



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

NATIONAL INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF UGANDA

Popular Version

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

August 2016



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Foreword

The Government of Uganda recognizes the critical importance of an Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) framework in ensuring children's rights to survival, protection, development and participation. These fundamental rights form a concrete path for the wellbeing of a child and are indeed a foundation for the country's future peace, security and prosperity.

ECD targets children from conception to 8 years and has been proven through various research to contribute to social, economic and human development, increase of workforce productivity, and poverty reduction.

As a signatory to the global and regional frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC), Education for All (EFA), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and standards on the rights of the child, Uganda is committed to using ECD as a platform for ensuring the fulfillment of the rights of children in the country.

The Government of Uganda is cognizant of the fact that effective ECD programming requires effective integration and harmonization of policies and programs across sectors and has therefore developed the National Integrated ECD policy of Uganda targeting children from conception to 8 years.

The responsibility for the successful implementation of the National Integrated ECD Policy of Uganda lies with the Government sectors, civil society organizations, private sector, communities and families. All these actors need to work together in a more effective and coordinated way to support the holistic development of Young children. I therefore call upon all sectors to embrace this policy with renewed commitment to enable the Ugandan children grow and develop to their full potential.

For God and my Country,



JANAT B. MUKWAYA (HAJAT)

MINISTER FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) is a comprehensive approach for children from conception to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers purposely to help the child grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially.

IECD Policy includes a variety of strategies and services to provide basic health care, adequate nutrition, nurturing and stimulation within a caring, safe and clean environment for children and their families. IECD hence calls for multi-sectoral collaboration to fulfill needs of the children.

Early childhood is a special and crucial period during which the brain develops fastest, is most malleable, highly impressionable and most amenable to change. Environmental influences and supports especially responsive care, nurture, stimulation, adequate nutrition and health care have the greatest impact on the brain development at this stage.

2. POLICY PROBLEM

School Attendance

Uganda's population currently stands at 34.6 million (Census 2014) and of these approximately 18% (6,131,253) are children below 5 years. The majority of the children 0-8 years are males (5,515,488) representing 52% compared to the females (5,174,583) representing 48%. These children are 10,690,071 which is approximately 10.7 million, regardless of their schooling status.

According to the MOES Statistical Abstract 2014, demographic statistics for 0-8 years children in school totalled to 3,126,034 and of these, 1,552,363 (49.7%) were males and 1,573,671 (50.3%) were females.

Infant and child mortality rates.

The Infant Mortality rate was estimated at 53 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2014, showing an improvement from 87/1000 live births in 2002. The under-five mortality rate was estimated at 80 deaths per 1,000 live births in

2014, an improvement from 156 deaths per 1,000 in 2002 (**NPHS 2014**). Malnutrition still remains the underlying cause in nearly 60% of infant deaths (Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP) 2011 – 2016). Looking at vulnerability of children, it was estimated that 8 per cent of children in Uganda are critically vulnerable, 43 per cent are moderately vulnerable and a total of 4.7 million children live in poor households and 8.7 million live in insecure non poor households. A good number of children whose number is not known at the moment are on streets especially in Kampala. This number needs to be surveyed and appropriate action taken to get rid of these children from the street by proper policy enforcement.

3. POLICY RATIONALE

The IECD policy will harmonize the goals and strategies across sectors and levels from national, district and community levels towards more coordinated, integrated and inclusive ECD.

The policy is an overarching guide in the delivery of ECD services. ECD services include prenatal and postnatal care, early infant stimulation and education, parent education, health and nutrition education and care, sanitation, and protection against abuse, exploitation and violence. Priority is on the most vulnerable children to benefit from quality ECD services for holistic development.

The policy has family and community strengthening as a core programme with priorities to engage parents and families in children's development, promotion of ownership of the programmes, and enables families' to access supportive services. The policy promotes strategic partnerships, more effective coordination to harness and expand vast knowledge, expertise and resources in ECD to compliment efforts at various levels.

4. POLICY VISION, MISSION, GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND TARGET GROUPS

Vision: All children in Uganda from conception to 8 years of age grow and develop to their full potential.

Mission: To ensure equitable access to quality and relevant ECD services for holistic development of all Children from conception to 8 years.

Goal of the policy:

The major goal of the policy is to provide direction and guidance to all sectors for quality, inclusive, coordinated and well-funded ECD services and programs.

Objectives: The three major objectives are to;

(i) harmonize existing ECD policy related goals, objectives and strategies and initiatives within and across all sectors,

(ii) set, improve and align standards for ensuring access to well-coordinated, quality, equitable and inclusive ECD services within and across sectors, and

(iii) Build/strengthen capacity of systems and structures to deliver integrated quality and inclusive ECD programs.

Target Groups: The Policy targets all children including the vulnerable and marginalized, from conception to eight years of age. Within this age range, there are four definitive categories: conception to birth, birth to three years, three to six years, and six to eight years. Although these children all have the same holistic needs, which consist of nutrition, health, nurture, protection, stimulation and training, the emphasis and focus of providing for these needs varies depending upon the age categories. The Policy also targets the primary caregivers of these children. These include parents and those who provide care for children in their absence, such as grandparents, other relatives and care providers in children's homes. Communities are also targeted and empowered to support families and alternative caregivers to provide for the holistic needs of young children, and to safeguard their rights.

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles will be observed and upheld by all stakeholders:

Holistic Development of the Child: Programmes will be designed in such a way that all the developmental domains (physical, mental, social, emotional and linguistic) of a child are taken care of across the four main age cohorts including prenatal and conception; zero to three; three to five; and six to eight years as well as parent education and support.

Equity in access to ECD services: ECD programs will be directed to all children irrespective of gender, geographical location, race, tribe among others and all forms of gender discrimination should be avoided. Children that are differently abled must also be given adequate opportunities to develop to their fullest potential.

Context specific: Programmes will be age appropriate, flexible, sensitive, culturally relevant, affordable and customized to meet special needs of children such as those affected by HIV/AIDS, children and women in conflict situations and children with disabilities and street children among other groups.

Family and community engagement: ECD programmes will actively engage and empower families and communities to participate and own programs for the care and development of their young children.

Good governance and accountability: Leadership and accountability of ECD will be shared across sectors based on primary mandates. Sectors should commit investment in terms of human, financial and material resources, resource mobilization, quality assurance and reporting and feedback mechanisms.

Rights based approach: All programs should adopt the Human Rights based approach to programming and promote the children's basic right to survival, development, protection and participation and adhere to the basic CRC principles of non-discrimination, best interest of the child.

Public - Private Partnership: The PPP approach should therefore be central in the delivery of programs. It requires mobilization, motivation, capacitation and fulfillment of roles and obligations by actors at all levels of government, in community and local leadership roles, and among parents and caregivers themselves. Community ownership and sustainability are essential characteristics of a high quality process.

Inclusive and complementary service provision: Programs should be designed to offer a range of continuous, well- coordinated, complementary and essential services along a continuum of care from conception to eight years.

6. POLICY ACTIONS

In upholding the rights of children from conception to 8 years and their holistic development, the following areas will be the main thrust of this Policy.

6.1. Early Childhood Care and Education

Government of Uganda will ensure that children's early learning at all the different stages of development is implemented and supported. This will focus on increasing access to equitable, quality, integrated, inclusive and developmentally appropriate early learning and stimulation opportunities and programs for all children below eight years in Uganda.

6.2 Food Security and Nutrition

GOU shall ensure that all households are food secure and have proper nutrition for proper child growth and development. This will involve supporting nutritious food production and uptake, nutrition care within the household, and community mobilization to promote the adoption of healthy behaviours and increased public awareness of the centrality of improved nutrition to community and national development to reduce prevalence of malnutrition among infants and young children, expectant and lactating mothers.

6.3 Child Protection

GOU will ensure the protection of all children from conception to eight years and their caregivers to promote children's rights to survival, safety, protection and adequate care at family, community and national level. The Government will strengthen mechanisms for preventing and responding to abuse, exploitation and violence against children, 0-8 years and their caregivers.

6.4 Primary Health Care, Sanitation and Environment

GOU shall ensure the right to survival and healthy growth of all young children in Uganda and ensure access to quality primary health care services and safe water and sanitation facilities at household, community

and institutional levels for children and their households. The main thrust for this will be prioritizing stimulation, care and development aspects in the traditional child health and survival programs to ensure children not only survive but also thrive.

Quality Maternal and Child health programs including water and Sanitation, Nutrition and environmental health will be scaled up to reach the most vulnerable children and families through family oriented and community based services.

6.5 Family strengthening and support

The family will be taken as the first line of response and will be strengthened to provide adequate and holistic care for children 0-8 years. GOU will promote approaches that strengthen families and community capacities including structures and systems in order to expand equitable, effective, and high-quality community-based response to enhance holistic child development.

6.6 Communication, Advocacy and Resource mobilization

The GOU shall increase its financial allocation to support programmes for young children and families to ensure quality, access and equitable distribution of services to all children, conception to eight years. Efforts will be directed to increasing awareness and commitment to ECD services and programmes by all stakeholders.

6.7 Multi sectoral Partnerships and Coordination

GOU shall enhance partnership and collaboration for effective IECD services in Uganda and set up mechanisms to streamline systems and ensure coordination for efficient delivery of services and programmes. GOU shall enhance mechanisms for partnerships in the provision of early childhood development services while increasing its capacity to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the services delivered by partners to ensure quality, accessibility and equity in provisions of services for all children.

7. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Multi-Sectoral Approach: The implementation of the Policy will take a multi-sectoral approach with contributions and participation of all key stakeholders. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development shall lead the implementation of the Policy in partnership with the various entities listed below in accordance with their primary mandates. The specification of roles will ensure full accountability and minimize overlap and duplication of functions.

ECD Technical Committee:

- (i) provides overall Technical ECD guidance and oversee the implementation of the NIECD Policy Framework from the National, to the lower local governments,
- (ii) advocates and lobby for inclusion of and appropriate planning and budgeting of ECD interventions in sector plans and budgets at all levels, and
- (iii) Initiates new ECD programs and interventions and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders preside over launches and dissemination of ECD Research Studies.

The National ECD Secretariat shall support the ECD Technical Committee through;

- (i) preparation of national level multi-sectoral quarterly, Annual, Strategic Plans for implementation of the NIECD Policy of Uganda, to be integrated into sectoral and lower local government plans, and
- (ii) preparation of integrated–multi-Sectoral Quarterly, Bi-Annual, Annual National ECD Reports for presentation to the Technical Committee and subsequent sharing with all stakeholders.

8. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

There is an implementation plan for effective implementation of the policy. At National level, there is a performance measurement framework including indicators against which to assess the implementation of the

policy. At implementation level, each stakeholder is responsible for its own results for each of the policy objectives. The ECD results will be measured and reported regularly through the normal performance assessment process. Accountability for the implementation rests within each of the cooperating partners and executing agencies. Performance review is the responsibility of the MoGLSD and will be carried out as part of the normal performance review cycle.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A monitoring and evaluation framework shall be used to effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policy. Each sector will be responsible for the day to day management within the sector and mainstream/incorporate ECD targets and indicators in their existing monitoring and evaluation systems, procedures and or tools for effective execution of the policy.

10. FINANCING

Financing of the policy shall be through cost sharing mechanisms among all key stakeholders. Additional financing is envisaged to be mobilized from development partners and communities in line with the Resource mobilization Advocacy strategy. All responsible role-players will be held to account for the timely and efficient expenditure of allocated ECD funds through their reporting obligations to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

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