban areas where parents can afford the fees charged. Rural areas have fewer ECD centres, with those available being of lower quality. The impact of this is that it is only children of those parents who can afford fees charged access ECD services, while children from poor parents who need ECD services most are left out.

Children at a centre with improvised materials   Hand washing training

4.3. General Achievements of ECD Policy

a) *Recognition of Pre-primary*: The implementation of the ECD policy paved way for recognition of pre-primary as the first level of education in Uganda in the Education Act (2008). According to MoES (2008), the structure of education in Uganda is now clearly spelt out in the Education Act, Section 10 (1) which specifies that "there shall be four levels of education as follows: a) pre-primary education;….." Previously, this was not the case, as pre-primary was considered under social welfare with little attention given to it.

b) *Increased funding by government:* The policy made it possible for ECD related activities to be directly funded by government in 2011. Previously, Ministry of Finance was not allocating any money for ECD activities directly, but allocated the money under part funding together with UNICEF. Other funds were being allocated to ECD under primary education. As of 2012, more activities are being planned for to be funded to promote ECD related activities.

c) *Stimulate need for a comprehensive ECD policy*: The ECD policy has been able to stimulate further thinking within the five sectors that work together to promote ECD in Uganda. The current ECD policy being more tilted towards education has now helped to start the process of a comprehensive ECD policy framework under the guidance of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

d) *Improved coordination of ECD activities at national level*: An ECD working group has been established in the MoES, with the aim of coordinating different ECD related activities across different departments, line ministries and NGOs. This body is trying to filter and coordinate ECD activities to bring all member departments on board, control duplication and work together as a strong team to advocate for ECD.

e) *Increased awareness on the importance of ECD*: The process of disseminating the ECD policy has made it possible to create more awareness in different stakeholders on the importance of ECD to children, families and nation. ECD now is more widely accepted in both rural and urban areas as an important stage that children should not miss before they go to primary school.

f) *Increased investment in ECD activities*: More NGOs are now coming up to invest and support communities in establishment and management of ECD centres as a result of the policy clarifying their roles in ECD. Different faiths, private persons and institutions are now more active in ECD centre establishment, development of instructional materials, training of caregivers and introduction of parenting programmes.

g) *Increased stakeholder participation*: Many stakeholders in the provision of ECD services have come on board and are now more willing to support different ECD related activities. This is because the policy has made most of them more aware of their roles and has been encouraged to play their part in ECD service provision.

h) *Uniformity in ECD provisions:* Some kind of uniformity has now been established in the way some ECD activities are being done. For example, through use of the ECD learning framework, children are now prepared using the same curriculum. Also, use of the caregiver training framework has brought uniformity to caregiver training in different training institutions throughout the country backed by unified regional caregiver assessment that is currently going on through their umbrella organization of ECDTIA.

i) *Inspection and monitoring of ECD institutions*: Although there are less funds allocated if any for ECD inspection, the coming into effect of the policy has raised the awareness to district officials and the inspectorate on the urgent need to inspect ECD institutions. Once in a while, it is now

possible for an inspector to inspect ECD centres as well when they go to inspect primary schools, especially those centres that are within the vicinity of the primary school. Also, as of 2013, school inspectors have been advised to include ECD centres in their inspection programme as they go out to inspect primary schools. The inspection now makes centre proprietors to put in place the basic requirements needed for quality ECD provision.

j) *Attaching ECD centres to primary schools*: Many ECD centres are now coming up as feeder nursery schools for the established primary schools. The centres act as a feeding nursery for individual primary schools, thus reducing underage children in primary one classes.

4.4. Best Practices

a) The ECD policy is being disseminated informally at the local level. Whenever there is an ECD activity, people who have idea of the policy will always mention the policy position that is related to the activity for members to take note of. This approach helps the policy users to focus on their area of concern and implement the policy even without seeing it.

b) Some communities have taken up ECD as an important component of their children's development. They have made it their responsibility where necessary to establish, manage and sustainably support their ECD centres for the welfare of their children of 0-6 years. In areas where the communities are so poor, you can still see the willingness if there is an assurance of donor support.

c) Some NGOs like Child Fund in Kiryandongo area are developing teams of Village Health Activists (VHA) who are being equipped in different ECD methodologies and best practices. The role of the VHA among others is to train parents on better parenting, encourage parents to take their children to ECD centres and encourage communities where there are no ECD centres to establish them.

d) Building of ECD support services based on local knowledge and experiences through use of local caregivers identified from the community who are able to transmit the desired culture to the children to meet their parental expectations. This is seen in areas that are supported by NGOs like Child Fund, Plan Uganda and Madrasa Resource Centre. Caregivers are trained in making play materials and better parenting skills.

Caregivers being trained   A male caregiver at work

4.5. Policy Gaps

a) ECD or pre-primary education for this matter in Uganda is optional. The ECD policy falls short of declaring pre-primary education as a must for all children to ensure a firm foundation for all children before they enter primary one. The implication of this is that some children have to stay at home and wait to join primary on a weak foundation. If the government strongly believes that ECD is the most important stage in the life of children that must be harnessed, then it must take overall responsibility over its provision and make it compulsory as in the case of many developed countries.

b) The ECD policy in its design is expected to work and thrive based on the good will of different stakeholders. Therefore, no appropriate enforcement mechanism or sanctions have been identified to be applied in policy or its guidelines to stakeholders, individuals or institutions that flout the guidelines. This means that even if a good guideline is put in place, there is no mechanism to enforce use of such guidelines. What you find therefore is the guideline in the shelves while the stakeholders continue doing "what they feel is right."

c) The ECD policy has not been able to identify funding targets, or sources of funding for ECD related activities either at national or local level. This gap makes ECD, a sector that is crucial for human growth at national level a non-funded priority.

d) Most ECD related activities are supposed to be provided by local private service providers in a decentralized system. For any input or expenditure from local governments to be channeled to ECD related activities requires guidelines to be provided for them through the local government structures. The local government Act at present has no mention of ECD services to operationalize the ECD policy at the district level. Unless the local government Act is reformed to include ECD services in its structures, ECD will remain a family or NGO affair.

e) While the policy has identified some roles of stakeholders in ECD, no particular mechanism of coordination of willing stakeholders to do their part has been put in place. The implication of this is that at the local level many NGOs and private individuals keep duplicating each other's roles and function in an uncoordinated way within the same area. It is therefore not uncommon to find two NGOs running different parenting programmes in the same village to the same parents but each organization operating independently.

f) Different ECD activities at the district level need to be coordinated. The education officer under education department in the district administration, the CDO and community based services under local government, and welfare office under gender need some kind of coordination. At present, the ECD focal point person at the district seem as the coordinator, but there is not coordination structure that can be followed and respected by all. Also the post of ECD focal point person at the district is not an established post but an added responsibility to a District Inspector of Schools (DIS). This DIS must first complete the assigned duties as established by his/her post before starting the ECD assignment.

g) While the ECD policy identified ECD as provisions for children and their care givers, it is only school service for children that have been identified for action. Others like children's parks, children's homes, parenting and caregiver training is not clearly defined. This needs to be done to guide NGOs that may need to have intervention in such areas.

h) Sports in ECD is another area that has not been explicitly explored in the policy. It is important to cater for this area as building of positive attitudes towards sports and other sporting activities need to be nurtured early at this level.

i) Whereas the ECD policy makes consideration for ALL children, there is no special focus on children with special needs that may not necessarily benefit from services that are provided for every child. A clear provision need to be identified to cater for such children in order to make services to benefit ALL children.

j) Whereas the planning unit in the MoES regularly gathers data on primary education and pre-primary, there is concern that ECD data is not being adequately captured under EMIS. It is only ECD centres that return statistical forms whose data is presented as the national data on ECD. It should however be noted that majority of ECD centres are not so active in providing such data, and are therefore left out.

4.6. Enabling factors to the success of the ECD policy

- Commitment by the Ministry of Education and Sports in ensuring that the policy is developed and disseminated
- Support from the development partners who funded the development and dissemination of the ECD policy, development of early learning standards, learning framework, training framework, basic requirements and minimum standards,
- Community support from CBO, NGO local and international in the establishment of ECD centres in the rural and hard to reach areas of the country.
- Working through the already existing structures like DIS, CCTs and inspectorate to promote ECD

4.7. Disenabling factors towards implementing the ECD Policy

National Level Challenges

- *Poor data collection*: Participating ECD institutions at district level and ECD centres at the sub-county level are still detached from the mainstream education services. Since most of them think they are 'private', little effort is made to keep up to date ECD related records that can be sent to the national level. Without this in place, we shall continue to have less accurate data on ECD in the country.

- *Lack of competent personnel*: ECD both at national and local levels suffer from lack of competent personnel to manage different ECD programmes. Tutors with ECD related training who can competently mentor caregivers in the colleges are few, highly trained caregivers who can manage centres efficiently are few and ECD trained district inspectors of schools are almost not available to supervise ECD activities.

- *Lack of adequate funding*: Implementation of the ECD policy needs adequate funding for different ECD activities. This funding is not easily available right from the national to district level. Most Ministry of Education and Sports activities related to ECD have been done with funding support from UNICEF. Government contribution towards this area is still limited in terms of funding due to the numerous challenges it has in other sectors as well.

- *Lack of adequate structures* for ECD service provision in the public sector makes its implementation difficult. If a service is to be provided, it has to be implemented through a stakeholder who is supervised by somebody from another sector who may not have ECD as a priority.

- *Role conflict*: Role conflict in the implementation of the policy by different stakeholders makes using the policy a challenge. For example, the roles of Kyambogo University and other universities is similar to those of TIET in MoES. Therefore, when it comes to implementation of different aspects, there is confusion on who is to take lead and who has the mandate to enforce

implementation. This therefore makes some activities to remain unattended to, yet they are critical for promotion of other sectors in ECD.

District Level Challenges

a) *Nature of Dissemination:* whereas the ECD policy has been disseminated up to district level, no attempts have been made by some districts to disseminate it beyond the district level. Some sub-counties have never seen the policy due to lack of funds for dissemination.

b) *Lack of adequate qualified ECD personnel:* ECD is a relatively new area at the district level. This means that there are a few people at the district that have adequate qualification in it. This could partly explain why some districts have not yet nominated ECD focal point persons. Therefore, any ECD related activities that need expertise input from personnel at the district will rarely be implemented. For example, use of the learning framework for ECD is supposed to be overseen by ECD focal point persons at the district. Absence of such persons makes ECD centres in such districts to operate without use of the learning framework although they may be having it.

c) *Nature of office of ECD focal point officer*: there is no office establishment for the ECD focal point officer at the district level. Any ECD related work is an added responsibility to an Education Officer or Inspector of Schools. Such an officer must first complete his/her tasks as prescribed by his/her appointment before attempting to do the added responsibilities. If such a person is overwhelmed by the rightful activities, then ECD related activities have to be shelved for some time.

d) *The nature of ECD service provision* is that it is for profit venture in many parts of the country. The implication is that most rural communities that have limited income have fewer ECD programmes due to issues of sustainability. Therefore, the majority of poor children who need ECD services most are not accessing it.

e) *Language barrier*: Whereas the ECD policy is in English, most ECD stakeholders in rural areas are not comfortable communicating in English. No attempt has been made to translate the policy into local languages that the stakeholders understand for effective implementation, since a policy is not supposed to be translated. Those who receive the policy simply shelve it since it is in a language they do not know. Effort should now be put on translating the guidelines for easy understanding and use at the county level.

f) *Lack of enforcement mechanisms*: At the village level, different stakeholders are supposed to play their roles so as to fit together as pieces of a puzzle. If one stakeholder does not act in time, then the whole process comes to a standstill. For example parents must send children to the centre so that caregivers can support them, and management will be able to support the caregivers. Currently, there is no enforcement mechanism in place to ensure that all parties perform their roles as expected in time to allow others operate.

g) *Transfer of district personnel*: Getting competent ECD staff to ensure implementation of different ECD policies is a challenge. It is however, more challenging for districts to keep the ECD staff they have worked hard to train within the district. As staff keeps moving from one district to another, the line of work they were meant to follow is broken and never taken up for some time.

h) *Inadequate support supervision*: Implementation of every programme requires adequate support supervision. At the local level, DES and other supervising institutions is not yet seen on the ground offering the support they are supposed to give in order to ensure efficient policy implementation.

i) *Attitude towards ECD:* Although most people you find will generally be positive about supporting ECD related activities, because it is the 'most important' stage in a child's development, on ground, the same persons will be the ones who will shelve ECD activities aside for other "more important" things. This point to lack of supportive attitude to practical implementation of ECD activities and policies. Some officials would only be attracted to implement ECD activities if there is a provision for allowances.

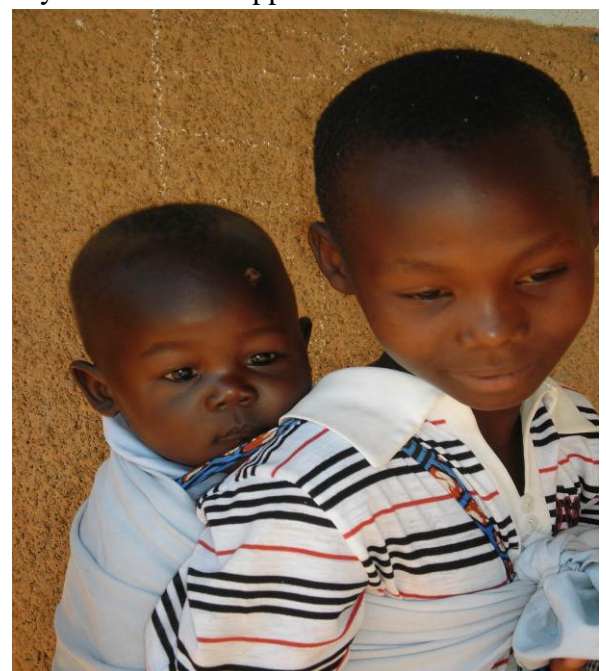*Play and socialization opportunities for children in ECD*

What has not yet be done in the ECD Policy

Although there is provision for the following in the ECD policy, these areas have not seen much progress in terms of implementation.

- Research in ECD to inform policy and service delivery in the country is still limited. So far, only one research that led to the development of Early Learning and Development Standards has been done
- Mechanisms for public-private partnerships have not been developed at any level. This makes it difficult for willing parties to support government and work together to promote ECD in the country.
- Coordination mechanism to bring on board all stakeholders whose roles have been identified in the policy has not been worked out. The policy expects each stakeholder on their own to start implementation without being told what to do. This may take time to happen.

Building self-esteem   Seeking opportunities

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Conclusion

The overall goal of the ECD policy is Improve child growth and development through improvement of ECD services delivery. Since the introduction of the policy, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of ECD services in the country, enrolment and uptake of ECD has drastically increased and generally awareness about the need for supporting ECD has been done and taken root in mostly urban areas. The four key objectives of the policy have been to a large extent achieved as demonstrated in the discussions but there is still work to do to ensure that most parts of the country do receive quality ECD services.

The physical ECD policy has reached the district level through sensitization workshops, and meetings held with different district officials. However, lower than the district at county or parish level, the policy has not reached. Guidelines in form of curriculum, establishment guidelines, and standards have reached a few specific stakeholders.

Although some stakeholders had either the policy or policy guidelines, parts of it were being implemented even without understanding of the policy. Many stakeholders were simply doing what they observed other people or institutions doing. The guidelines were being kept in offices for formality to meet basic requirements as required by the Ministry of Education and Sports. Some had the policy but referred to the curriculum as the policy, while the policy was referred to as a government document for ECD.

Whereas the ECD policy implementation is supposed to be monitored annually, this may never be the case due to financial challenges. Some districts never get the chance to be monitored or supported by any official either from national or district level. It is therefore important that the more districts are monitored and the outcome of annual monitoring and evaluation system go beyond the current statistical data collection to a diagnostic approach that digs deep into implementation, monitoring, collaboration, partnerships, establishment and sustainability issues with the aim of introducing reforms to mitigate the challenges. This is still lacking as of now in the ECD system.

More effort is still needed to increase awareness on the importance of ECD for the development of the country, more resources allocated to it, a clear structure put in place for its implementation and a strong enforcement, monitoring and evaluation mechanism put in place. If things continue as it is now, our children will keep missing the golden window of opportunity in their critical stage of development and will fail to compete favorably with other children from privileged communities in the world.

5.2   Recommendations

Access

a) The Ministry of Education and Sports should take the initiative and lead in revising the ECD policy to take in consideration new knowledge and trends in supporting ECD. For instance as the case with Kenya and Rwanda, the Ministry of Education has been given the mandate to lead other ministries through an inter-sectoral, and inter-ministerial ECD committees. Rwanda has gone ahead to have an ECD secretariat to fast track ECD related activities (Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2011).

b) The current Basic Education Working Group that is currently coordinating ECD policy related activities needs to be expanded beyond its current confines. The working group should

incorporate all line ministries that ECD related programmes, and Community Development Officers who are at the grassroots to coordinate policy with implementation.

c) Government, through the ministry of education should take up the role of providing some ECD services through establishing government ECD centres, support established ECD centres that are annexed to primary schools. The government should also take up the responsibility of paying ECD caregivers to attract quality caregivers in the service as the case in Rwanda (Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2011). The ministry should lobby government to take up pre-primary classes as components of UPE by sponsoring or paying caregivers who work with such children. This can be jointly funded with lower primary to cater for the under age children who are already seen in many schools in the country.

d) Although some stakeholders had the policy or policy guidelines, parts of it were being implemented even without understanding of the policy. Many stakeholders were simply doing what they observed other people or institutions doing. The guidelines were being kept in offices for formality to meet basic requirements as required by the ministry. Some had the policy but referred to the curriculum as the policy, while the policy was referred to as a government document for ECD. The language used basically communicates absence of ownership of the documents. Training workshops should be conducted by the CCTs and tutors to orient the caregivers, sub county official and all the stakeholders on the different documents and aim at shifting attitudes towards appreciating the documents and owning them. Support supervision should also be done to ensure implementation. The development partners should be lobbied for funding to facilitate the processes and activities.

Quality

e) In the revision of the policy the following issues or gaps should be addressed or clarified;

- More clarification on the roles of different stakeholders on ECD service provision must be done. For example the role of Kyambogo University and Teacher Education (MoES) must be clearly defined so as to avoid confusion on certification, and assessment of caregivers as it is right now.

- MoES should, in consultation with other stakeholders design a more inclusive coordination mechanism to allow different stakeholders to do their part in a coordinated manner without duplicating each other's' work. The coordination will also allow different stakeholders to be recognized and respected in their own areas as they provide services that will promote holistic child development. The coordination must be at the ministry and also at the district levels to bring on board all line ministries and departments with a stronger enforcement mechanisms. Lessons can be learnt from the way British early childhood services are coordinated from ministerial level to local level.

- Ministry of public service needs to create an establishment for the position of ECD focal point personnel at district level. This will ensure identification, and recruitment of ECD specialists to coordinate ECD activities at the district level. At present assignment of the office as an added responsibility gives the impression that an important area as ECD that is to lay a firm foundation for future national development is not being given the attention it deserves.

- MoES during the ECD policy review process should ensure that the policy clarifies and provides guidance on the establishment and management of ECD Assessment guidelines, affiliation guidelines; parenting programmes guidelines, children's parks and play centre guidelines, ECD administration system guidelines from grassroots to national level.

- Ministry of Education should lobby ministry of finance to establish a separate budget line for pre-primary to adequately cover ECD related activities. As of now, most of the funds allocated under pre-primary and primary education is taken up by primary education leaving ECD un catered for appropriately. Examples can be got from the

Malawian ECD policy that clearly articulates a separate budget line for ECD from primary education (Malawi Ministry of Education, 2003).

- MoEs should include sports, and HIV related issues in the policy to encourage behavior and attitude change as early as possible.

f) MoES should start and sustain discussions around minimum basic payment or remuneration of caregivers who work in different ECD programmes should be encouraged to begin. Because most service providers are private looking for profit, most caregivers are paid very little thus making the profession fail to attract the best staff to it. Lessons can be learnt from the basic GIII teacher salary that private schools use as a benchmark for paying their own staff. Government ought to increase her participation in ECD by taking up the responsibility to pay all trained caregivers as a policy matter to serve a trio benefit of attracting quality personnel (trainees), reducing the burden on the private proprietors and scaling down their undue control on the ECD programmes in Uganda. Entrusting ECD to private owners is like a mother substituting her role entirely to a maid, who should be a helper. ECD is the only sure way to improve a country's human capital, and countries that have made steady advancements in science and technology have invested unreservedly in ECD.

g) The Directorate of Education Standards (DES) should put some control measures on proprietors who are not specialized in the area of ECD to safeguard children from being strained due to the commercial drives and parents from paying for only 'damages.' Also the policy should restrict unqualified caregivers from teaching young children and such institutions without qualified personnel should be advised to get them or face closure.

h) MoES should establish a funding target for ECD at national and local level to avert the current critical underfunding of ECD activities in the country. The ECD policy needs to explicitly identify and set a funding target, for example 10 percent of the primary education budget to be allocated to ECD. The funds can be used to support a host of different ECD related services from infrastructure, caregiver support, materials development and training.

i) Whereas the ECD policy implementation is supposed to be monitored annually, this may never be the case due to financial challenges. Some districts have not got the chance to be monitored or supported by any official either from national or district level. It is therefore important that MoES creates a mechanism to ensure that more districts are monitored. The annual monitoring and evaluation system should go beyond the current statistical data collection to a diagnostic approach that digs deep into implementation, monitoring, collaboration, partnerships, establishment and sustainability issues with the aim of introducing reforms to mitigate the challenges. This is still lacking as of now in the ECD system.

j) MoES still needs to put more effort in increasing community awareness on the importance of ECD for the development of the country, more resources allocated to it, a clear structure put in place for its implementation and a strong enforcement, monitoring and evaluation mechanism put in place. If things continue as it is now, our children will keep missing the golden window of opportunity in their critical stage of development and will fail to compete favorably with other children from privileged communities in the world. The Ministry of education through the department of basic education and the directorate of education standards should develop a work plan and budget for enforcing the policy.

k) ECD being right from home, parents and care givers need to be sensitized about their role and the importance of feeding and feeding practices. Dietary diversification practice can play a big role in improving the health, nutrition status of mostly under five year children and the school going children. Malnutrition affects so many of our children, three out of ten children under five years of age have stunted growth (UDHS, 2011) and this has a lot of impact on their brain

development. Child feeding and feeding practices both at home and at ECD centres is important for child growth. Malnutrition affects so many of our children, three out of ten children under five years of age have stunted growth (UDHS, 2011) and this has a lot of impact on their brain development. Child feeding and feeding practices both at home and at ECD centres is important for child growth.

l) The planning unit in the MoES needs to develop a more comprehensive ECD data collection tool and use the parish chiefs and ECD focal point persons to track all ECD centres to ensure that accurate data is collected to help plan for ECD in the country.

District Level

a) Funds allocated at the district level for inspection of primary schools is still low. Since ECD is coming up as one important area that needs constant support, more funds for inspection need to be availed to cover ECD inspection.

b) Some communities have not yet given due importance to ECD and the need to take their children to ECD centre. It is recommended that as a matter of emphasis, districts should be encouraged to pass bylaws that require all children who are still at home to be taken to ECD centres if they are of age.

c) Whereas there is no specific law that requires districts to have an ECD focal point person, every district is required by MoES to assign one DIS, ECD as an added responsibility. Currently, not all districts, for example Kumi district have an ECD focal point person. Such districts are encouraged to identify one DIS for that role so as to help guide different ECD service provision at the district.

d) The education office at the district needs to be encouraged to work with the accounting officers to ensure that ECD related activities are included among primary education work plans for budgetary purpose and implementation.

e) District councils are urged to identify and pass bylaws that compel ALL parents to take children to ECD centres or schools at the right age. The laws should also be used to discourage child abuse and promote community responsibility towards children. Other issues like poor transportation of children to school on motorcycles, children overstaying in bars as they wait for their parents, use of English only as a medium of instructions in ECD or straining children with unreasonable written assessment.

f) ECD programmes are so fundamental that all children ought to benefit from it. ECD services being provided by most private providers are becoming too expensive for ALL to afford. This leaves out the majority who are supposed to benefit. It is therefore recommended that discussions on fees ceiling for different ECD programmes needs to be initiated by MoES pre-primary division so as to control such fees in a bid to make ECD programmes affordable for those who are supposed to benefit.

g) MoES needs to start thinking about how the Education sector ECD policy will fit into the integrated National ECD policy so as to maintain its unique provision, while at the same time recognizing need to a harmonized system and a coordinated approach to ECD service provision in the country.

International Agencies and NGOs

International agencies and NGOs can map out districts and support ECD service provision in the following ways:

a) Currently MoES releases about UGX 5million to every district for school inspection of primary schools, and other institutions. This money only allows one inspection in some primary schools with no specific focus on ECD. It is recommended that any other agency could come up with funds and provide to the same districts per school term with special emphasis on support supervision of caregivers in ECD institutions by district ECD focal point persons, CCTs and community assessors. This gesture will go a long way in improving quality of ECD services in ECD centres.

b) UNICEF has done a lot in helping faith based institutions to establish community ECD centres in Karamoja area, parts of the north and Rwenzori area. UNICEF should continue supporting these areas and also other areas that are equally badly off and need support in ECD centre establishment especially Ankole region, parts of Busoga and Teso. Any NGO or International agency can come in to help their establishment.

c) While there are many ECD centres that are being established in different parts of the country, over 95 percent of such centres do not have caregivers who have been trained in any child development methodologies. In the absence of trained caregivers at the centres, children are either being handled using primary school methodologies or are just being kept at the centres without any form of stimulation. NGO interested in ECD could provide funding for the training of ECD caregivers on ECD methodologies by targeting some district clusters. There is no doubt that increasing the numbers of skilled caregivers is a reliable and significant measure towards improving the quality of ECD.

d) Dissemination of the policy is still challenging beyond the district level. An NGO could take up the task of disseminating the ECD policy to different stakeholders at the grassroots so as to raise more awareness of ECD and build more support for its sustainability.

5.3   Limitations of the Study
In considering findings of this study, the following study limitations need to be put into consideration:

a) Whereas ECD in Uganda is implemented across five different sectors, the ECD being referred to in this study or implied is limited to ECD in the context of the Education sector. Any reference to other sectors in this study is simply to enhance the education component.

6.0 APPENDICES

Results

Table 7: Study Participants

Participating Persons and Departments	Number of Participants	Percentage
ECD caregivers from ECD centres	10	18.9
ECD Focal point Persons at the district	10	18.9
Directors of ECD Training Institutions Association	06	11.3
ECD programmes officers in ECD NGOs	06	11.3
ECD tutors from ECD caregiver training institutions	06	11.3
Community Development Officers at sub-county level	04	7.7
ECD officers, Pre-Primary Education (MoES)	02	3.8
ECD desk officer, Teacher Instructor, Education & Training	02	3.8
Deputy principal of Primary teachers' college	02	3.8
ECD lecturers, Kyambogo University	02	3.8
ECD focal officer, Directorate of Education Standards	01	1.8
ECD specialist, National Curriculum Development Centre	01	1.8
ECD specialist UNICEF	01	1.8
Total	**53**	**100.0**

Table 8: How Policy is being disseminated

Medium	Frequency	Percentage
ECD Policy Workshops	25	30.8
Informally	22	27.1
ECD related workshops	21	25.9
Other workshops	10	12.3
Newspapers	02	2.5
Radio	01	1.2
Total	**81**	**100.0**

Table 9: Policy guidelines developed to promote ECD policy

Document	Department Developing it	Year of Development
Early Learning & Development Standards	DES	2012
BRMS	DES	2010
Inspectors' handbook	DES	2011
Inspection instruments	DES	2011
ECD caregiver training framework	MoES, KYU	2011
ECD community mobilization manual	MoES, PPE	2008
ECD caregiver assessment guidelines	MoES, KYU	2010
Guidelines for ECD centres	MoES, PPE	2010
ECD management committee guidelines	MoES, PPE	2009
The learning framework for ECD (0-3, 3-6 years)	NCDC	2012, 2005
ECD caregiver guides to learning framework	NCDC	2012

Table 10: Achievement of the ECD Policy

Achievement	Frequency	Percentage
Recognition of pre-primary as first level of education	10	15.2
Increased funding from government	08	12.1

Clarified roles of stakeholders	08	12.1
Increased awareness on ECD	07	10.6
Increased investment in ECD by private practitioners	07	10.6
Increased stakeholders' participation	07	10.6
Uniformity in ECD service provisions	06	9.1
Identified ECD provisions	05	7.6
Inspection and monitoring of ECD centres	05	7.6
Improved coordination of ECD at national level	02	3.0
Interest in comprehensive ECD policy	01	1.5
Total	**66**	**100.0**

Table 11: Challenges Met in Implementing the ECD Policy

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of funds to implement policy	40	23.7
Conflicting roles of stakeholders	38	22.5
Lack of experts to implement policy	26	15.4
Lack of adequate structures for implementation	15	8.9
Poor data management	10	5.9
Nature of ECD service provision for profit	10	5.9
Language barrier	10	5.9
Lack of enforcement mechanism	08	4.7
Transfer of ECD staff	07	4.1
Inadequate support supervision	03	1.8
Attitude towards ECD	02	1.2
Total	**169**	**100.0**

Table 12: Gaps in the ECD Policy

Gaps	Frequency	Percentage
ECD is not compulsory	20	21.6
No clear ECD management structure	19	20.7
Lack clear funding line	19	20.7
No enforcement mechanism	14	15.2
ECD policy not aligned with Local Government Act	14	15.2
Lack of coordination mechanism at district level	03	3.3
Lack of Direction on ECD provisions	03	3.3
Total	**92**	**100.0**

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