



*The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development*

# NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN NAMIBIA

*Namibia Inter-Ministerial Task Force on ECD 1995<sup>1</sup>*

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## *Background*

There is great diversity within Namibia—in rainfall, in climatic conditions, in income, and in the quality of life for its people. Angola borders Namibia to the North, Zimbabwe and Zambia in the North East, Botswana in the East, South Africa in the South, and the Atlantic Ocean on the West. Namibia covers more than 822,000 sq. kilometres; its population is estimated at close to 1.5 million. Namibia has a population growth rate of 3% per annum. Only 30% of the population lives in urban areas. The majority is dispersed throughout the remainder of the country.

The per capita income is US\$ 1,520. (\$540 is the average for Sub-Saharan Africa.) As a result, Namibia ranks 84 out of 173 countries in terms of per capita GNP. However, Namibia's ranking

slips to 127 out of 173 when the Human Development Index (HDI) is calculated. (Social Sciences Division, 1995, pg. 17) The per capita figure is deceptive; it masks the wide disparity in income within the country which is reflected more accurately by the HDI. Further, almost half (47%) of Namibian households are living in poverty: 34% are ranked as *poor* while an additional 13% are classified as *very poor*. In general, however, those in urban areas fare better than those living in rural areas. In urban areas 22% of households are poor. In rural areas closer to 60% are poor. (Social Sciences Division, 1995, pg. 18) While there is an affluent population and a growing middle class, there are people living in rural areas who are not even part of the cash economy. 71% of the Gross Domestic Product is in the hands of 5% of the population; 55% of the population control only 3% of the nation's wealth. (Nghitwikwa and Nowaseb 1994, pg. 8)

Prior to independence, basic services, including health and education, were fragmented among racial lines. This has led to great inequities in provision and partially explains the low HDI. Since Independence in 1990, the Government has made a commitment to access, equity, quality and democracy in order to improve the life of all its citizens.

### *The Situation of Young Children*

Children in Namibia have been victims of war, poverty, overcrowded housing, inadequate food supply, polluted water, lack of sanitary facilities and isolation. They suffer from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and measles, all preventable diseases. Although it is one of the wealthiest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the malnutrition level in Namibia (29%) is only slightly lower than average for the region (31%). In fact, Namibia has the highest malnutrition level for any country in the world among the 83 countries whose GNP per capita income is higher than \$1,000. (Social Science Division 1995) A Household Health and Nutrition Survey conducted by UNICEF in the North West Region and Katutura found a *high to moderate malnutrition* rate of 30% and a *severe malnutrition* rate of 6.8% (Ministry of Health and Social Services 1992).

The dislocation of the population brought about by war and economic necessity has impacted the social structure of families. Geographic relocation due to wars and urban migration has separated families, leaving many without the traditional supports found within the extended family system. There is an increase in the number of female-headed households. The UNICEF Household Survey found that in the two areas surveyed 41% of the households were female-headed. (MOHSS 1992) In another survey it was found that 52.3% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 never marry. Teenage pregnancy is also common: 29% become pregnant before age 15; 40% of Namibian women become pregnant before they are 20 years of age. (Nghitwikwa & Nowaseb 1994)

When women work outside the home or are unemployed, and when young women want to continue their education, children are given to relatives (grandparents, aunts and uncles), friends and others, to be raised. This is not necessarily beneficial for the child. For example, grandparents may also have very limited resources, financial and physical, limiting their ability to care adequately for the child. (Nghitwikwa & Nowaseb 1994) Thus there is a growing need for a

system of child care that provides children with a safe, healthy and emotionally secure environment which promotes their optimal growth.

Historically, Christian missionaries took the initiative in terms of the provision of programmes for young children. The primary form of early childhood provision has been kindergartens (pre-schools)—formal programmes for children 3-6 years of age, providing them with an educational experience within the context of a centre-based programme that also addresses health and nutrition needs. The first kindergartens were affiliated with Churches, as are the great majority today. The Lutherans were among the first to provide such programmes, and they continue to have an extensive network of kindergartens throughout the country. The Catholic and Anglican Churches have also provided programmes for young children. Other non-governmental organisations, such as the Red Cross and S.O.S. Children's Village, have also established programmes for young children, and there are a growing number of other NGOs and private providers creating programmes for young children.

The setting for and quality of early childhood provision runs the full spectrum of programmes found anywhere in the world. Some are located in purpose-built structures with good equipment, a multitude of play materials and well-trained teachers, ever responsive to and supportive of children. At the other end of the spectrum are programmes where groups of children are huddled together in dilapidated huts, with nothing to play with, being overseen by an adult who has little understanding of children's needs or her role in supporting children's growth and development. Thus there are great inequities in terms of children's experiences in early childhood programmes. In a report on pre-schools in Namibia, Repp (1990) notes: "It is doubtful whether some of the inferior Pre-schools provide a better environment than would be experienced if the children were left on their own." (5) This does not speak well for the status of early childhood programmes in Namibia.

### *The Purpose of the Document*

There is a recognition by the government that the future of the country belongs in the hands of today's children. If those children lack appropriate experiences during the early years, there is a cost to society as a whole. Thus there is a need to create a policy which addresses directly the needs of young children and their families. The purpose of this document is to delineate a *National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy for Namibia*. The document will:

- Define the parameters of early childhood development;
- Establish the position of early childhood programmes in relation to national development priorities;
- Define the National Early Childhood Development Policy framework;
- Define the respective roles of Government, Churches, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and parents in provision of ECD.

## *The Parameters of Early Childhood Development*

### *Definition of Early Childhood Development (ECD)*

There is a need to have a common understanding of what is meant by the term Early Childhood Development (ECD). There are two parts to the phrase, *early childhood* and *development*. As it is currently used internationally, *early childhood* is defined as the period of a child's life from conception to age eight. There are two reasons for including this age range within a definition of ECD.

First, this timeframe is consistent with developmental psychology's view of the continuum of children's development. Children below the age of eight learn best when they have objects they can manipulate; when they have chances to explore the world around them; when they can experiment and learn from trial-and-error within a safe and stimulating environment. At about the age of nine they begin to view the world differently. They can manipulate ideas and learn concepts mentally and are less dependent on objects. Thus in terms of learning theory, the birth through age eight time period presents a developmental continuum.

Second, the international definition of early childhood includes the early primary years (ages six-eight) because of the importance of the transition for children either from home or from a pre-school programme into the primary school. If pre-school programmes for children are to be effective, there needs to be interface between what happens in the pre-school and lower primary school. This does not mean that early childhood programmes should become formal experiences for young children. Rather, there is a need for early primary teachers to become more aware of the experiences, skills and knowledge that children bring with them into the primary school if they have had an early childhood programme experience.

Within Namibia, the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing has responsibility for children from birth to age 6 when children enter the primary school. Children then become the responsibility of the Ministry of Basic Education.

In the definition of ECD being used in this document, *development* is defined as the process of change in which the child comes to master more and more complex levels of moving, thinking, feeling and interacting with people and objects in the environment. Development involves both a gradual unfolding of biologically determined characteristics and the learning process. *Learning* is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits and values through experience and experimentation, observation, reflection, and/or study and instruction. Both the child's physical growth (the child's health and nutrition history and current health and nutritional status) are crucial in the child's overall development. The child's current developmental status either facilitates or inhibits future learning. Thus learning is part of the development process. (Myers 1992)

## *The Importance of The Early Years*

Scientific findings from a variety of fields have demonstrated that support of early development yields rich benefits not only in immediate ways for the child and its parents, but also over time in terms of the child's ability to contribute to the community. Interventions in the early years of childhood offer an extraordinary opportunity to avoid or moderate learning problems, and to bring lasting benefits to individuals and society. As summarised by Myers (1993) the benefits of early childhood interventions include:

- ***Increased economic productivity.*** A person who is well developed physically, socially and emotionally will be in a better position to be employed and to contribute economically to the family, community and country than a person who does not have these characteristics. Interventions that support young children's physical and mental capacities lead to increased enrolment and improved progress and performance in school. This is important since school performance is linked to increased economic productivity.
- ***Cost savings.*** Of particular importance within the Namibian context, early childhood investments can reduce costs and improve the efficiency of primary schooling. Children who are better prepared physically, mentally and socially for school have an easier transition from home to school. Therefore, drop-out and repetition rates are lower and the need for remedial programmes is reduced, cutting costs. Effective early childhood programmes can bring *cost savings in areas other than education*: health care costs can be cut through preventive measures in programmes which help reduce disease and accidents (Evans and Shah 1994); the social costs of delinquency and related problems are cut as children stay in school longer (Schweinhart et al., 1992); and absenteeism is reduced when parents, assured of proper care for their children, can devote their time to the job (Galinsky 1986).
- ***Reductions in social and economic inequalities.*** Poverty and/or discrimination can inhibit development in the early years. By failing to intervene to support positive growth and development, governments tacitly endorse inequalities. This is certainly true if no special effort is made to assist those who have been discriminated against and if early childhood programmes are available only to those who can afford to pay for them. Investments in early childhood development have been shown to modify inequalities rooted in poverty and social discrimination by giving children from *disadvantaged* backgrounds a *fair start* in school and in life. Studies suggest that these children benefit more from early intervention programmes than their more-privileged peers.
- ***Reductions in gender inequalities.*** All children have a right to develop to their full potential. Attention to young girls often lags behind attention to boys, beginning and reinforcing a long cycle of discrimination. Gender-linked disparities in attitudes and expectations and in patterns and practices of early care and development need to be examined. There is evidence that early attention to gender can produce changes in the development of the girl child and in the way families perceive the abilities and future of that child. Furthermore, early childhood programmes can also benefit women and older siblings by freeing them from constant child care responsibility so they can learn and seek better employment and earnings.

- **Strengthened values.** Transmission of the social and moral values that will guide all of us in the future begins in the earliest months of life. In societies where there is a concern that crucial values are being eroded, a strong incentive exists to find ways in which those values can be strengthened. Early childhood programmes can assist in that effort by strengthening parenting skills and by providing environments within which children can play and give attention to culturally desirable values.
- **Social mobilisation.** In many locations, lack of experience in the political process makes it extremely difficult to mobilise people for actions that will be to their own benefit. In such circumstances, focusing a programme on young children as a point of common interest can be an effective rallying strategy and serve as an entry point for broader community development.
- **Community and family benefits.** Community improvements in health, sanitation and nutrition that benefit children are also likely to benefit parents, families and the community at large. These community and family benefits are evidenced by parents' improved self-confidence, the emergence of leaders, and by increased organisation and social action in communities.

In sum, the benefits of investing in early childhood care and development can be extraordinarily high.

### ***Child Development Principles***

The term used by the ECD community to describe children's development is *holistic*. What this means is that the child's development cannot be compartmentalised into health, nutrition, education, social and emotional variables. All are interwoven in a child's life.

Those within the ECD field hold firmly to a belief that early childhood experiences for children, at whatever age, should be holistic, and developed around the child's developmental abilities. Support for this position comes from international literature on how children develop and learn. Specifically:

- **Development begins pre-natally and learning is occurring at birth.** Too often the assumption is made that learning begins when children enter the formal school system. In fact, significant learning takes place before the child enters school. Therefore, attention to the developmental and learning needs of children should begin with pre-and post-natal interventions and be continued thereafter.
- **Development has several inter-related dimensions.** These include physical, cognitive, social, spiritual and emotional development, each of which influence the other and all of which are developing simultaneously. Progress in one area affects progress in others. Likewise when something goes wrong in any one of those areas it impacts all the other areas. For example, children who are malnourished are not able to learn, children with learning problems frequently have low self-esteem, etc. Developing a programme based on an understanding of holistic development means taking the whole child into consideration, providing attention to the child's health, nutrition, cognitive, and socio-emotional needs. Therefore development and learning must be seen holistically and interventions should

provide integrated attention to the child, including attention to needs for protection, food, health care, affection, interaction and stimulation, security provided through consistency and predictability, and play allowing exploration. All of these elements should be present to support the child's development.

■ ***Development proceeds in predictable steps and learning occurs in recognized sequences, within which there is a great deal of individual and social variability in children's rates of development and styles of learning.*** It is important for adults to use methods that fit with the child's growth pattern, not only in the cognitive area, but also in the affective, perceptual and motor areas. Activities should provide the child with a developmentally appropriate challenge. There is no value in presenting concepts and tasks before a child is developmentally ready to understand them. Integrated interventions promoting social, emotional and spiritual development as well as cognitive learning can take advantage of varied forms of learning, consistent with the culture, even while taking into account that there are recognized sequences and activities that facilitate learning.

■ ***Development and learning occur continuously as a result of the child interacting with people and objects in their environment.*** The role of adults (at home and in other settings) in supporting children's learning is to provide children with opportunities to work with concrete objects, to make choices, explore things and ideas, experiment and discover. Children also need opportunities to interact with peers and adults in a safe environment that provides the child with security and acceptance.

Given the importance of the environment in promoting children's learning, it is also possible to focus interventions on changing the child's environment. For example, increasing family income, upgrading health and sanitation in the community, and enhancing the social and political milieu will affect children's growth and development.

■ ***Children are active participants in their own development and learning.*** Learning and related development involves the child's construction of knowledge, not an adult's imposition of information. The skills which are the basis for constructing knowledge improve with practice. It is important for children to have opportunities to construct their own knowledge through exploration, interaction with materials and imitation of role models. Therefore, interventions should include opportunities for children to learn by doing, to be engaged in problem-solving, and to develop language and communication skills. ECD programmes should not put undue emphasis on rote memorisation and learning the 3 Rs. Opportunities for active involvement should abound, whether at home in everyday chores or in more organised settings outside the home.

In sum, ECD programmes building on a holistic understanding of children's growth and development suggest a broad conceptualisation of early childhood development in terms of the whole child within the context of the family and community. The early childhood years are perceived as the basis for learning life-long skills and attitudes. Activities and programmes planned for parents and young children should not focus solely on providing children with school survival skills, but should emphasise the development of the child's sense of intellectual, motor and moral autonomy, initiative and self esteem. Emphasis should be on **how to learn** (i.e., positive attitudes to learning and thinking skills) rather than **what to learn**.

## *Early Childhood Development Programmes in Namibia*

### ■ A DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are a variety of terms that are used to describe ECD programmes for children prior to the entry to school. Within Namibia the term *creche* generally refers to programmes providing full-day care for children from infancy to three years of age. These provide custodial care, with partially trained staff. *Day care* generally refers to full day programmes for children 3-6 years of age where custodial care is provided. These programmes seldom have an educational component.

The most common form of ECD provision in Namibia is *Kindergarten*. This term refers to non-formal centre-based programmes for children 3-6 years of age. These programmes are also known as *pre-schools*. While these programmes may have educational inputs, the staff may not have formal training. *Pre-primary* refers to programmes for children ages 5 & 6 prior to their entry into the primary school. Up until the end of 1994 pre-primary classes were operated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In some cases they were attached to primary schools and in other instances they were free-standing. In both instances they were staffed by professionally trained teachers.

In sum, programmes for young children can take a variety of forms. They can include parent education programmes, offered individually through home visits and/or in the form of parent groups. They also include provision for groups of children in centres (offered in purpose-built buildings, churches or community facilities) or homes (operated on the premises of the early childhood provider in informal back-yard structures or garages).

Since the National ECD Policy addresses the needs of children from birth to eight years of age, the term *Early Childhood Development Programmes* will be used to refer to all interventions with young children and their families.

### ■ CURRENT EARLY CHILDHOOD PROVISION IN NAMIBIA

There is a lack of data on current ECD provision in the country. Several surveys of centre-based programmes have been conducted since independence, but none of these have been comprehensive. In addition, no attempt has been made to collect data on the number of people being served through parent involvement programmes and/or children being attended in non-formal settings. What follows is a discussion of the data that do exist.

In the National Programme of Action for the Children of Namibia (1991) there are some data on the provision of pre-primary classes for children aged 5. Table 1 (table 1 not available) presents a summary of the number of children catered for in these classes, by sponsoring agency.

In preparation for the National Conference on Early Childhood Protection and Development held in 1992, Verhoef (1992) conducted a survey of 236 early childhood programmes that catered for children from birth through age 5. While not all ECD programmes in the country were included in the survey, his data yield some understanding of what is being provided for and by whom. Data from the survey are presented in Tables 2 and 3 (tables 2 and 3 not available).

Table 2 indicates who is providing services for young children, by region. Table 3 presents a summary of the age groups being served, again by region.

There some other interesting findings from the survey. For example, in terms of the characteristics of children attending ECD programmes:

- There are an equal number of boys and girls attending ECD programmes.
- Of those attending, 6% come from high income families, 31% from middle income and 63% from poor families.
- Within these programmes: 1% of the children were under 1 year of age, 2% were 1, 4% were 2, 14% were 3, 24% were 4, 34% were 5, 19% were 6, and 2% were 7.

In terms of infrastructure:

- Only 26% of the programmes were registered with the MEC; 74% were not registered;
- 60% of the programmes had no curriculum or scheme of work;
- 24% of the programmes were being offered in the primary school; 8% were offered in community halls; 28% were provided in churches; and 36% were being offered in homes;
- 32% of the programmes had no toilets; 6% had buckets; and 62% had flush toilets.

In terms of staffing:

- 9% of the staff had less than a Standard 6 education; 36% had completed Standard 6 or 7; 27% completed Standard 8; and 28% had completed Standard 10;
- 24% of the staff received salaries from the Ministry of Education; 19% from Churches; parents and school funds provided 31% of the salaries; 12% were provided by NGOs; and 14% of the ECD workers received no salaries.

In terms of health care:

- 67% of the children were fully immunised; in 22% of the cases providers did not know if children were immunised; 11% of the centres had children who were not immunised;
- 31% of the ECD programmes were being visited regularly by a health visitor.

In terms of Management:

- 60% of the programmes were run by parent committees. Within these, 96% of the members were elected by the parents. Thus there is considerable parent participation in the operation of ECD programmes.

In terms of collaboration:

–Collaboration among those offering ECD programmes is already taking place. There are instances where supervision of programmes comes from agencies other than the sponsoring agency.

As noted, these data present a picture of what was happening within 236 programmes in the early 1990s. Since then there has been a tremendous growth in ECD programmes. In 1993/4 another survey was conducted. This was undertaken by the MRLGH. Community Activators and Community Liaison Officers provided information on the ECD programmes that they worked with. (Community Development Directorate, 1994) A summary of the findings is presented in Table 4 (table 4 not available).

Comparing Table 1 and 3 raises questions. According to the 1992 survey of 236 ECD programmes, 12,482 children were being served. Yet Table 4 suggests that in 377 ECD programmes only 6,374 children are being served. The reason for the discrepancy is that in the 1993/4 survey information regarding the number of children being served were not collected from all centres. Thus the enrolment column is very incomplete. In addition, the survey did not include government provision.

Clearly not enough is known about ECD provision at the present time. Nonetheless, the comment in the report of the 1992 workshop still represents the state of ECD provision in Namibia today:

Since Independence there has been a 30% growth in the number of child care and pre-school programmes, although the disparity between facilities, types of programmes and teacher or caregiver qualifications is great. Despite this growth, only 5% of Namibian children from birth to 7 years old attend any kind of programme. (MLGH 1992, 12)

One area where there has been no growth is in terms of Government provision. Historically the Ministry of Education and Culture provided a one-year pre-primary experience for some children. Recognising the need to provide a quality pre-school experience for all children, and also recognising that the government could not afford to do this, the MEC decided to suspend its support of pre-primary classes. In explaining this action, the Ministry of Education noted:

In 1994 only 3,013 children and 161 personnel were involved in the pre-primary programmes [operated by MEC] which are primarily inherited from the previous advantaged ethnic administrations of the past dispensations. Comparing with the potential figure of approximately 80,000 five year olds the present enrolment is insignificant and catering merely for people who can afford to take their children to private pre-primary and kindergarten programmes. (MEC 1995, 2-3)

Nonetheless the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture is making a commitment to early childhood development programming in collaboration with the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, the Ministry of Health and Social Services and other partners to support community-based initiatives in ECD. These groups have come together in an Inter-

Ministerial Task Force established by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH) and the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) to create a National ECD Policy that will support a broad spectrum of ECD programmes designed to reach young children and their families throughout Namibia.

## *The Position of Early Childhood Programmes in Relation to National Development Priorities: The Need for an ECD Policy*

An indication of the Government's commitment to children is the fact that Namibia was one of the early signatories to *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Further, upon his return from the World Summit for Children in 1990, the President initiated the *National Programme of Action for the Children of Namibia* (1991).

Within the National Programme of Action for the Children of Namibia (NPA) there is a section on Early Childhood Protection and Development (ECPD) within which there is a strong statement in support of ECD activities. It reads,

Early childhood development is of such importance for the growth of children to their full potential, and for the advancement of women, that it must be the subject of a national programme involving Government, Churches, non-governmental agencies and the general public. Such a programme must be mounted despite the limited financial resources available to Government. (NPA, 95)

The NPA document stated clearly that there was a need for an ECD policy. A first step in the creation of the ECD Policy was a National Conference on Early Childhood Protection and Development, held in May 1992. The purpose of the Conference was to define Namibia's national policy on ECD and outline guidelines and standards for the operation of Namibia's early childhood programmes. The Conference resulted in a series of recommendations to be taken into consideration in the development of an ECD policy. In 1994 an ECD Inter-Ministerial Task Force was created for the specific purpose of creating a National Early Childhood Development Policy. What follows is the *National Early Childhood Development Policy*.

## *The National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework*

### *Objectives*

- To speak directly to the issue of young child development and to make the public more aware of the situation of young children and the importance of ECD provision. (The assumption is made that children will benefit from general improvements in agriculture, health, employment, education, etc. This is not necessarily the case.)
- To clarify the role of government in the provision of and support for ECD services and indicate its commitment to the welfare of children and the future they represent.

- To consolidate and systematise existing laws, programmes and activities related to ECD for the maximum benefit of all children, particularly those in rural areas and those living in difficult circumstances.
- To bring together the sectors involved in early childhood programming, providing them with a framework within which to take action, and allowing for the coordination of efforts.
- To clarify the roles, responsibilities and relationships between government, non-governmental agencies, Churches, NGOs, the private sector, communities and families for the betterment of children's lives.
- To mobilize and allocate resources for ECD programmes, within the government and from others.
- To provide guidelines and standards for those wishing to develop quality ECD programmes.

### ***The Approach***

Through a National Early Childhood Development Committee, appointed by the Government, the efforts of government, non-governmental agencies, Churches and the private sector shall be coordinated to work with communities as they develop programmes for young children. Community Activators, Community Liaison Officers and NGOs working with communities will promote the development of appropriate ECD programmes—with parents, in the home, in the community and in centre-based programmes—with the end goal being community-based sustainable early childhood programmes accessible to all young children and their families, with particular emphasis being given to supporting the development of ECD programmes in rural areas and for children living in difficult circumstances.

### ***Principles Underlying This Approach***

Assumptions about the role of the family and state:

***The primary responsibility for the support of a child's healthy growth and development lies with the family.*** The family is the child's first and primary learning environment. The family provides children with critical early experiences that are the base for later learning and functioning. Parents are motivated to provide the best experiences possible for their children, and have knowledge, skills and experiences that need to be built upon when creating an early childhood programme.

***The state shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.*** To do this the State shall provide families with the support they need so that they can carry out their responsibilities during the child's earliest years. This can be accomplished through a variety of ECD approaches, including the education of parents and/or caregivers and/or direct care and education to the child in formal and non-formal centres, in the neighbourhood and in the home. It can also include enabling programmes such as maternity and paternity leave.

Assumptions about the role of government, non-governmental agencies, the private sector and communities.

***ECD provision shall be expanded through the creation of partnerships.*** Neither government nor communities, nor a wide range of non-governmental organisations, can easily maintain an effective programme without help. The principle of developing partnerships between government, non-governmental agencies, the private sector and the community arises from social as well as financial needs. The development, management and funding of early childhood provision is the joint responsibility of the state, regional and local governments, the private sector, the community and parents. Collaboration is consistent with a holistic view of the child and it will decrease duplication of services in some areas with other areas, assure more equitable access to ECD programmes, and maximise the use of human and fiscal resources.

***Early Childhood Development programmes shall be developed in collaboration with the community.*** Within the Government there is increasing focus on the development of community-based programmes and the strengthening of communities to define their own needs and develop their own resources, thus decreasing their dependency on the State. Specifically, community-based programmes build local capacity to identify needs and seek solutions, create ownership and accountability, encourage unity and strength within the community, enhance the probability that decisions will be implemented and that programmes will be maintained once initial outside support is withdrawn, and empower people to make decisions in relation to all aspects of their lives.

***Non-governmental organisation (NGOs) have made significant contributions to ECD programmes. Their experiences, skills and knowledge shall be maintained and built upon.*** The NGO community, which includes Churches and other NGOs, has developed both appropriate delivery systems and training. Capitalising on the experience of these agencies will enhance the provision of ECD programmes throughout the country.

### ***Strategies***

Some of the following strategies relate directly to the principles of development and learning set out previously. Others are general programming strategies that apply to ECD programmes as well as to other efforts. At the core of the strategies is the desire to mount effective and sustainable programmes.

***Programmes shall be integrated in conceptualization, planning, service delivery, evaluation and promotion.*** This strategy derives in part from the holistic nature of child development in which physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions of development interact with and affect each other. Hence, effectiveness requires integrated attention to children. In addition, there is a maximization of resources when programmes are multi-dimensional, combining health, nutrition, education and social actions.

***ECD programme models shall build on the strengths of communities.*** These include: traditional family units and social structure that can be mobilised; rich traditional practices that

are supportive of children's growth and development; parents' strong desire to provide the best for their children; people's desire for education and knowledge; and the networks that have been created as a result of the fact that many people belong to churches and religious organisations.

***ECD programmes shall be developed to provide equity in access.*** While the aim is to provide universal attention to young children, there is special recognition of children living in conditions that put them at increased risk of delayed or debilitated development. This strategy recognizes the need for all children to be supported as they grow and develop, while stressing the urgency of attending to children living in poverty or those who are discriminated against as a result of ethnicity.

***Coverage shall be achieved by combining a variety of approaches rather than developing a single national model meant to apply to all.*** Attention to all the children shall be sought through a series of different programmes responding to distinct needs. There will not be one national programme that is extended to all children, parents or communities.

***Complementary strategies shall be developed and implemented to meet ECD goals.*** ECD programmes cannot be implemented in isolation. They shall be part of a broader conceptual effort that addresses the needs of children from birth through the early primary years. Since the child's development is affected by the environment, (the home, the community, social institutions, legal frameworks, and a cultural ethos) the comprehensive programme to improve child development shall function simultaneously at different levels, focusing respectively on the child, caregivers and national institutions and policies. Programme approaches include working with caregivers (parents, older children), direct services to children in centres, programmes for groups of children in homes, home visiting, changes in laws and regulations, and advocacy. (Table 5 presents a summary of eight complementary strategies that can be implemented to achieve ECD goals.)

***ECD programmes shall reflect diversity.*** It is not necessary for all children to receive the same kind of early childhood services. The actual form the programme takes will vary depending on local and regional needs and resources. This strategy derives in part from the social and individual variation in children's needs. It is also derived from a recognition of the cultural diversity which exists within Namibia. Programmes which respect this diversity will necessarily differ.

***An inter-generational view shall be taken and ways shall be sought to involve children, youth and adults in ECD programmes.*** Programmes of early childhood development can and should benefit parents, other caregivers and community members as well as children. Child care, for instance, is generally the responsibility of various family members (older siblings and extended family members in addition to fathers and mothers). Thus ECD programmes can focus on supporting these individuals in their caregiving task. Further, programmes shall take into account the needs of families as well as the needs of children.

***Systems shall be put into place to ensure quality.*** It is essential that quality not be lost as a result of increasing coverage. The argument that efforts should be aimed at increasing supply

before endeavouring to improve quality misses the essential point that without quality costs will be incurred later on, in schooling and by society.

Low quality programmes are ineffective, deprive children of benefits, and represent a waste of resources. A quality programme is appropriate to the child's stage of development and addresses the needs of the child, while respecting individual differences. In seeking quality, it shall be recognized that quality is affected by the motivation and training of programme personnel, the physical environment, the materials used, the curriculum, and the supports available to providers.

Quality cannot be legislated. Setting norms and standards does not guarantee quality. Neither is quality defined by expenditure level. Nonetheless a process for establishing standards (in relation to facilities, staffing, curriculum and programme quality) and for effective monitoring shall be established. This shall include a clear definition of responsibility for standards at the central, the regional and community levels. Standards shall be complementary and consistent across the health, welfare and education sectors. What is important is that quality be defined within the Namibian context, and that it not be identified only with high-cost pre-primary school models.

***Cost-effective ECD programmes shall be promoted.*** Increasing access is an overriding issue for ECD. Thus there shall be an emphasis on affordable models. The sustainability of programmes, and in particular those in remote and isolated areas, shall be a critical factor in determining a strategy that will increase access. It is imperative to promote adoption of low cost programmes to ensure maximum coverage. This strategy recognizes the importance of using scarce resources efficiently and effectively. This does not mean that low-cost programmes are necessarily the best. If they are not effective, they represent a waste of resources. In general, strategies that stress prevention are more cost-effective than compensatory strategies.

***A Children's Trust Fund shall be established to provide funding for ECD programmes.*** There is strong government support for the development and implementation of ECD programmes. However, philosophically and practically the full responsibility for funding these programmes should not fall on the Government. To encourage multi-sector involvement in ECD a *National Children's Trust Fund* shall be created for the purposes of supporting ECD activities. The Trust Fund will be established in such a way that contributions to the Trust Fund can be made by Government, national foundations/businesses, international donors and individuals.

***Monitoring, assessment and evaluation shall be incorporated into programmes from the outset.*** This strategy recognizes that programmes are only effective and sustainable when they include the capacity to analyze strengths and weaknesses and to adjust programmes accordingly. Assessment/evaluation processes need to be an integral part of all programmes. This shall occur at several levels. There shall be an assessment of the child's developmental progress. There shall be an evaluation of the impact of the provision on the child's progress through school and in relation to life-long learning. As well as focusing on the child, there shall be an evaluation of the ECD programme being provided and the primary system the child is entering. An assessment of the teacher training and support process is critical. And there shall be an assessment of the

effectiveness of linking parents, the community, NGOs and government for the purposes of supporting children's development.

In addition to monitoring individual programmes, **it shall be necessary to evaluate** the extent to which national goals have been achieved. The following dimensions shall be included in a national evaluation:

- Number of children being served by type of ECD programme
- The percentage of the 0-6 year old population that this represents
- Geographic location of ECD provision
- The distribution of ECD provision by socio-economic status
- The impact of the programme on children, families and communities
- Costs of the programme
- Funding provided by: the community, parents, Churches/NGOs, government and the private sector
- Types of in-kind support provided by: the community, parents, Churches/NGOs, government and the private sector
- Qualitative assessment of programme

At the present time there are inadequate baseline data. Therefore as the ECD Policy is implemented, baseline data shall be collected so that there is a referent for ongoing programme assessment.

## *The Role and Responsibilities of Parents, the Community, the Government, Non-governmental Organisations, and the Private Sector in ECD*

### *The Parents and the Community*

In order to have a clear understanding of roles and relationships it is best to describe how the process of developing and sustaining ECD programmes will evolve. What follows is a brief description of the steps that shall be taken to develop ECD programmes.

1. The creation of ECD programmes begins with parents and the community. The community determines its needs in relation to ECD programmes. This needs assessment process can be facilitated by a Community Activator, Community Liaison Officer and/or NGOs involved in the community.
2. Once the need is defined then alternative solutions to the issue will be explored. In all cases, new initiatives shall be built on the strengths of what already exists--whether that be traditional childrearing practices or other programmes that are already in place. It is important to note that centre-based programmes are not the only alternatives.

ECD programmes include efforts directed toward parents. Parent programmes can include such strategies as home visiting where an Early Childhood Worker (ECW) works on a one-to-one basis with a family. They can also include the creation of play groups where mothers come together with their children. While the children are playing, discussions with the mothers can focus on child development and all the things that parents can do to support that development, building on the kinds of activities that mothers do with their children during the course of the day. Another alternative is to offer parent education courses where parents come together on a regular basis over a period of weeks. Each meeting focuses on a given topic. These can either be generated by the parents themselves or be modules from a parent education course. In addition, resources can be made available to parents through a toy lending library or mobile van that moves from community to community. In remote areas where families are isolated, the possibility of using radio as a way of providing parents with appropriate messages is another viable ECD alternative.

Home-based programmes are also part of ECD provision. For example, there may only be a small number of children in the community who should be served. This would suggest that the best approach would be to create a home-based programme. This might mean giving training and support to a woman in the community who is already taking care of neighbours' children on an informal basis.

3. Once an approach is agreed-upon, a Parent Committee will be formed. They will determine what they as a community are able to provide. (i.e., a place for the programme, funds gathered through reasonable parent fees, some equipment and materials that can be constructed and/or provided by parents, contribution to the ECW's salary, donation of food, taking care of the designated space, etc.) The committee will also be responsible for recruiting an Early Childhood Worker (ECW). The specific role of the ECW will depend on the type of ECD provision that the community is seeking to implement. The ECW may work only with parents, or she may have responsibility for working with groups of children or she may be required to work both with parents and children. (Note: Within the Health field there is a model that could be applied. The ECW's role could be structured like the Community Health Worker's (CHW) role, but with a focus on child development and parenting. Another alternative would be to train the CHW to work with parents in relation to ECD concerns.)

4. Once the ECW is identified, a request will be made to the Regional ECD Committee for the ECW to receive training. Trainers within the TRC, and Community Activators and Community Liaison Officers will be able to provide the ECW with appropriate training, depending on how her role is defined by the community. ECD Officers from the Ministry of Basic Education would provide most of the training if the ECW is working with groups of children--in any setting. Community Activators and Community Liaison Officers would be more involved in the training if the ECW focuses more on parent education.

5. Upon completion of training the ECW will receive on-going supervision and in-service training from the ECD Officers based at Teacher Resource Centres (TRC), and from Community Activators, Community Liaison Officers and NGOs.

6. The Parent Committee might request assistance to support the on-going costs of the programme. With the advice of the Community Activator, Community Liaison Officer or NGO, they can also apply for funds from the Children's Trust Fund, or a local business, or they can apply for a 'matching grant' (i.e. the contribution from a business, individuals and/or

NGOs and government in response to evidence of the community's commitment to the ECD programme).

In other words, the responsibility for initiating ECD programmes lies with the community and with those who are working with communities. The next level of support for these groups is at the Regional level. And at the national level structures shall be put in place to provide guidance in the creation and implementation of the ECD Policy. What follows is a description of the roles and responsibilities of government and other significant partners in this process.

### ***The Role of Government***

The Administrative Structure within Government presented in Figure 1 will be operationalised to support implementation of the ECD Policy.

#### ■ NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

A National Early Childhood Development Committee shall be created for the primary purpose of overseeing the development and implementation of the National Early Childhood Development Policy. This Committee is a continuation of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force created to establish the ECD Policy. The Committee will consist of membership from:

- Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (Director level)
- Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (Director level)
- Ministry of Health and Social Services (Director level)
- National Planning Commission
- Ministry of Finance (Director level)
- NGO Representative
- University—Faculty of Education
- Chair—Inter-ministerial Committee for NPA
- Representation from Regional ECD Committee

The Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and Tourism, and the Ministry of Information will act in an Advisory Capacity to the National ECD Committee.

The National ECD Committee shall meet quarterly. Sub-committees shall be formed as required. These will meet more often. Over time, as the programme becomes well established, it is anticipated that there will be less demand on the time and energy of Committee members. At some point in the future the Committee will consist of only a small number of people who will play an oversight function.

The specific role and responsibility of the National ECD Committee shall be to:

- Set policy in relation to ECD provision

- Monitor implementation of the National ECD Policy
- Evaluate effectiveness and relevance of the ECD Policy
- Propose amendments to/changes in the ECD Policy
- Establish responsibility of each Ministry in policy implementation
- Ensure coordination of efforts among those providing ECD services (Government, NGOs, private providers)
- Examine current Labour laws and legal structures in relation to support for ECD and make recommendations for changes where necessary
- Advocate for greater attention to the needs of young children
- Educate the Public in regards to the importance of ECD

The Committee will be Chaired by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing. The lead Ministry in the implementation of the National ECD Policy shall be the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing. The primary partner shall be the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. While recognizing that a variety of Ministries and other organisations are key collaborators in ECD provision, what follows is a more detailed description of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture and the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, as these are two key Ministries in ECD provision. The responsibilities of other collaborating agencies and other sectors are presented briefly.

#### ■ MINISTRY OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING (MRLGH)

As the lead Ministry, MRLGH shall be responsible for overseeing the development and management of programs for children and their families from birth through age 5, or until the time a child enters primary school. An ECD Coordinator will be appointed and housed within the Directorate of Community Development. This person shall have primary responsibility for the development of the ECD activities within MRLGH. S/he shall also be responsible for liaising with the ECD Coordinator within the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) and with the NGO ECD Coordinator, to assure coordination among those providing ECD services.

*At the national level*, MRLGH shall be responsible for the development of:

- Guidelines for the establishment of ECD programmes
- Standards and Regulations and a procedure for monitoring compliance with the process and procedures to be utilised in the registration of ECD Programmes
- Training of the Community Activators and Community Liaison Officers
- Curriculum for the Community Activators and Community Liaison Officers to use in training community and parents
- Collaboration with the MBEC ECD Coordinator
- Collaboration with the NGO ECD Coordinator

*At the regional level*, the MRLGH shall have responsibility for working with the Regional Councils to establish and develop the capacity of a Regional Early Childhood Committee. This work will be done primarily through the Chief Community Liaison Officer (CLO). The Chair of the Regional ECD Committee will be elected by members of the Committee. (One recommendation is that the ECD Committee be chaired by the Governor.)

Specific responsibilities of the MRLGH at the regional level include:

- Assuring that mechanisms are in place to implement National ECD policy at regional level
- Responding to requests from communities for technical and financial assistance
- Raising funds for ECD programmes
- Application to the Children's Trust Fund on behalf of ECD programmes
- Action on/disbursement of funds in response to community proposals
- Registration of programmes/issuing licences
- Monitoring of ECD Programmes in terms of compliance with standards
- Training of Community Liaison Officers and Community Activators
- Maintenance of regional data-base on young children
- The referral of appropriate issues to the National ECD Committee

*At the community level*, MRLGH will be actively involved in ECD programmes. Given the infrastructure currently in place and the direct work MRLGH is doing through Community Activators and Community Liaison Officers, they are in the best position to help stimulate and provide support to communities interested in developing ECD programmes. Thus they will be actively involved in ECD activities at the local level. Specifically they will:

- Conduct parent education programmes
- Train Parent Committees in the management of ECD programmes
- Work with Parent Committees to acquire resources required for the ECD programmes

Parent Committees: Roles and responsibilities. As noted, the responsibility of the community is to define their needs and determine an appropriate course of action in relation to those needs. Specifically they will:

- Define the ECD services required by the community
- Select an Early Childhood Worker (ECW) to provide services within the programme
- Manage the programme once it is under way
- Assure sustainability of the programme by seeking a broad base of support

Alternative sources of funds include:

- Parent fees
- Identification of local supporters (small business, individuals)
- Support from income-generating projects
- In-kind support
- Subsidisation from government when serving populations most in need of ECD services
- Application to Children's Trust Fund

#### ■ MINISTRY OF BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE (MBEC)

The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture shall serve children from age 6 onwards. To facilitate the entrance of children into the primary school the MBEC has developed a 10-week transition curriculum which will be implemented when children enter Primary 1. The curriculum is meant to provide six-year-olds with a pre-primary experience before they begin the Primary 1 Curriculum. This approach will be carefully evaluated since the implementation of this kind of 'bridging' programme has not been demonstrated as effective in other countries.

Within the National Institute of Educational Development there shall be close collaboration between those designing the early childhood and early primary curricula to assure that there is a smooth transition for children as they move from ECD programmes into the formal education system.

***At the National level.*** An ECD Coordinator shall be appointed within the MBEC who will have responsibility for implementation of the MBEC's contribution to the National ECD Policy. Specifically at the national level, the MBEC will:

- Develop curriculum guidelines for a variety of ECD programmes—parent education, home-based, centre-based—for children 0-6 years of age
- Create a mechanism for the certification of non-governmental training organisations/institutes involved in early childhood training
- Develop ECD capacity within current Teacher Resource Centres to provide training in response to requests from communities
- Develop training guidelines
- Develop a Plan of Action for the provision of training
- Develop training materials
- Create an accreditation system for recognition of different levels of training/competence within the ECD field
- Develop criteria to be utilised by the Inspectorate in monitoring ECD programmes

***At the regional level.*** The Regional Early Childhood Development Officers shall have primary responsibility for implementation of MBEC's contribution to ECD at the regional level. Housed at the Teacher Resource Centres, the Regional ECD Officers will be responsible for:

- Operationalising national curriculum guidelines based on regional needs
- Creating a mechanism for the certification of teachers based on national guidelines
- Monitoring/Supervising ECD programmes for quality control
- Organising, setting up and conducting regular pre-and in-service early childhood training workshops through the TRCs in their region, following the Ministry's Plan of Action for in-service training
- Conducting evaluations of each training workshop and keeping records of ECWs attending workshops
- Conducting regular field visits to ECWs to ensure effective quality programmes
- Monitoring training progress and impact, and identifying areas for improvement
- Setting up and maintaining the early childhood corners at the TRC
- Assisting the Early Childhood Workers during their visits to the TRC
- Producing appropriate early childhood training and awareness materials in consultation with Head Office
- Submitting regular reports on activities/tasks carried out
- Conducting an annual evaluation of the programme

***At the local level.*** There will be no MBEC staff operating on a daily basis at the local or community level. However, as noted, the Regional ECD Officer will make periodic visits to ECD programmes for the purpose of providing supervision, on-going training and monitoring of programme implementation. The visits of the Regional ECD Officer will be coordinated with the activities of the Community Activators, Community Liaison Officers and NGOs working in the community.

#### ■ MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES (MOHSS)

The Ministry of Health and Social Services shall be responsible for all health inputs into ECD programmes. At the level of the National ECD Committee, the health services that can be provided to young children and their families through ECD programmes will be defined. An appropriate structure will be created to assure input from MOHSS at the national, regional and local levels in programme implementation.

***At the national level.*** The Ministry of Health and Social Services shall be responsible for developing the guidelines used in the delivery of health components through ECD programmes.

***At the regional level.*** The MOHSS shall work with the Regional ECD Officers to assure that appropriate health promotion activities are built into the ECD curriculum. They will also assist in

training ECWs in terms of appropriate health monitoring activities that can be undertaken within the ECD programme.

***At the local level.*** MOHSS shall provide periodic screening of children in ECD programmes. They will also work with ECWs to assure that all children are immunised. The Health Visitor will make periodic visits to the ECD programmes to monitor children's health and respond to the specific needs of the ECWs.

#### ■ MINISTRY OF FINANCE

The Ministry of Finance shall play a lead role in creating a structure for the allocation of funds to ECD programmes. Within the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, and within the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture resources will be allocated to the ECD Programme. In addition the Ministry of Finance will provide guidance in the creation of alternative funding strategies. (See Section VI for a description of possible alternatives.)

#### ■ MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

The Ministry of Home Affairs will serve in an advisory capacity to the National ECD Committee. They shall ensure the safety, security and protection of young children by providing guidelines that can be used by Early Childhood providers in their work with children and families.

#### ■ MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism shall serve in an advisory capacity to the National ECD Committee. Their role will be to ensure that young children are made aware of environmental issues and that the environment is a safe place for young children.

### ***Non-governmental Organizations***

Historically NGOs (churches and others) have played a significant role in the development of ECD programmes. They established the first kindergartens and remain a significant provider of ECD services. Many of the programmes they have established have been created to meet the needs of children most in need of early childhood provision. The NGOs have developed alternative models of care, most notably home-based provision and parent education programmes, thus allowing early childhood programmes to reach a population not served by the pre-primary classes offered by Government.

In addition to having created a variety of ECD models, the NGOs have developed training systems. Initially these were created to meet their needs to staff their own programmes. However, as ECD programmes have been created by communities and less well established NGOs, the NGOs with more experience have provided training outside their own programme framework.

NGOs represent an invaluable resource in the development of policy related to young children and in terms of implementation of quality programmes. The NGO community can provide appropriate training, curriculum and material development activities, and support local early

childhood programmes. Thus they will be active partners in the development and implementation of the National ECD Policy.

***At the national level.*** A representative of the NGO community shall be a member of the National ECD Committee, working with governmental agencies to create and oversee the implementation of the ECD Policy. An ECD Coordinator shall be appointed who represents the NGOs supporting ECD programmes. This person shall work closely with the ECD Coordinators within the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing and the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture to create national guidelines for the implementation of ECD programmes.

***At the regional level.*** The NGOs shall link with the TRC in the provision of training and on-going support to ECD programmes in the region. As noted, each TRC will be staffed with one person from MBEC responsible for ECD coordination within the region (the ECD Officer). Given the magnitude of training needs within the regions, this individual will be unable to provide the necessary pre-and in-service training that is required. Therefore, NGOs will be drawn upon to support the training effort.

***At the local level.*** One of the strengths of NGOs is that they have considerable experience working at the grassroots level. They have developed processes for working with communities to both define community needs and to develop community-based solutions to problems. Thus they are an important partner in establishing ECD programmes within communities.

Note: At the present time there is no national ECD Association, although some attempts have been made to create such a body. The creation of a National Association should be encouraged. The association should have the responsibility for appointing someone to the position of ECD Coordinator, to work with the ECD Coordinator positions in MRLGH and MBEC. In addition, the association can play an important role in terms of advocacy and the 'professionalisation' of the field of ECD. Good models for this exist in the Republic of South Africa and in the USA. Further, the *Early Childhood Development Network for Africa* (ECDNA) has recently been formed. Its purpose is to share information and expertise among African ECD practitioners, to promote ECD concerns, to share experiences, to provide a source of technical assistance within the region, etc. This might be a valuable resource at some time in the future.

## ***Other Partners***

### ■ THE PRIVATE SECTOR

There are others within the country that play a significant role in supporting ECD programmes. This includes the private sector, foundations and philanthropic organisations. The private sector can contribute through creating ECD programmes for the children of their employees. These can either be on-site, depending on where the business is located and the feasibility of allocating appropriate space to the ECD programme, or they can provide vouchers to employees who can then 'purchase' appropriate child care at a facility of their choice.

The private sector can also contribute by 'adopting' a community and providing finances to sustain their ECD programme(s). They can also donate equipment to ECD programmes, or provide food and/or materials. Business people should be asked to sit on the Boards of ECD programmes. This will bring management expertise to the enterprise and it helps raise the awareness of the public to ECD issues. Business people can become strong advocates for ECD provision.

Contributions will be sought from the private sector for the Children's Trust Fund described in Section VI.

#### ■ NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

Historically the Rossing Foundation has been a significant contributor to ECD. Other national foundations shall be educated as to the importance of ECD and to the role they can play in supporting programmes for young children. Specifically foundation support will be sought to fund innovative pilot projects, evaluations of current ECD programmes, needs assessments within communities, and basic research on child growth and development within Namibia, particularly in relation to childrearing practices and how these can be built upon in ECD programming. Foundations will also be encouraged to contribute to the Children's Trust Fund.

#### ■ INTERNATIONAL DONORS/BILATERAL AGENCIES

There are several international organisations that have made a significant contribution to the development of ECD programmes in Namibia. Most noticeably these include the Bernard van Leer Foundation and UNICEF. These organisations and others can continue to contribute through supporting the development of model programmes; providing international training opportunities; providing financial support for positions in government; supporting the development of degree-level in-country training; enhancing the capacity of Teacher Resource Centres, providing vehicles to facilitate transportation, and contributing to the Children's Trust Fund.

### *ECD Programme Components*

In the discussion of the administrative structure that shall be put into place to implement the ECD policy, a number of ECD programme components were noted in regard to who would take responsibility for that component. This has been summarised in Table 6. The table presents various ECD programmes components, the Ministry or agency that will take the lead in the development of that component, supporting agencies, related areas, and the status of the activity. What follows is a general description of key components of ECD provision.

#### ■ ECD PROGRAMME INFRASTRUCTURE

As has been noted, ECD programmes can be provided in a variety of contexts--in the home, in community centres, in church halls, and even under trees. Regardless of the actual location of the programme, there are a variety of guiding principles that facilitate the setting up and management of ECD programmes. These *guidelines for the establishment of ECD programmes* shall

be provided to Parent Committees (in the local language) to facilitate their task and provide them with an understanding of their responsibilities.

Another important part of the infrastructure is the establishment of *standards and regulations*. ECD programmes will need to meet specified standards in order to *register*. All ECD programmes serving young children in groups shall be required to register with the Government and receive a licence. While standards shall be established to assure a safe, healthy, and secure environment for children, these shall be flexible in order for them to be adapted to reflect regional differences.

The development of sustainable funding for the ECD programme is an essential part of programme infrastructure. It will be discussed in Section VI.

## ■ CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

ECD curriculum guidelines are required at several different levels. At the core of the ECD programme is the curriculum to be used with the beneficiaries of the programme—whether that be parents or the children. To meet the specific needs of young children, curriculum guidelines shall be appropriate to the developmental and learning needs of children in the various age groups being served. The curriculum shall take into consideration children's needs in health, nutrition, education and psychosocial development and prepare children both for school and lifelong learning. Further, the curriculum shall be culturally sensitive, and prepare children for a society based on access, equity, equality and democracy. The curriculum shall be provided to those working with young children and their families in the form of *Curriculum Guideline for ECWs*. While a more theoretical set of curriculum guidelines has been developed for those providing training (Manual for Early Child Care and Development (MBEC & UNICEF, 1995), a simplified version of these guidelines shall be developed for practitioners.

There is also a need for *Curriculum Guidelines for Trainers*. This describes the subject areas that shall be included in the training of teachers and the specification of training techniques to facilitate the training process. An important document already available is Workshop Ideas for Early Childhood Trainers: A Handbook (MBEC, MRLGH and UNICEF, 1995).

## ■ TRAINING

Training occurs at many levels. There is the training of the individual who actually works with children and/or parents. It is also necessary to provide training to the Parent Committee that has responsibility for overseeing the operation of the ECD programme. At the next level, there is a need to train the Community Activators and Community Liaison Officers in how to provide support to ECD programmes in the communities. Those operating at the regional level, the Chief Community Liaison Officer and the ECD Officers, need training, and those within the national structure who take on the role of ECD Coordinator within their respective organisations need appropriate training. Thus an assessment of needs in relation to job description shall be conducted and appropriate training systems and opportunities designed to provide individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies.

Among ECWs there is a wide variety of skills and basic levels of education. One training package does not cater to the range of needs. A tiered or step training system shall be developed which

caters for the needs of early childhood workers with little or no basic education, to a mid-level training, through to tertiary level training. (Such a tiered training system is described in Curriculum for Pre-School Teachers Education (Early Childhood Worker). (MEC/NIED, June 1994))

Training of Early Childhood Workers will be offered by Early Childhood Development Officers located at Regional Teacher Resource Centres (TRC). At the present time 10 TRCs are operational. ECD Officers will be available to provide training and support to communities developing ECD programmes.

Through a National Training of Trainers system begun in 1995, three individuals attended a Training of Trainers Workshop in Johannesburg. Upon returning to the country they trained others, resulting in a cadre of trainers within the country. These include Early Childhood Development Officers within MBEC and Community Liaison Officers from MRLGH. The ECD Officers shall provide training and support to Early Childhood Workers. The Community Liaison Officers provide training for Community Activators who are responsible for training parents and mobilising communities.

It shall also be necessary to prepare Regional Councils and the Regional ECD Committee to carry out their responsibilities in relation to the ECD Policy. Training shall provide them with a basic understanding of the importance of ECD and what it means to provide programmes for children in this age group. They shall also be trained in programme management, providing them with the skills necessary to be responsive to the needs of communities.

Another aspect of training is the credentialling of non-governmental organisations providing ECD training, if they want their trainees to receive national credentials. Thus a process for credentialling training institutions shall be developed. Guidelines for accreditation for different levels of training shall be developed nationally. The guidelines shall include an analysis of the training courses being offered, staff qualifications (experiential as well as academic), agency experience in providing the services for which they are seeking accreditation, the adequacy of the training facilities and the resources available to trainees. The ECD Certificates offered by credentialed training institutions shall be recognised nationally.

## ■ QUALITY ASSURANCE

One of the key issues within ECD provision currently is the quality of the services being provided. At the present time ECD programmes are so under-resourced that they may, in fact, be unhealthy for young children. Thus there is a need to be assured that ECD programmes are promoting rather than stifling or retarding children's growth and development.

The most common way to address the issue of quality is to focus on the adequacy of the physical environment (availability of water, toilets, space, ventilation, etc.). These are the *static* dimensions of quality. And while these are important dimensions of an ECD programme, the standards set are often unrealistic, so people are unable to register their programmes. This means that many ECD programmes do not have access to the training and support that will be provided

through TRCs and the work of Community Liaison Officers. Thus, as noted above, standards shall be set that are realistic within the prevailing context.

Quality consists of more than the static dimensions. Also of importance are the *dynamic* dimensions of quality. The dynamic dimensions are, in most instances, more important than the static dimensions. The dynamic dimensions address the types of interaction that occur within an ECD programme--the type of interaction that occurs between the ECW and the children; the kind of interaction that occurs between ECWs and parents; child-to-child interaction, etc. If the ECW has an understanding of child development and her role in promoting children's growth and development then the way she interacts with the child will be significantly different from the interaction that occurs when the ECW plays a 'teacher' role. Quality programmes are those where the ECW creates an environment within which children are able to become self-confident learners.

To determine quality and whether or not the ECD programme is achieving its goals it is necessary to institute an assessment, monitoring and evaluation process when the programme begins. This process should take into consideration the conditions and needs of parents and children when the programme begins, and create systems that provide for the collection of data over time so that periodic reviews of progress can be made to determine programme impact.

TABLE 6

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ECD PROGRAMME COMPONENTS

<i>Component</i>	<i>Responsible Agency (ies)</i>	<i>Supporting Agency (ies)</i>	<i>Status</i>
Guidelines for establishing ECD programmes	MRLGH	MBEC, MOHSS, NGOs	P
Regulations/Standards	MRLGH	MBEC, MOHSS	N
Registration of Programmes	MRLGH	MOHSS	P
Curr. Guidelines for ECWs	MBEC	NGOs, MRLGH	P
Curr. Guidelines for TRNRS	MBEC/MRLGH	NGOs	P
Training—National/Regional Trainers	MBEC/MRLGH	NGOs	O
Regional ECD Committees	MRLGH	MBEC	N
Community	MRLGH		O

Activators Liaisons Officers			
ECD Parent Committee	MRLGH	NGOs	P/O
Early Childhood Workers	MBEC/NGOs	MOHSS/NGOs	O
Materials Development/Product ion	MBEC/MRLGH	NGOs	O
Facilities/Place for ECD Programme	Community	MRLGH/MBEC/NGO Private Sector/MWTC	O
Inspection/Monitoring/ Supervision	MBEC/MRLGH	MOHSS	N
Data Base— Collection/Analysis	MRLGH	MBEC/MOHSS/NGOs	P/N
Basic Research Programme	NIED/UNAM	MRLGH/MBEC	P
Evaluation	MRLGH	MBEC	N
Child Assessment	MBEC	UNAM/MRLGH/MOHSS	N
Health Guidelines	MOHSS		P
Health— Delivery/Surveillance	MOHSS	ECW	O
Child Protection	MHA	MBEC	P
Policy/Legislation	ECD Committee		O
Advocacy	ECD Committee		O
Funding	MRLGH	Min Finance /MBEC/NGOs	N

KEY: C = Completed, P = Partially Developed, N = Needs to be Developed, O = Ongoing Activity

## *Costs/Financing*

### *Costs*

This document does not contain data on costs. This is a priority issue for the Task Force. A primary difficulty is that cost data are not generally available. These need to be generated. A necessary next step in the process is to calculate the following costs (both in terms of cash and in-

kind contributions) at three levels: in the provision of services (ECD programme costs); infrastructure costs at the regional level; infrastructure costs at the national level.

#### ■ LOCAL ECD PROGRAMME COSTS

Costing shall be done by type of programme (centre-based, home-based, home visiting, parent education) and by type of supporting agency (government, Church, NGO, private providers). These shall also be done by region as there are significant regional differences. This will yield data on how much is spent on children and/or parents in the various settings. For each programme the following costs shall be collected:

- Start-up
- Facilities (if a centre-based programmes), equipment, supplies  
Staff training

#### Ongoing costs

- Maintenance of the facilities
- Renewable materials
- Periodic replacement of equipment
- Staffing costs
- On-going training and supervision
- Transportation

Given the data generated regarding the costs of ECD programmes in the various settings, a per child/parent cost will be calculated. In determining per child/parents costs issues of quality shall be taken into consideration. This shall be balanced against what can feasibly be provided within a given context. In other words, neither the most expensive nor the lowest cost examples of provision will be used as the frame of reference.

By extrapolating from the per child/parent costs, the costs of providing ECD services to all children 0-6 will be calculated. It is neither feasible nor desirable to provide ECD services for all children. Instead, government shall review needs and allocate resources to ECD programmes accordingly. Progressive targets shall be established in relation to the percentage of the age group to be served. An example of such a progression is in Table 7. However, before setting targets, data will be collected on the extent of current provision to be used as a referent.

TABLE 7

PHASING OF ECD PROVISION -A FIVE YEAR PLAN  
PERCENTAGE OF AGE GROUP RECEIVING ECD PROVISION\*

<i>Ages</i>	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 4</i>	<i>Year 5</i>
0-1	3%	6%	9%	12%	15%
1-2	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%
2-3	6%	12%	18%	24%	30%
3-4	12%	24%	36%	48%	60%
4-5	12%	24%	36%	48%	60%
5-6	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

\* It should be noted that provision can be home-or centre-based, it can be in non-formal as well as formal settings, and it includes parent education.

■ REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

ECD programmes require technical support. This shall be provided through infrastructures within the MBEC and MRLGH which are already in place. Thus for some tasks, current funding is sufficient. However, there are some additional inputs that are required to create a structure for the development of sustainable ECD programmes.

***Staff (Trainers/Supervisors)***

***MBEC -Regional ECD Education Officers (11).*** These are new positions but they will be filled by people currently under contract with the MBEC. Thus there are no new costs associated with these positions.

***MRLGH -Community Activators (60) and Community Liaison Officers (20).*** These individuals are currently in government employment. They will receive additional training to function as key actors in the development and support of ECD programmes.

### ***Training-Pre-service***

Facilities  
Trainees costs (transport/per diem)  
Materials

### ***Training-In-service***

Facilities  
Transportation  
Materials

### ***Facilities Regional TRCs (ECD corner)***

Materials  
Support staff

### **■ NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS**

The responsibility at the national level is to provide the policy framework and guidelines for ECD programmes. There is also the responsibility of overseeing coordination and collaboration across Ministries and with NGOs and the private sector to assure equity and the provision of quality services. Thus there needs to be infrastructure support at the national level. This includes staff who have specific responsibility for ECD, and support for them.

### ***Support costs for the Secretariat for the ECD Committee***

Secretarial  
Supplies

### ***Staff within MBEC and MRLGH responsible for ECD***

*MRLGH -ECD Coordinator*, within Community Development Directorate  
This person will also serve as Secretary to the National ECD Committee  
*MBEC -ECD Coordinator*

### ***Support staff***

Secretarial  
Transportation

### ***Training costs***

Staff (training of national staff in their new roles)

## *Financing*

At the local level, the community shall be responsible for funding the ECD programme to the extent that they are able. This can be done through parent fees, contributions from the organising agencies/organisation, in-kind contributions, and seeking support from local businesses. The MRLGH shall provide communities with an *Activating Fund* that provides an ECD programme with some basic equipment ( e.g. blankets, mats, utensils for the children, chairs, etc.) The contents of this Activating Fund will differ depending on the needs of the ECD Programme. In addition, the Regional ECD Committee can apply for funds from the Children's Trust Fund.

At the National level a *Children's Trust Fund* shall be established. Government will contribute to the fund through a special tax created for the purpose of supporting ECD efforts. Donor agencies will be encouraged to contribute to the fund as well. The National ECD Committee shall appoint the Board of Trustees who shall be responsible for overseeing and managing the Trust Fund. Trustees will include members of Government, a lawyer and an accountant. The Board of Trustees will be responsible for developing the criteria to be used in disbursement of the Fund and the mechanisms whereby the funds are disbursed. The Trustees will also monitor use of funds. Annually the Board will provide an audited report to the National ECD Committee on the status of the Fund. Branches of the Children's Trust Fund shall be established at the regional level.

Another alternative way of funding ECD is through the creation of a quasi-governmental body whose mandate is implementation of programmes for young children and their families. Funds to support this body can be generated through a national Tax on businesses/individuals.

As the idea of a Children's Trust Fund and/or taxation are explored, technical assistance will be sought from countries who have undertaken these innovative ways of funding ECD programmes. (Models for the development of Trust Funds can be found in Mauritius, and the taxation approach has been implemented in Colombia.)

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## *Annex 1: Abbreviations and Acronyms*

CA	Community Activator
CCLO	Chief Community Liaison Officer
CLO	Community Liaison Officer
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDNA	Early Childhood Development Network for Africa
ECPD	Early Childhood Protection and Development
ECW	Early Childhood Worker
HDI	Human Development Index
MBEC	Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (since March 1995)
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture (prior to March 1995)
MOHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MLGH	Ministry of Local Government and Housing (prior to 1993)
MRLGH	Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (since 1993)
NPA	National Programme of Action for the Children of Namibia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## *Endnotes*

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<sup>1</sup> The Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Early Child Development was created in March 1994. It was established as a joint initiative by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, and the Ministry of Basic Education for the purposes of defining a National Policy on Early Childhood Development. Members of the Task Force include: Mr. I. Iithete, Director, Community Development, MRLGH (co-Chair); Mr. T. Kamupingene, Director, Education Programme Implementation, MBEC (co-Chair); Mrs. A. Mushimba, Deputy Director, Community Development, MRLGH; Mrs. E. Muundjua, Deputy Director, Community Development, MRLGH; Mr. W. Nel, Senior Education Officer, MBEC; Ms. J. Comalie, Chief Social Worker, Directorate of Social Services, MOHSS; Ms. B. Farmer, Senior Social Worker, Directorate of Social Services, MOHSS; Ms. E. Rencs, Primary Teacher, MBEC; Ms. D. Yates, Coordinator, Children's Desk, CCN; and Ms. N. Abrishamian, Project Officer, ECD, UNICEF. The Task Force was assisted in the writing of the ECD Policy document by Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika of Zambia, and Dr. Judith L. Evans from the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development.

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