

---

# SITE VISIT: NEPAL CASE STUDY

---

By Caroline Arnold, 1990. Source: *Women, Work and the Need for Child Care*.

---

## *Background*

Nepal is a land of great diversity. Wedged between India and China, the land descends from the world-famous peaks of the Himalayas, through the hills, to the flat sub-tropical plains known as the Terai. Ninety-four percent of Nepal's population live in rural areas; around half in villages inaccessible by road. The country's great variety of terrain is matched by its great diversity of ethnic groups and cultural practices. Eighteen different languages are currently spoken by more than 5,000 people, basically split into the Tibeto-Burmese and Indo-Aryan groups.

The state religion and most powerful ideological force in Nepal is Hinduism, with the King regarded as an incarnation of the God Vishnu. Buddhism also has a strong tradition and Buddhist and Hindu elements are mixed in many people's practices and beliefs. Spiritual leaders have a pervasive influence and the caste system, although illegal as a basis for discrimination, still exerts a powerful influence in Nepalese society affecting, to varying extents, people's access to employment, education and power.

The population of Nepal is close to 15 million, including eight million children under the age of fifteen. Large families, averaging six children or more, are the norm. The significance and resilience of the family constitutes a point of convergence across the different ethnic groups. In rural communities, the joint family may include a number of paternally related men with their nuclear families. Families in the hills are usually composed of a parent couple with their married sons and the latter's nuclear families. In the Terai, joint families are larger and more complex. In all cases, pressure is now being felt by these large extended families as land holdings, which have been divided and redivided for generations, become too small to support so many people.

Cut off from the outside world until the 1950s, the people of Nepal have for centuries demonstrated remarkable skill and resourcefulness in winning a living from the land. But population and ecological pressures are making their situation ever more precarious. Indeed harsh conditions make Nepal one of the world's poorest countries (according to the World Development Report of 1985 only three other countries had a lower GNP per capita).

Any improvement in the Nepalese economy has been largely off-set by population growth (2.66 percent and increasing) and the country is now experiencing a food crisis, the result of both ecological and socio-political conditions of production. Despite investments in agricultural development, most of Nepal's rural population is undergoing a process of impoverishment resulting in increasing nutritional stress—with women and children most at risk.

## *Women's Lives and Women's Work*

Throughout the country the vast majority of people are subsistence farmers. The family farm produces almost 80 percent of the average annual household income. In the division of labour, the major workload falls upon the woman and it is simply assumed she will fulfill multiple roles. According to comparative time allocation studies, a Nepalese woman must spend almost 11 hours a day just to maintain the family's subsistence level.

Men, by comparison, are involved in the family farm enterprise for approximately six hours daily. According to the Status of Women Reports, there is a general pattern of female predominance in agriculture decisions (and also household matters). Low levels of education continue to negatively affect employment of women in the formal sector. Estimates of women's participation in the economy vary according to the way in which "economy" is defined, and to the importance ascribed to activities mainly performed by women. The census definition of economic activity excludes many of the activities which absorb the labour of women because they are those essential for household survival (such as drawing water, fuel and fodder collection, kitchen gardening, food processing and child care). Ninety-six percent of women described as "economically active" are engaged in agriculture.

In addition to their contribution to the family farm and household maintenance, women also undertake "informal" economic activities such as small trade, marketing, various crafts, shop-keeping, etc., to supplement the household income. However, the time rural women in Nepal can spend on activities with potentially higher economic return is limited by their extremely heavy burden of providing food, water and fuel for the family. Landless women, and those living on small, marginal farms, often bear the full responsibility for providing food and shelter for their families while their husbands spend many months of the year seeking work elsewhere.

The extent of women's participation in the economy varies greatly across the country. Among conservative, high-income families, particularly those in the Terai, women tend to have very few opportunities and their movements are restricted. In contrast, women from the mountains regularly engage in local barter trade, frequently travelling some distance from home to market their goods.

While there are little data available, it seems that women throughout rural Nepal are often malnourished. Many factors combine to undermine female health. According to national mortality data, women at all ages appear to be less healthy than men. For one reason, family food distribution traditionally tends to favour males; women nearly always eat after everyone else. Also, women's extremely heavy work burdens, when combined with many closely spaced pregnancies and poor nutrition, clearly have a negative impact on their health.

As mothers, women play a critical role in their children's development, but they are often limited in their ability to nurture and stimulate their offspring because of social conditions that deprive them of access to food, services, resources, and information. Equally important, they simply have very little time available to spend with their children. Each year it is necessary to go further up in the hills to collect fodder, taking more and more of their time.

Access of girls and women to educational opportunities is also limited and today 82 percent of Nepalese women are illiterate. This has had a negative impact on their access to knowledge and their participation in the development process. Early on, girls are expected to participate in household labour, particularly in child care, thus reducing the likelihood that they will attend school. Combined with a general lack of confidence in the education system, this has meant that only 30 percent of school-age girls currently are enrolled at primary school; in some districts enrollment is as low as 13 percent and, even when enrolled, their attendance is about 50 percent lower than boys.

### *Child Care and Development*

The vast majority of births in Nepal take place in the family home assisted by a traditional birth attendant. The first few months of a child's life are often spent with the mother. Until children are six months old, they are often carried or kept in a basket. Infants usually receive a great deal of affection. Grandparents spend hours playing with them and they are constantly surrounded by other family members. They receive a lot of physical contact, which is important, as the quality of early social interaction is central to all children's development.

By the time a child is able to crawl, she/he is increasingly likely to be left in the care of other family members while the mother attends to farm work. As the young infant begins to explore, she/he is exposed to a highly contaminated environment. Thus, from early on, the child's development is subject to frequent setbacks as disease undermines an already precarious nutritional status.

The growth and development of many Asian children are hampered by poverty, lack of access to education, and poor health. In Nepal, over 42 percent of the population live below the poverty line, which is assessed by the Government at Rs. 10,667 (around U.S. \$425) per family per year. Many more live on the brink of poverty where illness, accident or poor harvests can tip the balance, forcing the household into indebtedness. Many Nepalese children suffer from gross deprivation of their most basic needs and one out of six die before reaching their fifth birthday. Such high infant and child mortality rates (113 and 165 respectively) not only underscore the vicious cycle of poverty, but also point to increased risks of damage for the survivors. According to the National Nutrition Survey's weight-for-age data, two-thirds of Nepalese children under the age of six are malnourished and an additional five percent are very severely affected. During the "hungry months" (March-July or August), most family households are totally involved in land preparation and planting. While labour demands increase, food reserves decline resulting in increased malnutrition among children. Some local surveys have reported food shortfalls affecting 50-75 percent of households during this period.

Food shortages are, of course, not the only factors involved in malnutrition. The frequency of parasitic infections, contaminated water, environment, and the extreme frequency of diarrhea, which inhibits the absorption of nutrients, also play a major part. Feeding patterns, too, contribute to poor infant health. There is a trend towards early supplementation (i.e., before four months) because of women's heavy workloads. On the other hand, exclusive reliance on breastfeeding for older infants, who need other sources of nourishment, is also widespread.

Poor nutrition seriously undermines the capacity of children to resist disease. Children suffer from gastrointestinal, respiratory and a wide range of other diseases with tuberculosis and measles being amongst the most common. At present around 40 percent of infant deaths occur during the first month of life, mostly due to neonatal tetanus, premature birth, and low-birth weight. A general lack of awareness of the additional nutritional needs of pregnant women seems apparent and there are scarce means of meeting these needs.

By the time children can walk, they are considered old enough to be left in the care of an older sibling. Girls of five, or even younger, are entrusted with the responsibility of looking after children of one or two. From this time on, the child's information concerning the world comes mostly from other children, rarely in the form of direct instruction but rather by means of imitation. Parents, however, are held responsible for the child's cleanliness, eating habits and moral qualities.

Sick children are cared for by family members. The first outside consultations are almost always with the dhams and Jhankaris (the traditional healers) who are easily accessible. In many parts of Nepal, the nearest health post is hours, if not days, away on foot. In addition, health posts often experience drug shortages, and there are also frequent communication problems between rural parents and the health workers. A heavily centralized bureaucracy has further hampered the delivery of health services for children. Vertical projects, an extreme bias towards curative practices rather than prevention, and lack of women's participation in the health sector are major problems. Of the many health education interventions available, only ORT (oral rehydration therapy) has received sustained attention. In most parts of the country immunizations are carried out by travelling teams. One of the most significant reasons children are not being immunized seems to be lack of information regarding where and when immunizations are given.

## *Identifying the Need*

In Nepal, where infant mortality is high, low birth weights prevalent, and morbidity and malnutrition widespread, child development programmes must have a strong orientation towards health, nutrition, sanitation, and parental education because the majority of children who do survive will, for the most part, continue to live in the same potentially debilitating conditions of poverty that first put their lives at risk and now threaten their development. There is also a need for a psychosocial component—to be interwoven with other activities—as the developmental perspective compliments the emphasis on survival by addressing the question of how these children will live the rest of their lives.

Planning child development programmes in Nepal must also take into account the increasing stress women are under just to meet the family's subsistence needs. The demands that accompany their dual roles as chief nurturer and main provider can become overwhelming. The challenge therefore, is to develop effective programmes which simultaneously address both women and children's intersecting needs. Women's lack of access to education and information, as well as the pressures on their time, must be taken into account. Fathers, and the community as a whole, also need to be involved—education and information should not be directed only at mothers.

It is also necessary to look at the broader picture. In Nepal, there has been a lack of political commitment to early child development, which means that professional expertise in the field is extremely limited. Education below primary school falls outside the formal education system and, therefore, is inaccessible for most young children. The Nepal Children's Organization operates centres that provide pre-school education and day care for about 4,000 children, however, these centers are situated in district headquarters and serve the needs of government officials and town residents. While many private pre-schools can be found in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, in rural areas there is an almost total lack of any sort of child care facilities. Those that do exist generally have been introduced in connection with community development projects supported by donor agencies and cater to only a few thousand children nationwide. While financial support from the government for this sector is currently unavailable, the development of pre-school programmes through community participation is stressed in the Seventh Plan and the Basic Needs Policy.

In Nepal, almost 40 percent of children drop out of school during the first year. And, of those who remain, 25 percent have to repeat Grade 1. This is indicative of the difficulty many children have in coping with the school environment.

## *Taking Action*

The early childhood programme described in this article was developed as an integral part of the Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW) project. This project was built upon the knowledge gained from the Status of Women in Nepal reports that were conducted among Nepal's various ethnic, cultural and geographic groups. These reports confirmed several assumptions which designers of Women-in-Development projects worldwide have used as the basis for their implementation strategies. The reports emphasized both the tremendous work pressures women face all over rural Nepal and the significant positive impact earning an income has both on a woman's status (her increased say in family decisions), and her family's standard of living, particularly the health, nutritional, and educational status of her children.

Administered by the Women's Development Section (WDS) of the Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development (MPLD) (local government), the PCRW project provides support for a range of inter-linked credit and community development activities carried out by village women. PCRW is a UNICEF-supported project. The PCRW project document reflects UNICEF's basic services strategy: the child is set within the context of his or her community and the emphasis is on working towards social and environmental changes within the community that will benefit the community at large and thereby enhance children's overall health and development.

PCRW field staff, working in the project's credit component, assist low-income rural women to take advantage of credit schemes available through national banking institutions for agricultural production, cottage industries, and services. These are the type of activities women are already doing and, therefore, are most suitable for income generation. In the community development component, groups of women are given the opportunity to participate in the definition of problems and the search for solutions. The activities undertaken vary from site to site according to perceived needs and available resources.

Besides having their own intrinsic merits, the economic and community development components strengthen each other. A woman's ability to take full advantage of possibilities for economic activity may depend on services provided through community development efforts. The focus has been on women's needs, so the community development efforts have emphasized projects that reduce the time required for a woman to complete her daily chores—for example, providing water near the village, a mill for processing oil and grains, or establishing child care facilities. As such these community development activities enhance women's potential to participate in economic activities. Equally important, they are services that promote sanitation, nutrition and the healthy development of children. Drinking water systems, for example, will tend to provide cleaner, as well as more accessible water, hence they have a beneficial effect on everyone's health, especially that of children who are prone to water-borne diseases.

In the original project design, child care arrangements were envisaged as one small component of PCRW's community development approach. Although the benefits to children were included in the initial conceptualization, the main concern was to free up women's time so they would be better able to engage in income generation activities. But demand for child care centres increased as field workers and communities more and more frequently identified this service as a priority. Soon child care centres had become a vital facet of PCRW's complex of inter-related activities.

While child development efforts that are part of broader community development efforts are better able to benefit from multi-sectoral support and the cooperation of the community, actually involving parents and establishing genuine community-based participatory programmes are long and complex tasks. Further, the ability of communities, themselves often on the edge of the cash economy, to take over the running costs of the child care centres has been problematic. Since the move towards self-sufficiency is slow, outside resources continue to be required to operate the centres and cannot be freed up to start new child care initiatives. Thus, this important intervention continues to directly benefit only a limited number of children. This experience brought home the realization that centre-based arrangements cannot provide adequate coverage. They are, in any case, unable to cover the wide spectrum of needs for early child care and education alone.

With this reality in mind, UNICEF prepared a discussion paper outlining various complementary programming possibilities, emphasizing low-cost strategies firmly based in the community and able to reach greater numbers of children. In determining approaches that would best respond to the needs of women and children in rural Nepal, the following strategies were considered:

- home-based programmes to be run by the mothers themselves on a rotational basis.
- parent education classes, based at child care centres and community centres, covering subjects from pre-natal care to concerns of school age children.
- a Child-to-Child programme that would strengthen older children's abilities to promote the health, welfare and development of younger children.

These goals and approaches were then discussed with the Women's Development Section (WDS). Working together, UNICEF and WDS decided to develop a programme that would help mothers be more productive with their time, while at the same time improving the quality of care

their children were receiving. Particular emphasis in the child care program would be on raising health and cleanliness standards and strengthening the ability of the mothers to support and sustain their children's overall development. The main goal framing the programme is:

to strengthen the resources available within families and communities that will enhance their own ability to create and sustain the social, cultural and environmental conditions that support survival and encourage optimal physical, intellectual, and social development of children.

Specific objectives were identified as being

- to mobilize local communities in support of early child development activities that address the needs of both women and children, in particular through direct centre-based delivery of child care for young children and education programmes built on community participation, and
- the education, training and support of parents and other family members, to strengthen the institutional capacity and programme infrastructure of WDS in order to ensure that child survival and development issues receive adequate attention and effective support for implementation.

## *Implementation*

### *Child Care Centres*

Child care centres provide services for groups of 25-35 children, three to six years old. There are currently approximately 60 child care centres serving some 1800 children scattered through 32 of Nepal's 75 districts. The goals of the child care centres are:

- to provide quality child care in a safe, clean place while parents work
- to improve the nutrition and health of under-privileged children
- to provide a stimulating learning environment that will optimize children's development, enabling them to make better use of the educational experiences that will be offered to them in Grade 1
- to establish a school-going habit in young children
- to free older sisters from child care duties so that they can attend school
- to serve as models of good child care practices for parents.

Under the guidance of a child care management committee, each centre is run by two women selected from the community, a teacher and an assistant known as a sevika, who have participated in a one-month practical training course. A rich play environment is created from materials freely available in the rural areas.

The daily schedule of each child care centre is carefully designed to offer a wide range of activities aimed at optimizing children's motor, cognitive, language and social development skills. Examples of activities include construction, modelling, sorting, creative and imaginative play, movement, co-operative games, nature observation, experimentation, and pre-math games. A sample day is as follows:

Once most of the children have arrived the teacher takes them outside for a moment. Today they each have a cloth strip about two feet long. Within moments the children are absorbed in following Man Kumari in an exuberant game where the cloth strip is stretched up above your head, disappears into a ball, is passed to a friend between your legs, is twisted round and round, tiptoed along and a myriad of other things.

After ten minutes or so of intense activity the children go, laughing and chatting, back inside. Inside they sit down quietly and the attendance register is taken. Next comes a series of question and answer songs which deal with topics such as the weather, days of the week, festivals, etc.

Each day there is a theme (sometimes one topic may carry over for several days). Today, Man Kumari has a small basket with her covered with a cloth. "What do you think is in here?", she asks the children. Twenty-six children offer almost as many suggestions and strain to see. "Well, listen" she says "be very quiet and maybe you will hear what is inside." As complete silence (except for the sevika chopping vegetables outside) descends on the room a little cheep cheep, is heard. A "bird" someone cries. Eventually the children establish that there are five newly hatched chicks in the basket and a lively discussion ensues as the chicks are examined and touched. Almost all the children have got something to tell about their own experiences with baby chicks and Man Kumari skillfully encourages those who are at first reticent to make their own observations.

After some time all the children want to use the clay and wonderful model chicks and eggs start appearing all over the place. The sevika has also prepared two different coloured paints using different clays and some of the children are soon painting on the section of wall which is specially kept aside for the children to paint on and periodically paint over with a fresh coat of mud/clay. (Paper is a rare and expensive commodity and only available from the district headquarters three hours walk and an hour's bus ride away.)

The children choose from a whole range of activities designed to improve their hand-eye coordination in preparation for writing and other fine skills. These have been set out around the room on nanglos (the woven trays used throughout Nepal for cleaning rice and pulses). Today there are clay beads for sorting and threading leaves for threading charcoal for shading some outlines on the wall, some pieces of old newspaper for tearing and a jug and tin cups for pouring.

Community participation is indispensable to the success of these activities, and communities contribute in a number of ways, such as providing the land, local materials, and unskilled labour

needed to construct a building to house the centre, providing mats, fuel, and food (often a seasonal contribution), and by cleaning the centre.

***The Home-based Programme—'Entry Point'*** This is always referred to in Nepali as 'praveshdwar' which translates as the 'entry point' or 'first door into a big, important place'.

The 'entry point' home-based programme focuses on children aged one to three and is built upon a solid base of community participation. These are informal arrangements in which mothers look after children on a rotational basis. Its objectives are:

- to establish groups which offer both a safe and stimulating environment for children, and provide mothers with more time to take part in income generation and other activities.
- to improve mothers' knowledge and skills in the areas of health, nutrition, and hygiene and to encourage them to use these skills both within the programme and at home.
- to strengthen the interaction between mothers and their children in order to support the children's optimal physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development.
- to increase women's self-confidence and help them develop their capacity to adopt new roles.

Because of her central role in the family, this approach concentrates on the mother and begins in the village home. As with other PCRW activities, the group is the focal point for action. Mothers who want to participate in the programme form themselves into a group (usually six). Before training is provided, the community must have arranged for a site for the programme, including a latrine, and a kitchen. In some places, the community has given a room to the programme; in others, particularly in the Terai, where cold is not a problem, they have constructed a small shelter. But in most instances, the mothers run the programme on a rotational basis in their own homes (although often, if one of the mothers has a room that is not much used, she will offer this to the programme). The groups meet weekly to ensure the programme is running smoothly. Each group establishes a schedule according to its own needs.

A basic kit of materials, in a tin trunk, is supplied to each group. The kit contains cooking utensils, plates, cups, a bucket, a jug, personal hygiene materials, a rug, two dolls, three puppets, a ball, and a drum. Besides the basic kit, a play material kit is also supplied, containing materials that help introduce specific concepts such as shapes, colours, body parts, domestic animals. Nine different kits are presently available, so neighbouring groups periodically exchange kits, in this way exposing the children to a variety of toys and play materials. A range of bamboo toys, made by the fathers, are also used.

As almost all the mothers are illiterate, a pictorial chart is used to indicate the daily schedule of activities. Children engage in individual play activities that teach a variety of different skills and concepts and they play simple, creative, non-competitive games. A strong emphasis is placed on personal hygiene and the use of the latrine. Each day mothers contribute food, providing nutritious meals.

---

Sri Maya lives in the middle hills of Nepal. She arranges some nesting beakers, a graded 'stacking on a stick' toy almost two feet high, rings on sticks, circle puzzles, a colour matching toy and a variety of shakers and rattles on a blanket on the floor. This set of bamboo toys were all made by the fathers over two years ago during the four-day training when Seto Gurans came to the village. Sri Maya makes a mental note to ask her husband to make two replacement pieces which have gone missing from one of the toys.

Suddenly she hears her two children laughing and chattering outside. They have been helping her by arranging old corncobs which will be used in a game around the space in front of the house. Now the other children have started to arrive with their mothers and are wondering what game they will play. Sri Maya gestures a formal namaste and then takes each of the five children in turn from their mother's arms and gives them a hug. She discusses the weather for a moment with the women—they may be a little late coming to collect the children today. It looks as if the rain may be coming soon and it is vitally important that the planting is done. This is no problem—one of the joys of running the group themselves is the flexibility it gives them. The women leave and Sri Maya starts the day by helping the children wash hands and faces and comb their hair while they all sing a song to go along with the actions. She then settles the children to play with self-selected bamboo toys.

Sri Maya then takes the group outside and they play a new game in which they dance around while Sri Maya plays a madal (drum). When she stops they have to pick up as many corncobs as they can and place them in a big cane hoop. It takes them quite a while to get the idea and Sri Maya's older boy Dil Bahadur, who is four and will go on to the child care as soon as a place becomes available, has to help the two year olds.

The pattern of activities is similar to that in the child care centres—progressing through a series of short activities—but appropriate to the interests and abilities of the 1-3 age group. There is a careful balance of very active games involving large movements and quieter activities building concentration and fine control.

One of the most notable things is the way Sri Maya is interacting constantly with either the whole group or an individual child. Even while preparing their lunch she is talking with them—discussing the pegboard one has just completed, commiserating with the little girl who has a sick dolly, suggesting where someone else might look for the ball. And so the day progresses through games and stories and songs—Sri Maya always available to lead the exploration, join in the laughter and wipe away the occasional tear and spill.

Women from neighbouring groups come together to share ideas. In addition, Sri Maya and the others in her group have already started to spread the word about the programme in neighbouring villages and new groups have started up as a result. Once the planting is completed they plan to go further afield. Thus the programme expands: woman-to-woman, group-to-group, village-to-village.

---

Benefits to children are not limited only to those who participate in the group. The quality of interaction between the mother and all of her children changes through her increased knowledge and confidence in her new role. Through this programme mothers find that, although they are spending one day per week looking after a group of children, they actually have more time to engage in other activities, including income generation.

I used to think this programme would interfere with my work but Naresh doesn't seem to get sick like he used to—I used to always be having to spend time at home because I was too concerned to leave him he got so ill. Before, even when he was well I used to worry about getting back to the house in the middle of the day to make sure everything was OK—and my fields are so far away it took me 1 1/2 hours... And Sumita is so happy because she has been able to go to school instead of caring for him all day.

Moreover, by working co-operatively over an extended period of time, the mothers learn basic management skills and increase their sense of group responsibility. The skills and confidence gained can then be carried over into other community development and income-generation projects. And this is a two-way process: sometimes income-generation groups end up starting a home-based child care programme.

As of May, 1989, there were 54 groups in operation in 11 districts and proposals from 50 already established groups, busy making preparations to start child care programmes, are awaiting training.

## ***Parent Education***

### ***Objectives:***

- to strengthen parents' self-confidence, knowledge and skills relating to their children's health and development.
- to enhance the ability of parents to foster the physical, mental, social, and emotional development of young children.

Parent education classes are held at child care centres and community centres. They are conducted weekly by supervisors/child care centre teachers, health workers or women from the community who have received training. Presently the main focus of the training materials is on common rural health problems because this is such a keenly felt problem. The parents' groups are encouraged to identify measures that the community can take to both prevent and deal with health problems. Some child development materials are also included. Classes are designed to be active and participatory, so they are deliberately kept small, usually around 15 people. Parents know their child better than any professional ever can and the emphasis is on recognition and respecting existing knowledge and practices and, while building on this, to also provide new knowledge that will facilitate changing any harmful practices. The parent education classes also contain a functional literacy element, and the importance of this aspect should not be under-estimated. Being able to sign their own name on a bank loan, for example, represents an enormous increase in self-dignity.

As more child development materials are produced, the parents' role as the child's first and most natural teachers is being further emphasized. Initial focus is on strengthening parents' verbal and non-verbal interaction with their children in everyday situations, such as breast-feeding, washing, dressing, feeding, putting the child to sleep. Mothers are taught how to use everyday activities (sorting beans, kneading dough, cleaning rice, etc.) as opportunities for play activities. Fathers are shown how to make simple toys that have multiple uses for their children.

### ***Child-to-Child***

Child-to-Child is an international programme based at the Institute of at the University of London which builds on the traditional practice of older children caring for younger ones. Within PCRW its objectives are:

- to form groups of child volunteers and provide them with information and practical skills that will enable them to enhance the health and development of younger children;
- to encourage them to share information and knowledge with other family and community members;
- to involve child volunteers in community action in order to improve the village environment.

At present this programme is functioning on a pilot basis in two sites, one in the schools and one with out-of-school children. As the communities where the programme is operating are located far from health posts, the emphasis of the first set of activities has been on health and nutrition. Topics include immunization, construction of a latrine, ORS, attention to scabies, eating healthy food, looking after children who are sick, etc. New activity sheets now being developed will contain, in addition to the current health/nutrition emphasis, ideas for active, fun-filled interaction with younger children.

In each case, a team of child volunteers, 10-15 years of age, is formed. This team meets monthly. At each meeting activities carried out by the children during the previous month are discussed and then a different topic is introduced. The activity-based approach is central to the Child-to-Child programme. A facilitator (a supervisor, child care centre teacher or school teacher) works with each group, acting as a catalyst, encouraging the children to help each other and their communities. She also interacts with families, community leaders and the health services if necessary.

Perhaps most important in terms of its potential long-term effect, however, is the emphasis on preventive rather than curative solutions to health problems. The child volunteers have been particularly successful in promotion of ORS, an important intervention not included in the school health curriculum. In addition, through these activities, the children gain a sense of increased self-esteem and confidence.

## *Organization and Management*

The Women in Development Section, which administers the PCRW project, functions within the Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development Planning, Integration and Women in Development Division. Headed by an extraordinarily committed, capable, and charismatic chief, VMS is divided into two major groups: 1) field staff, who facilitate the design and implementation of economic activities and community development projects, and 2) central staff who provide the technical, logistic and administrative support required for field work.

The early childhood programme is fortunate in being under the direction of someone with a clear vision of the close interrelationship between women and children's needs. She also has exceptional technical, management and communication skills. However, as WDS is chronically short of staff, she also has a whole range of other commitments.

WDS field staff positions have been filled by a new cadre of women government officers, the Women Development Officers (WDOs). WDOs and their assistants act as facilitators to help local women develop viable income generation and community development projects. Organized at district level, WDOs work under the supervision of the Local Development Officer who is responsible for coordinating development activities in the district.

The PCRW project is very decentralized. Each WDO supervises a group of Women Development Assistants (WDAs), who are playing an increasingly important role as PCRW expands. This shift is essential as the WDOs will, in time, become the focal point for women's activities throughout their districts, while the WDAs will be left as the sole facilitators at the local level. Therefore, the focus is on upgrading the skills of the WDAs in group formation and improving their ability to tap local resources. In addition, more emphasis is being given to training WDAs in basic technical skills that directly relate to credit and community development. It is hoped that this will enable them to help their communities make more effective use of resources available from relevant service agencies, where they exist, as well as increasing local self-sufficiency. In the early childhood programme, WDAs are beginning to take an active role in training as well as supervision and support.

The management of early child care activities is strongly participatory. The management committee of the child care centres consists of the WDO, a health worker, village leaders, mothers, teachers and other interested persons from the community. It is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the centre. The committee is also involved in helping to organize and support the parent education and Child-to-Child activities. The home-based programme is managed and run by the mothers themselves.

### *Training*

#### ■ TRAINING FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Expertise in the field of early child development is, as previously mentioned, limited in Nepal. For some time, the training needs of all rural child care centres, supported by a number of different agencies, were being met by one individual. In 1985, UNICEF recognized that it was no longer

possible for this one person, despite her indefatigable energy and capability, to handle all of the country's rapidly expanding training needs alone. Therefore, at the beginning of 1986, UNICEF supported the establishment of Seto Gurans National Child Development Services. This training and resource centre represented a considerable step forward in building up Nepal's local capacity for early child care education, training, and materials development. Seto Gurans has now assumed the lead role in meeting the training needs of the PCRW early child development programme.

Working in cooperation with WDS, Seto Gurans has developed a series of one to four-week training modules for pre-service and refresher training for child care centre teachers and sevikas, as well as pre-service and refresher training for district level supervisors. Together these modules cover all the skills needed for implementing the four child care strategies described above.

Initial training for the child care centre teachers lasts for one month. Both management and child growth and development concepts are introduced, the latter in a very practical form that can subsequently be used with the children. Considerable attention is focused on the play equipment the teachers will need in their work. Activity sheets used in the training will later help them when they introduce each topic in their classes. Trainees in the parent education and Child-to-Child programmes participate in discussions, role play, drama and demonstrations.

Training for the home-based programme takes place on-site and lasts for four days. The training approach was originally developed in a small village through discussions and activities of WDS field staff and groups of village women. Since then it has continually been modified in response to field needs. Components include, in addition to general child development themes, a focus on health, habits of hygiene (especially important where 95 percent of the population do not have access to a latrine), and nutrition. In the nutrition component, mothers learn basic elements of both nutrition and growth monitoring. Nutritious meals are prepared using only locally grown food.

While the mothers attend their training course, the fathers are shown how to make the toys which will be used in the programme. These toys are constructed out of bamboo, a material that is readily available throughout the country. The women are then trained in how to use these toys to play a variety of games designed to present different skills and concepts to the children. The training emphasizes the importance of the mothers' roles as "teachers." and aims to build up the women's confidence in their ability to manage and run the programme. While practical arrangements are discussed during the training, the day-to-day decisions involved in running the programme will be made by the women themselves.

All Seto Gurans training is participatory and strongly activity based. Most of the rural women participating in the training never have had the opportunity to experience the majority of activities they will use with the children. So, following discussions about each topic, most of the training time is spent actually playing games and trying out all the play equipment. Virtually all of the mothers in the "entry point" programme are illiterate, so a good deal of time is spent on how to use the picture inventory in the basic kit and daily schedule. In the beginning, both the

mothers and child care teachers and sevikas are often shy and reticent, but it never takes long before everyone is laughing and joining in the games.

Whatever I do, do it with me," calls the trainer as everyone takes a small piece of jute rope. "Hold your rope in both hands, over your head, behind your neck, swirl it around over your head, ... find a friend, lead your friend wherever you want ... make a tail...all together in a circle .. join your pieces together in a line .. jump over...O.K., now let's make some patterns...

And so it goes until all the trainees are taking turns leading each other in the games. The movement games always seem to be the favorites and so they are used to present most of the subject areas. For instance, the nutrition component of the child care centre training starts with group discussion of the availability of different foods in everyone's home area. The women then compare different practices, and many of them have an impressive store of knowledge to build on.

When the discussion turns to balanced diet, the fun really begins. Everyone has a card to wear indicating that they are a member of either the grain family, the pulse family or a green vegetable. They run around to the rhythm of a drum and, when the music stops, find two partners to make a balanced meal. Time is also spent more quietly, sorting food into different groups and preparing sarbotham pitto, a nutritious flour made from a combination of grains and pulses. The trainees always remember these games and use them, or adaptations of them, with the children.

During the one-month training course for child care centre staff, the women are supposed to leave their children at home. However, there are always at least five or six infants who are still breastfeeding or children who are unwell and can't be left at home present during these sessions. In cases where a woman is living alone and has no one to look after her children, she will bring them along. In marked contrast to almost all other training programmes in Nepal (even those that are supposedly serving the needs of women and children), Seto Gurans believes it is important that women who need to bring their children still be accommodated in the training programme. This has always been done successfully, although it sometimes puts an extra burden on the training staff. Still they have no doubts that it is a correct policy decision.

During the four-day training for the home-based programme, children are with their mothers from the beginning, learning to play with the toys at the same time their mothers learn how they are to be used. Towards the end of the training period, the mothers withdraw from the group one-by-one, until the children are left with just one mother. The others then observe their children and discuss what is taking place with the trainer. This process is repeated until all the mothers have had a chance to be left "in charge" of the children.

Throughout the training, the mothers are involved in making up words to songs and deciding how they want to organize their daily schedule. They are surprised that their opinions are not only invited, but are being used. That it really is their programme is very evident to anyone observing one of these training sessions. It is almost possible to feel the group grow in strength

and dignity while, at the same time, they are falling over themselves laughing as they try out some of the games.

## ■ FIELD STAFF TRAINING

Training for both central and field staff is an important part of capacity building. At this point, perhaps the most important part of Seto Gurans' role is building the capability of WDS to conduct its own training. While this takes time, especially in a situation where supervisors themselves often have limited education, progress is steady. For example, in the field training for the home-based programme, Seto Gurans' staff work hand-in-hand with WDS supervisors, a number of whom are now able to conduct training sessions on their own.

As with other PCRW activities, the group is the key. Before any training is provided a great deal of time is invested in the group formation process. One of the great strengths of PCRW's field staff training is the attention given to respecting, building rapport with, and motivating village women. This has become the indispensable base for all PCRW village level training.

The field worker has the vital role of initially mobilizing groups within villages. Then, once the programme is established, her continued support, supervision, and ability to provide further training are, perhaps, the most important factor in the long-term success of the programme. Women Development Assistants (WDAs) have been trained to fulfill this role. Initially they were trained only to provide support to the child care centres. But, as the early child care and education component expanded the range of its activities, refresher training was provided to give them the skills to work with the other programmes as well. The role of WDAs in support of parent education classes is very important. In the beginning, they may have to support the facilitator in forming a group, making practical arrangements and creating a participatory atmosphere. But it is perhaps with the home-based groups that her role is most critical. One of the reasons for the success of the home-based programme is that no further financial assistance is needed after the training to keep the programme running. The trained mothers are able to do it themselves. But while outside financial support is not necessary, moral support, new ideas to sustain enthusiasm, and help with practical problem-solving is indispensable.

### *Supervision, Support and Follow-up*

Supervision, support and follow-up is provided by WDS field staff with support from Seto Gurans. The district level supervision system has been progressively strengthened as the programme has expanded. Originally Seto Gurans took responsibility for most supervision and support activities. However, early on, the critical importance (for programme growth and sustainability) of institutionalizing this process firmly within the WDS was recognized.

Traditionally WDAs have fulfilled multiple roles in support of a range of credit and community development activities. But with the expansion of many of these components, they are now beginning to specialize in particular fields, such as early childhood education. However, in practice, because of the multiple demands of the project (due in the main part to its success), they are often required to spend large amounts of time on other PCRW activities. While this is understandable, as the project expands so does the need for specifically trained staff with

well-defined responsibilities. The need to be clear about the role of WDAs and to support them in that role is obvious. Here the Women Development Officer is absolutely critical as, time and again, her commitment, enthusiasm, capability and support appear to be the key elements in programme success.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

Monitoring and evaluation has been an integral part of PCRW as a whole since its inception. Its basic function has been to monitor the progress of credit and community development activities, and when combined with additional information, to evaluate its impact on beneficiaries. However, as originally designed, the monitoring and evaluation components did not really contribute towards effective programme management, so the system is being continually modified to strengthen field to central office communication and the ability of the central office to respond to needs in the field.

Thus far monitoring of the early childhood education component has been largely dependent on supervision forms completed by the *ECE* supervisors each month. These forms provide basic information regarding the condition of the children, the environment, regular activities, contributions of parents and the community, and any problems occurring. Information on programme performance is also obtained through local field staff and by means of field trips by WDS/Seto Gurans and UNICEF staff.

The main problem has been the lack of regular and prompt analysis of reports from the field in order to identify emerging problems or positive trends. There has also been little feedback to the field.

### ***Programme Strengths***

The early childhood programme has a number of notable strengths, all of which are closely interlinked. These strengths pivot around the way programme goals and activities have evolved as family and community-based approaches to meeting people's needs have been implemented. Activities are not rigid, externally imposed prescripts, but rather they exhibit a flexibility that allows families and communities to take the lead role in deciding how they want things to run. The planning process starts with village women and is responsive to their perceived needs. Planning, management, supervision, and support are all highly decentralized.

A second strength is that the multi-faceted child development efforts have been integrated within broader community development and economic activities. This too has had a positive impact on community participation. Moreover, the complex relationship between women's work, credit opportunities and early child care and development programmes has been recognized. Often programmes tend to focus exclusively on either enhancing women's economic status or on young children's needs.

Recognition of the crucial importance of the group process has been another strength. Forming groups around common purposes, such as obtaining credit or starting a home-based programme, is critical to building women's confidence in their own abilities to improve their lives. The mutual

support the women thereby provide to each other has many implications for improving their children's well-being as well.

It is this principle of building on the strengths of women, families and communities, rather than using a "deficit model," which is so important. And their strengths are many, for example, strong family-child and community-child bonds and a collective orientation encouraging self-control, sharing and cooperation.

This recognition of strengths is also central to the development of a training programme that emphasizes respect for what people already know and do, and confidence building. In addition, training curriculum and programme materials are all highly relevant, attractive, practical, and well matched to the educational levels of the trainees. Recognition of the interactive effect between health, nutrition, and stimulation is implicit in the design of the curriculum and this integrated approach is evident throughout all aspects of the early child care and development programme.

The range of innovative options the programme offers is another strength, with attention given to the development of an overall strategy with complementary goals and target groups. These include: 1) direct attention to the child, including younger children in the 1-3 age groups, where interventions can be so effective; 2) support and education of care givers; 3) strengthening community organization; and 4) improving conditions in the villages. Moreover, the development of the programme has been intimately linked with the establishment of Seto Gurans, a highly innovative and effective training and resource centre devoted to the promotion of early child development progress.

Collaboration between a number of different agencies at different levels has contributed to the success of the ECE programme. Collaboration between WDS and UNICEF, and Seto Gurans, has been important at all levels. UNICEF has provided both financial and practical support and has played an important role in supporting conceptualization and development of alternative, complimentary approaches. Seto Gurans has provided vital technical assistance and support for development of training, materials development, and supervision systems. At district level, links with the government health services and with the community health component of PCRW have been emphasized.

### ***Constraints to Optimal Programme Implementation***

In Nepal, where populations are dispersed, the terrain is difficult, and there are few motorable roads, there are inherent and imposing difficulties in communication. Inaccessibility places severe constraints on efforts to reach out to the children of Nepal and reinforces the need for strengthening the decentralized supervision system.

As the number of villages served and the range of activities offered by PCRW expands, they are finding themselves on the threshold of a transformation of their organizational structure, which now demands more formally defined areas of responsibility and more clearly stated definition of tasks. This is already beginning to happen, but the formal identification of specific early child care and development posts within WDS, at both field and central level, would greatly

strengthen the programme, and increased staff time would allow for increased coverage that could reach many more children. The creation, under the WDS director, of a child development officer post would greatly strengthen the project's ability to respond to needs in the field. However, it is also true that, given the severe staffing constraints, other central staff members should also be trained so that they would be able to effectively provide follow-up for this and other programmes while in the field. Also the monitoring and evaluation components need to be revised in order to make them truly responsive to field needs. This would include incorporation of feedback mechanisms, which do not, at present, exist.

Another major constraint is the continued dependency of the child care centres on external funding. When the centres were first developed, the community was expected to contribute to their support, but the resources provided by UNICEF/WDS were extensive and the guidelines specifically stated that "long term arrangements for the community to take over the running costs initially covered by WDS/UNICEF will be determined through WDS/UNICEF discussions with the child care centre managing committee," rather than systematically budding sustainability into the programming process from the start. While the vital importance of helping the centres become self-sufficient has been recognized for some time, progress has been slow. This is a lesson that should be kept in mind by other agencies embarking on similar efforts.

In Nepal there is little collaboration between ministries and the lack of an effective national referral system places severe constraints on all health, nutrition and development, programmes. However WDS field staff still have been very effective in increasing village women's access to services wherever these are available.

While the very limited ECD technical expertise within Nepal is noteworthy in this context, the barriers to optimal child development that exist within families themselves cannot be ignored in any consideration of constraints. Many of these barriers result from socio-economic conditions, as have been noted above. Here it may simply be worth adding that traditional child-rearing practices can sometimes be in conflict with the child-centred approach which recognizes the child's needs for play and exploration.

## *Effects on Women and Children*

Informal and anecdotal evidence suggests that the programme is having a significant positive impact. In the Nepali language two words meaning 'inner' and 'outer' are used to describe invisible and visible effects and are more apt, in this context, than the English. While these inner effects may not be quantifiable, they are clearly evident in mothers, children, and field workers.

The increased self-confidence for example of the rural women involved in the programme, and their delight in it, are clear in their attitudes and conversation. The field workers and Seto Gurans' staff quite rightly point to the inner effects as their chief accomplishments. It is important that expectations are realistic. The programme is set within the context of the prevailing socio-economic conditions and reflects these. However, time and again one sees the contrast between the children attending a child care centre or a home-based programme and children from a neighbouring village where no early childhood activities are operating. This

contrast is evident in terms of the children's general appearance, their health and status and, equally important, in their responsiveness, interactions, and interest in exploring their surroundings. As one supervisor said, "There is a difference. The spark is strong. There is hope and happiness, or, as a 3-year-old in a home-based programme put it, "It's fun. My mummy knows how to play all these games."

The ability of early child care and education programmes to free up mothers' time is an obvious and important benefit to women. The Chief of the Nutrition and Child Care section of WDS says that the comment, "We are mentally free now", is one she hears time and again when visiting the day care centres and entry point groups. She also believes that the opportunities for parent education built into the programme have definitely changed behavior. For instance, in many parts of Nepal there is a strong belief that if a severely malnourished child touches another child, the latter will become malnourished too. Similarly, many people believe that fruit causes coughing in children. However, through discussion and improved access to information, beliefs like these are changing. For example, in a recent informal survey conducted by WDS every single mother interviewed was now using ORS. As the Chief notes, "Sometimes the mix might not be perfect, but the principal of preventing dehydration is here to stay."

She also notes that, "The impact of the programme on children's health, nutrition and school performance is striking." Recent reports from WDOs in Kotari, Sivangunj and Tharpu districts report that all their child care centre children are going on to the elementary school, and these are children from villages where previously less than a third of all children ever attended school. Moreover, says Sulochana, the WDO from Tharpu, "They are more active, more exploratory, more social, and their language skills are much better than the other children's." In addition, as Mikana K.C., one of the most experienced supervisors points out, "Children who have participated in an entry point programme or a child care centre don't drop out or have to repeat classes like the other children do."

Within the home-based programme, it is also clear that the mothers' active involvement in running the programme has been just as important to their self-development as other PCRW activities. As their confidence increases in their new roles as 'teachers,' some begin to assume leadership roles in the community, and the management and organization skills they learn are useful in other activities.

For many mothers there is also an ever-deepening awareness of the potential of early childhood education programmes. Radha, a mother from Utter Pari in Surkhet, expresses this beautifully:

Childhood is the initial stage of life as the foundation is the first design of a house. The house can be strongly built only if the foundation is laid strongly. Similarly, if the child is to prosper and be strong, we must make the early childhood days good. Because life is so hard for almost everyone here, it is hard to think enough of children's health and better future, but our early childhood programmes have created new avenues. Sometimes it is hard to provide even two meals a day, but we believe we can make our children's future brighter, as someone reaching their destination with a torch in the dark...I think we will reach our goal taking our own steps..!

On a different level, the same is also true for field staff. Their self-confidence is a significant indicator of the success of both PCRW as a whole, and the early childhood component specifically. Their obvious and explicit pride in being associated with PCRW stands in patent contrast to the cynicism encountered among many other development workers. The emphasis on up-grading their technical skills and the greatly increased responsibility they are now being given within the early childhood programme is important to their own self-development.

### *Programme Expansion: Implications for the Future*

Consideration needs to be given to issues of programme replicability and sustainability (planning, collaboration, linkages with other programmes, costs, the mobilization of political will, etc.) that will be critical for the successful expansion of ECD programmes. The integrated nature of the early child development programme, its "process" rather than "product" approach, makes replication more complicated than for projects focused solely on one problem.

Low cost programmes facilitate expansion. However, whether or not low-cost programmes can be developed that function effectively on a large scale is still an open question and careful cost analyses are needed. The idea that community participation does not cost anything must be abandoned. Where mothers and community members are the basic service deliverers (for ECD or anything else) their training needs are considerable and training must be a continuing affair that is combined with intensive and capable supervision. The supervisors themselves also need good professional support. For example, within the PCRW's early childhood education component, it costs approx \$120 to get one home-based group established, equipped and trained. After this, no external support is needed for the day-to-day operation of the programme. While this is an impressively low figure, it must be remembered that the programme is still small-scale and relatively new. The costs of follow-up training and support still need to be determined.

Income generation has been stressed as a primary means of achieving self-sufficiency and is a logical point of contact between PCRW's programming for women and for child development. Fruit tree growing and pig breeding are examples of activities that have been initiated in support of the child care centre programme in all sites. While the child care centres may continue to be major focal points of the early childhood programme, one of their most important functions eventually may be to serve as training and co-ordination resources for a variety of complementary early child care and education activities. For instance, Parent education and Child-to-Child classes already take place at the child care centre and the home-based programmes look to the centres for advice and support, and sometimes materials or food. In addition, children participating in the other programmes have priority for admission in the child care centres.

Initially developed on a very small scale, the early childhood education programme is now expanding in stages, making continual adjustments as it learns from experience. The programme's first concerns were effectiveness and programme "fit." Now, perhaps, it is in the second stage, where the focus is on increasing its efficiency. Modest programme expansion is slowly increasing the cadre of experienced personnel who will be available to help build an expanded organizational capacity. One of the strengths of the programme has been that its expansion to

date has always been in response to the demand from families and communities. This demand, combined with decentralized organizational and management capacity, should continue to be the major consideration in pacing programme expansion. For the immediate future, VMS has identified the home-based programme as its main focus for expansion.

While the early child care and development component may expand substantially within PCRW sites, PCRW itself is a project dealing with the challenges of growth. The possibility for expanded collaboration and coordination should be explored. For example, the Agricultural Development Bank's Small Farmers Development programme has an early childhood component which could be strengthened. Other approaches include links with different international NGOs who are now either implementing, or are about to implement early child care and development activities adopted from the original PRCW model. Other possibilities include co-operation with the Nepal Children's Organization to expand coverage in rural areas. With their focus on lowcost alternative strategies Seto Gurans, while still very small, has an important role to play in expanding the country's resources for training and support, as well as promoting awareness of early childhood programmes. UNICEF's initiatives and responsibility to promote links between small but effective NGOs and larger governmental and non-governmental organizations is also critical to building up early childhood development capacity.

There is a new interest in pre-school programmes within the Ministry of Education as a means to decrease underage enrollments, repeat rates, and drop-outs in elementary school. Early child care and education programmes, which incorporate health, nutrition, and stimulation elements, can play an important role in preparing children for school. It must also be said that the drop-out and repeat figures also point to the urgent need for the improvement in the quality of primary education in terms of the relevance of the curriculum, teaching methods, etc. Here too it is important to avoid using a deficit model when looking at children from disadvantaged environments. It is perhaps more useful to view the situation as one in which children learn a different set of skills—skills more related to adult work and values of collectivity that, while functional in their own environment, may not be valued by the school system. There is now interest within the Ministry in developing training modules and activity-based curriculum materials that will be tried out on a pilot basis in selected schools.

Other opportunities include inputs into materials for out-of-school girls produced by the Ministry of Adult Education. While much relevant material is already included, there is little content specifically concerned with early childhood education. The almost total dearth of and demand for both pre grade 1 and post-literacy materials also offers some interesting possibilities, for instance, books for pre-school children which are also suitable as neo-literate reading materials for mothers and older children to read to young children.

The early childhood component's institutional memory is, at present, housed in the minds of individuals involved in its implementation, and an evaluation may now be timely. The process of evaluation would provide an opportunity to record different aspects of implementation and to look carefully at some of the key questions; for example, the links between the formation of home-based groups and credit groups and the participation in other community development

activities, the links between girls' participation in ECE programmes and their enrolment and performance in school, and the impact of ECE on children's nutritional status, etc.

## *Lessons Learned*

With so much variation in the way early childhood and development programmes are planned and implemented, it may be worth considering some of the factors that appear to be critical in the success of ECD programming in the context of a country like Nepal.

- Parents, and the community as a whole, must be involved if programmes are to become self-sustaining and, in the longer run, permanent changes in environmental and social conditions are to result. Even those programmes aimed specifically at the child (such as child care centres) must include parental education components that include the development of knowledge and skills as well as changes in attitudes and behaviour.
- The importance of the group process should not be underestimated. It is the development of dynamic cohesive action groups (particularly of women), able to articulate their needs and act together, that will generate solutions to problems that are relevant, practical and of high visibility. The potential power of rural women, once they come together in groups, to improve their own and their children's lives, is just beginning to be felt. It is through projects like these that the role of women is slowly changing from one of recipient to that of equal contributor in the overall development process. As one site report states, "The most invisible changes (i.e., attitudes) might turn out to be the most important ones"—as they lay the foundations for participation of women in the development process and for the development of conditions within the community supporting the survival and optimal development of children."
- In terms of both materials and concepts, it is important that the "technology, is appropriate and that there is a good training program to match to the level of the participants. Perhaps the key here is how the training materials are used and how back-up support is provided. For community-based early child development programmes to be successful, the focus must be on developing practical, commonsense problem-solving skills. Teaching needs to be "learner-centred," recognizing and respecting what people know and have already achieved, and then building on this. The training must encourage the growth of self-confidence among the people who will be in the child's immediate environment. They must become confident in their own abilities to stimulate and support their children's development.
- Recognizing and tackling issues related to expansion and sustainability early on is vital to the success of early childhood development programmes. To be successful, any project with a highly decentralized staff structure must be prepared to devote a significant portion of its budget and management time to training field staff. To achieve success in more than a few pilot projects, a community-based ECD approach requires a commitment, particularly in the early days, to building up technical expertise and making skilled personnel available to supervise, encourage, and advise field staff.

- The strengthening of institutions devoted to early child development is a priority. In this context, the need to foster political will—to really put child development on the national agenda—is also critically important. It is possible to do a great deal. What is needed is the will to deliver. Here it is important to keep in mind that Early Child Development is not a product to be dispensed, but a process in which families, communities, fieldworkers, professionals and planners must all work together in partnership.

Copyright © 1990 Caroline Arnold

---

*Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.*  
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1999.