

Impact Evaluation of Early Childhood Care and Development Project of Plan Nepal



Evaluation Team

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Executive summary

As one of its core program, Plan Nepal introduced childcare center in 1986. With this experience it changed its strategy and initiated Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) program in 1995. The current program, which was funded by Plan Netherlands National Organization (NLNO), was started in 1999 for 4 years (1999-2002). The second phase (FY 2003 to 2005) was completed by the end of June 2005. The third/final phase was completed in December 2008. But this project got six months "no cost extension period" which was recently completed by June 2009.

The ECCD project has aimed to ensure holistic development of the children below 6 years of age. For this, it has invested its resources for ECCD building construction, teacher preparation, remunerations, educational materials, capacity development of management committees for sustainability, and other forms of technical backstopping.

This study was conducted in order to assess the relevancy, adequacy, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, capacity, and sustainability of the ECCD program. Both qualitative and the quantitative information were collected and/or generated. Five researchers with 8 other field assistants conducted this study. Prior to go to the field they reviewed project documents, developed tools, tested them in two ECCD centers of Makawanpur district, and finalized them. During the pilot test Plan Nepal's staffs were present. They also observed the data/information collection process and shared their comments and concerns during the debriefing session. In this session CBO and NGO persons were also present. By incorporating their concerns, queries, and comments the tools were finalized. These tools were (a) observation form (b) group interview guidelines (c) achievement test, and (e) cognitive test.

The evaluation team observed 60 ECCD centers, 20 PCES program, and 10 PE of six study districts viz., Sunsari, Morang, Rautahat, Bara, Makawanpur, and Banke. It was 10% sample and the centers to be observed were identified through stratified random sampling procedure.

In the field the evaluation team observed the public school classrooms where ECCD graduates were studying. In these schools it conducted cognitive as well as achievement test with both the ECCD experienced and the non-ECCD children. Prior to visit the ECCD center, the evaluation team organized a familiarization session with the district level ECCD stakeholders. It also conducted the post study debriefing session with the same groups of peoples. The purpose of such sessions was to triangulate the field-generated information and at the same time let these people know about the result of Plan Nepal's initiative on ECCD. The team also followed the same process in the field right after the collection and the generation of the data/information. Its purpose was to triangulate the information obtained from different sources.

Both the qualitative and the quantitative information were coded, decoded, and recoded for analysis and interpretation. On the basis of these efforts the team could found out the following results:

1. ECCD program was found relevant for children's security, care, and their holistic development. They had also adequate coverage in Morang and Sunsari. But they were not found adequate in the sparsely populated areas of Makawanpur, heavily populated areas of Bara, Banke, and Rautahat. The team also found that peoples were demanding more ECCD centers for their VDCs.
2. ECCD program was found effective for many reasons. For parents it was both the childcare center and preschool program; for the schoolteachers, it was the preparatory class for their future students; for the private boarding schools it was regarded as taming center for their future nursery class students; and for the poor parents it had been the alternatives to the highly opted boarding school.

3. Plan Nepal's ECCD program was efficient in a sense that it had ensured the access of all ECCD age group children of its catchments to the center. It has also made efforts to make them all able to possess the required abilities among the ECCD children. Regarding the completers of the ECCD program, the system could ensure more than 50% of the enrollees retain there. The boys and girls' retention ratio was varied from district to the district.
4. The ECCD completers were doing relatively better in cognitive as well as the achievement test implying that they are smarter in comparison to their non-ECCD counterparts.
5. ECCD program had made positive impact to all the stakeholders of education including their parents. Their socialization, inquisitive approach to learning, social dealing, and discipline were highly admired by all the informants.
6. The ECCD teachers had adequate capacity to run the center but the low qualification holders were found more dedicated to their profession and the high qualification holders were looking for other options.
7. The evaluation team found that ECCD programs once initiated by Plan Nepal have been sustained because it could mainstream its program by signing MOU with the Department of Education for its continuation. Apart from it, there had been sporadic efforts to sustain ECCD centers by parents, SMC members, and school head teachers, and some others. But these efforts are yet to be synergized.
8. The team also found that Parenting Education, Parent to Child Early Stimulation (PCES)-home based ECCD service to below 3 years of age, ECCD center, and school classrooms were found inadequately linked for their functional coherence.
9. The Community Based ECCDs approach of Plan Nepal was found efficient in reaching to the marginal community like Dalits. It had also addressed gender issue and social inclusion.
10. The PCES approach was found very effective in improving the child caring and child rearing practices of the parents including their nutritional status.

With the above findings the evaluation team found some of the issues that are to be sorted out. These issues were related to the ECCD models for sparsely and densely populated area, bridges between different programs, sustenance by the local government, and continuous backstopping by the local people.

In consonance with the above findings and the issues the study team came up with some recommendations. They were related to (a) pedagogical continuation (b) expanded access of ECCD program (c) locally available technical backstopping, and (d) development of easy monitoring and supervision system.

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Background

Plan is an international, humanitarian, child-centered community development organization without religious, political or governmental affiliation. Its vision is of a world in which all children realize their full potentials in societies, which respect people's rights and dignity. With this vision Plan Nepal aims to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of deprived children in developing countries, through a process that unites people across cultures and adds meaning and value to their lives. Currently, Plan is working in 49 developing countries including Nepal.

Plan Nepal's Country Strategic Plan (CSP 2006-2010) incorporates hopes, dreams and vision of children stressing on empowerment of disadvantaged families and communities. It follows Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) emphasising on empowerment, respecting indigenous system, and advocacy for the rights of children, women and disadvantaged families and communities.

Plan Nepal is implementing Child Development and Learning as one of the main Country Program Outlines (CPOs). Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is one of the programs under this CPO. This program receives financial support from Netherlands National Organization (NLNO). Its first phase of grants was made available in 1999 under ECCD project (NLNO/MFO GAD# NPL 0073) for 4 years (1999-2002). The second phase (FY 2003 to 2005) was completed by the end of June 2005 and third/final phase was completed in December 2008. But this project got six months "no cost extension period" which was recently completed by June 2009.

Plan Nederland has supported this ECCD program through the funds that it generates from the private individuals and organizations. It has also granted the status of co-financing organization (MFO), which entitles it to subsidy from the Dutch Government under the co-financing policy (MFP) framework. Plan Nederland also supports for the development of civil societies that are capable to eradicate structural poverty and ensure child rights. The reason is that Plan Nederland considers poverty alleviation to be inextricably linked with it. By means of its role and mandate as an independent donor, Plan Nederland through Plan International and local partner organizations supports resource-poor communities in the nations of the South including Nepal.

In its pursuit of the visions above, Plan Nederland has supported development initiatives through three strategic interventions:

- Activities aimed at increasing access to means and services that are crucial for achieving a sustainable livelihood: education, health care, food and food security, water and sanitation, natural resources, protection, safety, etc.
- Activities aimed at institutionalizing rights, particularly child rights and gender equity, as well as reinforcing the processes and structures within society in which the poor can claim these rights.
- Activities aimed at actively informing and involving Dutch society in child-centered poverty alleviation and child rights in the South through development education and campaigns. In addition, lobby activities towards policy makers, politicians and through public media.

In line with the above strategic interventions, this ECCD project was implemented to achieve Plan's guiding principles as child centeredness, institutional learning, integration, gender equity, environmental sustainability, empowerment and sustainability and co-operation.

Understanding the ECCD program

Introduction

In the 1950s Nepal introduced childcare centre program. Initially it emerged as Montessori school. With the passage of time Kindergarten schools emerged. Later on pre-schools were developed. In the industrial areas, childcare centres were evolved and gradually expanded to the rural areas as well. In this process, programs like ECE, ECCE, ECD, and ECCD programs came into existence. All of the above programs, in one or in other way, have been implemented in Nepal.

Plan Nepal from its inception in 1986 launched childcare center program in the periphery of Kathmandu district. These centers worked as day care centers and hence they lacked holistic development and child rights. Realizing this fact Plan Nepal revised its childcare center program and made it ECCD. The rationale of this revision was to ensure holistic development (physical, social, emotional and cognitive) of the pre-school aged children (0-5 years) including their rights. With this change Plan Nepal implemented community based ECCD programs in 1996.

From 1999, Plan Nepal made ECCD as its core project under Child Development and Learning Country Program Outline (CPO) and expanded it in all Program Units (PUs). Along with the expanded area coverage, it added Parenting Education (PE), Parent-to-Child Early Stimulation (PCES)-home based ECCD intervention in ECCD program, capacity building of the management committees, and leveraging funds from other sources.

Through this program Plan Nepal advocates for and ensures children's rights to survival, protection, participation, and development. It believes that all children are active participants of the process, and they have a right to live and develop their full potential. It also holds the principle that all children should be treated equally regardless of their gender, race, caste, ethnicity, language, and religion. It has also been realized that basic demand for food, health care, protection, love, affection, interaction, stimulation, and friendly opportunities for learning and personality development are not just the basic needs but also rights of the children. For this, Plan Nepal has implemented delivery, capacity development, and advocacy programs under its ECCD initiatives.

ECCD project purpose

On the above backstop ECCD project/program was implemented to:

- Ensure physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of below 6-year children of the program districts.
- Increase awareness on child rights and development, and involvement of parents, caregivers and communities and other stakeholders in each stage of ECCD project cycle.
- Strengthen institutional capacity in managing and promoting ECCD program.

The objectives above are set in line with CSP objectives. The CSP objectives also seek to integrate ECCD program with health and nutrition, water and sanitation, livelihood, gender and children especially in difficult circumstances, birth registration and environment of the Plan's program.

Project results:

Studies done so far (Pande, 2006) reveal that ECCD has given the following results:

- Increased access of children to ECCD opportunities (center and home-based ECCD program) in Plan's program districts within 3 years.
- Improved learning environment and physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children who have attended ECCD centers and benefited from home-based ECCD program in Plan's program districts within 3 years.
- Increased enrolment of children in primary school at the age of 6 years.

- Improved health, hygiene and nutritional status of children attending ECCD centers. Raised awareness and education level of parents, caregivers and communities involved in ECCD program within 3 years.
- Enhanced management and leadership skills of ECCD MCs, CBOs and NGOs.

Major Activities

Encouraged by the above results Plan Nepal implemented number of programs in its program districts. The major programs related to ECCD initiatives are as follows:

1. Community-based ECCD centers:

Community based ECCD center is a venue. It has stimulating and child friendly environment where the children between 3 to 5 years get opportunities to develop them physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. There are various activities that assure holistic child development. ECCD Management Committee (ECCD MC) is formed prior to the establishment of ECCD center. Ideally ECCD age group children's parents are the ECCD MC. These members in consultation with local community people select the facilitator and helper for ECCD center and send them to participate in the pre-service training. Apart from it this committee is the responsible for overall management of the center. Similarly, the trained facilitator and caregiver are responsible to carry out all activities in the ECCD centers from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. including supplementary feeding and rest time. The center itself is also a place for the parents' get-together and learning venue for child rearing/caring practices, child rights, and development. The number of community based ECCD centers implemented in 6 PUs with 7 districts is given below:

Table 1: Plan Nepal's ECCD Centers over the years

Program District	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Morang	73	86	100	105	105	140	141	180	109	109	106
Sunsari									106	106	106
Rahutahat	54	66	90	91	97	132	132	140	54	54	54
Bara									104	104	104
Makwanpur	80	100	127	130	130	131	126	175	205	205	199
Banke	183	199	212	216	216	231	170	200	216	273	271
Bardiya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	43	43
Total	390	451	529	542	548	634	569	695	829	893	883

Note: - Some of ECCD centers were closed due to few numbers (5 to 7) of children

The table above shows that Plan Nepal has been increasing the number of ECCD centers though these numbers vary from district to district.

2. Parent-to-child early stimulation (PCES):

Parent-to-Child Early Stimulation (PCES) is a home-based ECCD program that provides early enrichment to the children of below 3 years of age. It combines home visiting and training to mother, father and caregivers. A female home visitor, who is trained, local and experienced of child rearing practices visits the families of below 3 years children and supports the families for interactive child

caring and rearing practices. In addition, the PCES program provides training to mothers, fathers and caregivers once a month to increase their knowledge and skills on early stimulation practices to address children's social and emotional needs and their personality growth.

PCES was implemented in 4 communities of Banke district in 2001. Gradually, it was expanded in Makwanpur, Rautahat/Bara and Sunsari/Morang PUs. PCES has been already implemented in 400 communities in Banke, Makwanpur, Rautahat, Bara, Sunsari and Morang PUs.

3. Parenting education (PE) session:

Recognizing the parents and caregivers as the first teachers of their children, Plan Nepal has been providing support to implement Parenting Education (PE) classes. PE intends to empower the parents and caregivers by enhancing their knowledge, attitude and practice required for care and development of children especially below 6 years of age. In addition, Plan Nepal's other program such as community awareness education campaign and parents' gathering add value to raise awareness among parents, caregivers and community people. A total of 428 PE classes and 200 parenting awareness campaigns have been already implemented in 6 PUs of the program districts.

Objective of this study

The main objective of this evaluation project was to assess the overall impact of the project (home-based parent-to-child early stimulation, community-based ECCD centers and Parenting Education classes) on children, families, communities and ownership of the government at end of the project.

Following the above objective, this study examined ECCD impact on the specific areas mentioned below:

- a) *Program/project relevance:* The evaluation team had analyzed how well the key issues of children regarding holistic development were addressed (timely, adequately, and qualitatively). It also examined whether the organizing structures were delivering quality ECCD services appropriately by establishing ECCD centers and conducting parenting education programs massively.
- b) *Program/project efficiency:* The team analyzed to which extent the project has efficiently used its resources in delivering the activities in line with its stated goals. In this process the team identified the strengths, the problems, and the resource use. Each of these areas were mentioned below:
 - Identification of the strengths related to human resource, networks, functional ECCD Center Management Committee, partnership collaboration and its area of improvements.
 - Figuring out the problems and constraints faced by the project during its implementation
 - Assessing the use of resources in delivering quality ECCD services particularly from the community based ECCD centers and parent to child early stimulation (PCES) – home based ECCD programs
- c) *Effectiveness:* In order to understand the effectiveness of the ECCD program, the evaluation team used the following processes:
 - Assessed the project achievement in line with given objectives and implementing approach
 - Evaluated the partnership approaches (quality, intensity, openness, dialogue) between Plan Nepal and local partners – NGOs, CBOs, District Education Office, District Child Development Committees, ECD committees at ECD center and village level.

d) *Sustainability*: The evaluation team made efforts to identify the ECCD sustainability approaches by

- Creating community demand
 - Ensuring community ownership
 - Assuring DOE/ DEO – government ownership
 - Promoting ECCD understanding level
 - Producing technical human resource on ECCD at local level
 - Institutionalizing the initiatives through District Child Development Committee, Village level ECCD network / committee and ECCD Center Management Committee
 - Creating ECCD matching fund
- e) *Equity*: How and to what extent equity aspect has been dealt by the project especially gender equity and equity to marginalized ethnicity was the question. The evaluation team answered this question through
- Coverage and expansion – within Plan working village or throughout the district where Plan Nepal works.
 - ECCD access of the marginalized children such as *dalit*, girls, and disables
- f) *Impact*: What have been the impacts of the ECCD program to the children, parents, and the community was the question related to the impact. In order to get the response of the stakeholders the following questions were asked.
- a. What had been the long-term impact of the ECCD program intervention in achieving goal of holistic child development?
 - b. What was the impact of ECCD program in relation to the access and quality of primary education?
 - c. What had been the impacts of the ECCD project at individual, families, communities and national level?

Methodology

Population and sample

Plan Nepal has implemented ECCD Program in 7 districts namely Morang, Sunsari, Rahutahat, Bara, Makawanpur, Banke and Bardiya. There are 883 ECCD centers (In FY 2009). Out of them the evaluation team selected 90 centers (i.e. 10% of the parent population) in consultation with the Plan staff- CD, PSM, SGSM, Grants Coordinator, Learning Coordinator, other Technical Coordinators (Health, Watson, Livelihood, Gender, Building Relationship), Program Unit Managers, Program Managers, PU Technical Coordinators, Director General of DOE and ECD section head of DOE and other field staff.

The ECCD personnel of each program district categorized its program under three heading viz., best performing, moderately performing, and less performing. This categorized list was made then available to the members of the evaluation team. The team identified the study centers through random sampling process. In other words the sample was taken by using the stratified random sampling procedure. The following were the selection criteria for the ECCD centers.

- ECCD centers that had at least one year's experience
- Proportionate number of ECCD center from each phases of the program.
- Equal number of girls/female and boys/men for FGDs/interviews
- Availability of the late adolescent girls and women as ECCD parents.

Keeping the criteria in mind the evaluation team identified the following ECCD centers for this impact evaluation study.

Table 2: Number of studied ECCD Centers

District	Total	Sample	Best performing	Moderately performing	Less performing
Banke	58	16	6	6	4
Bara	104	8	3	3	2
Makawanpur	199	15	6	6	3
Morang	106	8	3	3	2
Rautahat	54	5	2	2	1
Sunsari	106	8	3	3	2
Total	627	60	23	23	14

Apart from the ECCD centers, communities of the program districts were selected for Parent-to-child Early Stimulation (PCES) and Parenting Education (PEs) programs. The communities were also identified in consultation with the Plan staff of the concerned program district. The table below displays the PCES and PE sample of the study.

Table 3: Number of studied PCES and PE programs

District	PCES program		PE Programs		Remark
	Total	Sample	Total	Sample	
Banke	670	4	-	2	PE was not initiated since 2004 However, discussion was organized in four community with more than 60 parents
Bara	50	3	2	2	PE & PCES program is not conducted at present. It was conducted in 2007. Even though discussion was organized with previous PE & PCES groups.
Makawanpur		4	2	2	ECCD awareness campaign program is conducted recent year.
Morang	18	3	3	3	Found PCES program successful to visit PCES family. We found PCES children in ECCD centre too and evaluated them.
Rautahat		3	1	1	Recently PE program is not found.
Sunsari	20	3	2	1	Recently PE program is not found.
Total	670	20	8	10	

Field researchers

Four teams were deployed for fieldwork. Each team consisted two ECD expert women. Some of them were ECD promoters and others were trainers, researchers, and managers. These expert women were involved in tools preparation, field-testing, information and data generation as well as collection, data editing, tabulation, and also in report writing. A man researcher coordinated the fieldwork. He also monitored the fieldwork through SMS and telephone and visited Makawanpur district for field sensing.

Apart from these researchers, 6 research assistants were mobilized in Bara, Makawanpur, Routahat, Morang, and Sunsari who rendered their time, energy, and expertise to help the field researchers.

Study procedure

Both the secondary and primary information was sought out for this study. For the secondary information the evaluation team reviewed ECCD related project documents, study reports,

government policies, Plan's principles and Strategic Directions, the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) and Country Program Outline (CPO) of Plan Nepal, project proposal, ECCD Operational Guidelines, quarterly and annual reports, mid-term evaluation reports, position paper on Education (NLNO), CPO evaluation report, Baseline report, ECCD resource materials, and other relevant documents.

The purpose of this review was to locate the ECCD status in the country in general and figure out Plan Nepal's effort in particular. But the primary information was collected and/or generated to get the fresh look of the ECCD program in the field.

This study collected and/or generated data/ primary information from both the quantitative and qualitative methods. For this, the evaluation team developed tools, discussed them extensively with the Plan staff, received their feedback, revised them, field tested, and finalized by incorporating the suggestion and experiences.

Since four researchers and the team leader were heavily involved in developing the tools they did not need orientations. For two other field researchers D-Net organized a session. In this session they too became acquainted with the tools and the ways to generate and gather information/data. This means 6 researchers were fielded for data collection and information generation. The locally hired field assistants supported them. These assistants collected the quantitative data and also provided local perspectives to the field researchers.

Prior to visit the field the field researchers received orientations from the Plan Nepal staff of the concerned districts. They also visited the government officials, NGOs, and other agencies working for ECCD in the district. The purpose of this program was to equip the field researchers with the field reality and at the same time to inform other stakeholders of education that the evaluation team has already started its research activity.

In the field, the field researchers observed ECCD centers, Parenting Education participants, Parents and Child Early Stimulation participants, Pre-primary classes, took interview with program participants, schoolteachers, ECCD facilitators, ECCD management committee members, CBO members, District Level government officers and children and their parents.

Each day the field researchers maintained their diary. They wrote their findings, gist of the discussions with the field assistants, and their own reflection as researchers. They also listed the verbatim of the informants related to the relevancy, efficiency, impact, equity, and sustainability of the ECCD project/program.

Upon the completion of the fieldwork the field researchers organized debriefing sessions with the Plan Nepal staff of the concerned districts. They also arranged similar programs with district level stakeholders of ECCD program. These stakeholders included District Education Officers, Resource Persons, members of the district NGO Coordination Committee, Local Development Officers, and the members of the Teachers' Union depending on the availability of their time and convenience. The purpose of these sessions was to share the preliminary findings with the program implementers and other ECCD related personnel. Apart from it the objective of these sessions was to verify the data and the information that was obtained by the field researchers and the field assistants.

Fieldwork

The evaluation team started fieldwork right after the selection of the study population. The team accomplished the following tasks during the study:

- a. Participatory discussion with children, parents and communities for their experience and insights on ECCD program.
- b. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with parents and caregivers, ECCD Management Committees and CBOs.

- c. Key Informants' Interview with some of the stakeholders: facilitators, helpers, home visitors, PE facilitators, CBO members, primary school teachers, NGOs staff, Plan staff, local government bodies (VDCs, DDCs), district line agencies (District Education Office and District Public Health Office), District Child Welfare Board, ECCD networks and ECD Section, Department of Education, Ministry of Education and Sports.
- d. Achievement Test and Cognitive Test to children who had been attending ECCD centers for at least one year, and children who were studying in primary schools after graduation from ECCD centers, and their counterparts who never attended any kind of ECCD program as control group.
- e. ECCD centers visits and observation of the overall activities
- f. Review of supervision and monitoring mechanism and tools, integration with other programs (health, livelihood, critical issues, building relationship and environment), management of program, training and materials, human resource development on ECCD, cost effectiveness, local capacity building, community contribution and participation, sustainability, coordination with line agencies and partnership with NGOs.
- g. Review of the exit strategy and planning of mainstreaming into DEO system.
- h. Discussion with Plan staff in PUs after field visit.
- i. Interview with Plan NLNO staff (relevant Program Officer).
- j. Case analysis

Three sets of tools were developed. The first sets of tools assessed ECCD and non-ECCD children's academic performances. The second sets of tools collected the observed information from the home and the ECCD center. And the third sets of tools generated qualitative information from the community leaders, parents, schoolteachers, ECCD facilitators, and the district education authorities. The information thus obtained from different sources was triangulated prior to reach at the conclusive understanding.

Reporting plan

The draft final report have been presented in the six parts that is (a) executive summary (b) introduction (c) methodology (d) findings (e) recommendation followed by appendices. The field analysis has been thematically displayed and interpreted by bringing different perspectives. The themes included relevancy, adequacy, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. In doing so, efforts were made to provide hard data to support the soft data that the evaluation team obtained from different sources.

The field

The preliminaries

In this section, the evaluation team tried to find out the basic information associated with the ECCD, PCES, and PE programs. For this the team reviewed the documents, took interview with the Plan staff of the concerned districts, and also reviewed the field records. On the basis of this information, the following knowledge was obtained.

1. Qualification of the ECCD teachers

Ideally ECCD center facilitators are selected from community among the ECCD parents. This indicates that ECCD have been selected democratically. The Department of Education has also applied the same rules and regulations. This "regulatory sameness" was considered Plan Nepal's strengths for the institutionalization of the ECCD program through the mainstream.

Selection and recruitment rules and regulations	
Plan Nepal's	Department of Education's
• Orientation on ECCD at community level • Inform to community for the formation of ECCD management committee. • Management Committee formed at local community • Select Facilitators who should have at least 8 classes. • Management committee meeting makes decision to work as facilitator in ECCD center.	Quota is provided to head teacher for the pre-primary class. Head teacher and school management committee make decision who will be the facilitator for the pre-primary class.

The democratically selected ECCD facilitators had four levels of academic qualifications. Majority of them were high school dropouts and very few of them had university degree. The table below provides the academic qualification of the ECCD facilitators of the studied ECCD centers.

Table 4: Academic qualification of the teachers

District	Under SLC	SLC	IA/I.Ed	BA and above
Banke	9	4	2	1
Bara	5	2	1	
Makawanpur	11	2	2	-
Morang	4	3	1	
Rautahat	1	3	1	
Sunsari	4	4	-	
Total	34	18	7	1

The table above indicates that Plan Nepal has been able to generate the rural youth employment for the domestic women. The table also shows that (a) ECCD could give employment even for the under SLC graduates (b) high qualification holders were inadequately lured by the program because of its low economic incentives (c) the presence of the female teachers promoted gender equity, and (d) the ECCD teachers got job at their door though the incentive is very low.

2. Preparation of the ECCD facilitator:

ECCD teachers once selected were locally recruited; they were entitled to receive 10 to 12 days training. This evaluation team found that these teachers were trained in the district headquarters and the Program Units. Currently, Plan Nepal have contract partnership with the district level Setoguransh for the capacity building and training for ECCD facilitators, PCES facilitators, ECCD management committee members capacity building. The ECCD centers facilitators had reported that different resource persons including Setoguras trained them. Usually Seto Guras professional trainers trained them. However there were some other agencies as well which used to train these facilitators. During the training they had received both the theoretical knowledge as well as practical skill, the later part was emphasized more. After the training these teachers were deputed to the respective ECCD centers. The table below displays the list of the training providers and the basic training, refresher training, and other trainings as well as exposure visits that the teachers received during their tenure.

Table 5: ECCD basic and refresher training providers and the trainings

District	Training providers	Trainings	
		Basic	Refresher
Banke	ECD resource persons were directly hired by Local NGOs up to the year 2007 Currently Setoguras became the technical partner of Plan for conducting ECCD training	Basic training	Refresher training
Bara	SOWEC, Gramin Uthan, HUDEC, DEO provided training	Basic training	Refresher training
Makawanpur	Setoguras	Basic training	Refresher training
Morang	DEO, Setoguras Morang, and RSDC		
Rautahat	Setoguras	Basic training	Refresher training
Sunsari	DEO, Setoguras Sunsari	Basic training	Refresher training

The table above shows that a few training providers had the monopoly "but it was desirable" said a Plan staff because of the expertise of these providers. These training providers were also providing similar trainings to that of the DOE. This "similarity" was also found out as Plan Nepal's strength to institutionalize its ECCD program under the government plan. Because of the similar nature of the training the ECCD teachers were found very much active to prepare educational materials and mobilize the parents for such endeavors.

3. ECCD opening days and hours

Guidelines work as standard for uniformity. But there was no guideline for ECCD management committee and CBOs about the opening days. And yet Plan Nepal has strongly advised to open the ECCD centers 6 days in a week, 24 days in a month. It has also suggested that children need to engage in learning and developmental activities for around 5 hours (including rest and feeding time) in a day. In addition that Plan Nepal has encouraged following government ECCD operation policy guide line as Plan Nepal and Department of Education has already signed MOU for implementation of quality ECCD centers by sharing resources from both parties.

The evaluation team found that ECCD centers were established in the community to ensure the easy access to the children. Because of this arrangement the management committee members and the teachers reported that ECCD centers were not disturbed by any kind of band. Even if ECCD teachers were unable, the management committee members used to make alternative arrangement to open the center and provide midday meal to the children. In this sense the feeding provision made by Plan was one of the attractions for community to open the ECCD centers and regularize the children there. This situation was everywhere in the studied districts but it was more so in ECCD centers of Banke district.

On the contrary the ECCD centers attached and/or nearby to the school were found closed during the band. In other words these centers were treated as preschool and its traditions were imposed in the ECCD centers. Despite this situation Plan Nepal had aimed to open ECCD centers for 6 days in a week and 4 to 5 hours in a day. So is the aim of the DOE, which have set rules to run ECD centers for 4 to 5 hours daily with minimum of 220 days in a year. In order to find out whether these ideals were put into action or not the evaluation team asked some questions with the informants. The table below provides their responses related to the ECCD opening days in a year and the daily opening hours.

Table 6: Average ECCD opening days and hours

District	Opening days in a month		Opening hours in a day	
	Plan Nepal's	DEO's	Plan Nepal's	DEO's
Banke	20 to 24 days	5 to 10 days	4 to 5 hours	4 to 5 hours
Bara	18 to 21 days	NA	5 to 5.30 hours	
Makawanpur	19 to 25 days	4 hours in morning, 5 hours in day	4 to 5 hours	
Morang	20 to 25 days	NA	5 to 6 hours	
Rautahat	20 to 25 days	5 hours in day	5 hours	
Sunsari	20 to 24 days	NA	5 to 6 hours	

The table above shows that both Plan Nepal and DEO of the concerned districts were giving flexibility for the ECCD teachers. They were flexible in opening days in a month and hours in a day. This flexibility was observed because of the socio-political context of the given location. For instance, the community based ECCD centers were not disturbed by the strike. And yet the ECCD centers used to follow the government calendar for the holidays. But the case of ECCD centers nearby the schools had another story to share: they were band along with the school. The reasons were (a) older siblings would be there to take care of the children at home (b) parents used to feel insecure to send their children in ECCD center during the band (c) the ECCD teachers also wanted to enjoy the unexpectedly happened holidays.

The discussion shows that both school as well as community based ECCD centers were following the public school's rules and regulations. The reasons were (a) the ECCD teachers of school based ECCD centers were compelled to follow the rules and regulations of the school (b) the school students were supposed to take care of their siblings and hence they did not take their younger brothers and sisters and drop them in the ECCD centers no matter they were school or community based (c) parents realized that since the school going children were accountable for taking care of their siblings they would take care of their brothers and sisters at home if they did not think necessary to drop them out (d) parents might have thought that ECCD is also a school. These reasons were found in all the studied districts no matter they were the ECCD centers of the Terai and/or the mountains. In other words, school students were used as culturally evolved childcare takers and the ECCD centers were regarded as schools, no matter they were school and/or community based.

4. ECCD fund and the financial supporting agencies:

Both Plan Nepal and DEO envisaged that ECCD center management committee requires a sizable fund. This fund is regarded as financial guarantee for the operation of the ECCD centers. Because of this requirement, the vulnerable groups had difficulty to raise this amount of money. In this case some of the ECCD centers had identified the financial supporting agencies as well. The table below gives the account of the fund and the financial supporting agencies of the ECCD centers.

Table 7: ECCD fund and financial supporting agencies

District	Fund in NRs	Funding agencies and their intents
Banke	16,000	Since all the ECCD centers supported by the Plan Nepal were found mainstreamed DEO has provided the salary of the ECCD teachers.
Bara	63,200	
Makawanpur	79,180	
Morang	58,752	
Rautahat	41,016	
Sunsari	58,148	

In all the studied districts, ECCD management committees were found aware of raising fund for its sustainability. And yet all the ECCD centers had no fund. However the committee members reported that meetings were conducted to raise fund but still they were not success. Some parents also reported that they were not interested to contribute money to the ECCD. Their argument was that it was the "free cake" for them and should remain the "free cake" forever. Despite their arguments both the parents and the community members had provided cash, kinds, and labor contribution for the construction of ECCD building.

In the case of Plan Nepal operated ECCD centers, the members of the ECCD Management Committees had also mobilized the local resource that were available with the VDCs and the DDCs as well. They had also exchanged their labors once Plan Nepal had given zinc plate for roofing. They had also mobilized other resources that were available at their periphery. But the nature of the support varied from district to the districts. The amount of the fund given in the table above can be seen as testimony of the above arguments.

5. ECCD graduates

This study found that there were various types of ECCD graduates. The first types of ECCD graduates lived for couple of months, learnt basic disciplinary skills, and enrolled in the private boarding schools. The second types of the ECCD graduates lived in the ECCD centers for more than one year. These graduates were either enrolled in the private boarding or the public schools without completing the ECCD course cycle. The third category of the ECCD children had completed two years program, who were enrolled at the age of 3. The table below gives the figure of the two years ECCD completers in the year 2065 BS.

Table 8: Two years completers ECCD graduates of 2065 BS who were enrolled in grade one

District	Boys	Girls	Total
Banke	Partially data available	Partially data available	134
Bara	59	88	147
Makawanpur	80	76	156
Morang	43	48	91
Rautahat	27	29	56
Sunsari	38	45	83

The evaluation team aimed to find out the ECCD enrollees and their cycle completion rate. Through this the team had versioned to find out gender ratio, dropout rates, repeaters, and the completers. But we could not find out the systematic record in all the study centers. In this situation we could figure out the gender ratio in two districts only at least for one year. The analysis of this information tells that both boys and the girls have almost equal access of ECCD program. Moreover the discussion with the ECCD teachers also provides the clue that almost all of the ECCD enrollees go to school no matter they go to the public or the private schools; and no matter they complete the ECCD cycle or leave the program earlier for other reasons. In this sense ECCD centers of the studied districts had been the jumping stations of the children for school.

6. Ratio of the ECCD and non-ECCD children in school:

The evaluation team identified two scenarios in relation to the ECCD and non-ECCD children's ratio in school. One, there are adequate ECCD centers in some VDCs of Sunsari and Morang and Banke districts. Because of this adequacy there were almost all ECCD graduates in schools. But the situation of other districts was different: there was a few ECCD centers. The reason was that the rules of the government and Plan Nepal's were different and hence the different ratio emerged in school as well.

Provision of Plan Nepal	Provision of DOE
Establish ECCD center where children are available and center are community based	Establish one ECCD center in each ward of the VDC

The rules above show that there was a fundamental difference between these ECCD promoters. For instance DOE made Ward as unit of ECCD expansion while for Plan Nepal number of children became the unit of ECCD expansion. In this case, two ECCD promoters were not agreeing in a specific point. The field report also had reiterated this argument. Despite the above realities, there were more ECCD children in grade 1 in many of the observed schools of the study districts. This could be so because the evaluation team observed the schools nearby the ECCD centers.

The analysis of the quantitative data also shows that there was almost equal number of boys and girls in ECCD programs. This was so especially so in the semi-urban areas of the study districts. The reported reason was that both mothers and the fathers were aware of the importance of ECCD program. Despite this numerical equality of the ECCD graduates the achievement of the boys and the girls was different. In other words the result was not unexpected (Seto Guras, 2009).

7. Age group of the ECCD children:

Plan Nepal designed ECCD program for 3 to 5 years children. DOE on the other hand developed its program for the children of 4 to 5 years. These designs have created conceptual differences. In this situation the evaluation team tried to figure out the age group of the Plan Nepal's ECCD children. The table below provides a picture of it.

Table 9: Number of ECCD children in grade 1 in 2066 BS

District	Gender and age group of children								
	Overage		Underage		Exact age		Total		Grand Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
Banke	5	7	23	19	129	135	145	163	308
Bara	-	-	20	21	88	70	109	90	199
Makawanpur	1	1	38	47	77	91	125	130	255
Morang	-	-	23	24	98	77	98	77	175
Rautahat	9	5	21	31	38	25	74	55	129
Sunsari	-	-	19	12	118	86	130	105	235

The table above provides a clue that parents used ECCD for different purposes. One, ECCD became a toddlers' center for childcare. Two, it remained as ECCD center for the exact age group children. Three, it became a habit correction center for those children who join ECCD for a short-term. Later on these short-term children join in the private school. Four, the overage children attend ECCD program for play and for midday meal. Five, the poor parents send their children to the ECCD center in a hope that they get boarding like education there. In this sense they understood ECCD as poor persons' boarding school. These finding gave birth many issue for the ECCD promoters like Plan Nepal. These issues are related to bridge parents' expectations, children's socio-physical, and psychological preparedness of the children, expectations of the private boarding school, and focus of the public school.

The statistics mentioned in the table able also showed that there were a significant numbers of underage children. This was so in all the study districts. But the case of overage was different: it

was more so in Rautahat and Banke districts. This indicated that the level of parental low level of awareness and the number of overage children in ECCD center had positive relationship. The case of Morang, Sunsari, and Bara also provides the testimony of it. In these study districts, the parents were found aware of the age of the children and the level of education they must attend. But the case was not so with the parents of Rautahat and Banke. In Banke for instance Muslim parents used to keep their overage children in ECCD center. So was the case of Gupta parents of Rautahat district.

8. Attendance rate of the ECCD children

The evaluation team also studied the attendance rate of the ECCD children. In this process we saw three emerged tendencies. One, with some exceptions the underage children was more regular than their older siblings. Two, boys were more regular than the girl children. Three, the exact age children were found in between the attendance of the over and the underage children. The table below shows the attendance rates of the ECCD children. This rate was calculated by using the ideal ECCD opening days envisaged in the Plan Nepal's document.

Table 10: Attendance rate of the ECCD children

District	Overage		Underage		Exact age		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Banke	79%		77 %		75%		77%	
Bara	-	-	73	72	74	64	109	90
Makawanpur	.39	.39	14	18	30	35	49	51
Morang	-	-	32	31	65	56	98	77
Rautahat	6.9	3.8	16	24	29	19	57	42
Sunsari	-	-	26	32	88	77	130	105

The analysis of the above table shows that parents used to send their underage children regularly to the ECCD center to be free from their rearing. But with their increased age these children had someone at home to attend them. This tendency above was also evident in the pre-primary classes as well.

Table 11: Attendance rate of pre-primary class

District	Overage		Underage		Exact age		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Banke	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bara	90	95	69	76	100	80	10	11
Makawanpur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Morang	90	95	48	29	67	64	17	9
Rautahat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sunsari	-	-	78	75	80	98	12	12

The analysis of the table gives the clue that parents send their elder exact age children more in pre-primary education classes. Even the overage children were more regular in school. But the underage children were less regular. But the analysis of the boys and girls' attendance rate did not give a definite trend. For example, the overage girl children were more regular in school but the case of underage girl was different. In the exact age more boys were regular in school. This finding could be understood from different angles. One, parents entertain gender discrimination right from the beginning of the children's life. Two, the lived world of the poor parents had demand children for domestic chores as well. Three, the overage children were used to take care of their siblings.

9. ECCD served groups

EFA Core Document (2002) wrote that ECCD should address the vulnerable groups but the UNICEF study (2005) done in Chitwan said that it could not reach to the targeted groups. Amidst this

situation the evaluation team tried to find out Plan Nepal's effort to reach at the children of the vulnerable communities. The table below gives the account of the ECCD served groups of the program district.

Table 12: ECCD served groups

District	Program beneficiaries			
	Caste group	Ethnic/caste group	Religious group	Poor Economy class group
Banke	A total of 16% (69) children were from Dalit community out of 465 children in 16 ECCD centers	A total of 63% (294) Khatik, Parsi, Barma, Luhar, Godiya, Kandu, Sahi, Tamoli, Khatik, Sonar, Sonar, Chouhan, Kahar, Tiwari, Chamar, Khatiwa, Kami, Tele, Rai Chetri, Tharu, Gupta,	21% (102) of children are from Muslim	19 beggar (Mahout)
Bara	11%	Jaisawal, Meheta, Chaudhari, Tamang, Kusuhawa, Ansari, Lesa, Miya, Dhobi		
Makawanpur	(5% Dalit),	Tamang, Lama, Rana, Gole, Moktan, Pakhrin, Thing, Santang, Rumba, Ghising, Waiba, Balami, Didung, Lungba, Vlon, Rai,(84%,Ethnic))		(11% Chhetri/Bahun
Morang	15%	Biswakarma, Sada, Pariyar, Subba, Biswas, Dhami, Majhi, Saha, Sardar, Mandal, Choudhari,		
Rautahat	-	Kumar, Baitha, Yadav, Bal, Gole, Ray, Ram, Thakur, Gupta (90%),	Khatun,	Pahadiya (10%).
Sunsari	26	Ram, Miya, Chaudhari, Rai, Chettri, Brahamin, Mehata, Yadav, Paswan, Alam, Urau, Sarki, Mukhiya		

The table above shows that Plan Nepal could reach to the vulnerable groups including the Dalits and the beggars. Plan Nepal's participatory rural appraisal techniques to find out the poorest of the poor community are to be credited for it. Apart from this technique, its operational mandate also might have worked on it. If we compare the HDI of the aforesaid groups of the people (Human Development Report, 2006) it also reiterates the above findings. In this sense Plan Nepal has been geared towards fulfilling the first EFA objective with its ECCD program.

Systemic effectiveness and efficiency

Effectiveness and efficiency are the two terms used to assess the system. The first word deals with the individual as well as group performance while the second with the system. Effectiveness in the case of ECCD looks after the preparation of children for pre-school including their emotional skills (Kariuki et.al., 2006). This also demands the changes in the home, childcare, early care, and educational setting (esktop\D-net\RFA-HD-0-003). Plan Nepal in this sense has applied this

understanding through its PE, PCS, ECCD, and school support program as a package. But all of these programs were not found effective implemented as continuum of a project. This "missing conceptual linkage" has created some gaps in the ECCD achievement. However Plan Nepal has heavily emphasized ECCD program other than the PE, PCS and school support activities at least in the study area.

On the above backstop, the evaluation team examined the relationships among the PE, PCS, ECCD, and school support activities. The table below displaces the relationship between the aforesaid programs.

Table 13: Relationships among the PE, PCES, ECCD, and school support activitis

District	Program beneficiaries			
	Relationship between PE and PCES	Relationship between PCS and ECCD	Relationship between ECCD and grade one	Relationship among PE, PCS, ECCD, and school support activities
Banke	A total of 607 communities with 1200 parents were participating in PCES program.	In an average 6 children's parents had participated in PCES program.	A total of 8 to 17 children were enrolled in grade one. In grade one, 15 to 25 children had ECCD experience.	School and ECCD have no linkages formally in teaching learning. In grade child friendly furniture and rooms were available. But there was inadequate support for teaching learning
Bara	PE participants had knowledge on child development. Children's group member were taking care of their younger siblings	The PCES participants send their children in ECCD regularly. PCES parents used to help ECCD facilitators in preparing midday meal	Two year completed children ECCD graduates were sent to school	In grade child friendly furniture and rooms were available. But there was inadequate support for teaching learning
Makawanpur	Only 7 VDCs had PCES program.	More mothers and other community members used to visit ECCD centers	Two year completed children ECCD graduates were sent to school	School and ECCD had no formal linkages in teaching learning.
Morang	20 groups of mothers including 500 parents were trained and 500 children benefited	PCES was found as most strong strategy for ECCD center functioning and sustainability	All ECCD graduates are enrolled in grade I	In grade one, almost all children had experienced ECCD programs

Rautahat	PCES program was conducted in the past but PE was not there in the ECCD catchments	Community became aware of the ECCD program.	School enrollment was increased.	
Sunsari	Previously PE was implemented as awareness raising then PCES provided service at home level	All PCES experience children are enrolled in ECCD center	No ECCD experienced children was left at home but enrolled in school	Almost all ECCD children were enrolled in grade one

The analysis of the table above shows that there were linear relations between the aforesaid programs. This was so because each program had its emphasis. The PE was found sporadically dispersed; the PCES was not regularized; the ECCD and the school support activities were not tied up as it used to be; and inter-program discussions were never hold in the study districts. It is where the team found the following gaps:

- PE program was conducted as one-shot initiative. This demanded periodical meetings of the PE groups with the PCES, ECCD, and school authorities regularly
- PCES program had inadequate contact with the ECCD and school activities
- ECCD and school support activities were inadequately linked with each other.
- The PE, PCES, ECCD, and school authorities were not found sitting together for their collaborative undertakings.

PCES : a home delivery ECCD program

Home visitors are the trained person, who visit children's home to facilitate in development and early learning at home environment .She plays role model for 20 -25 each houses monthly. Home visitors Nirmala Mehata has become a role model for Devangaja VDC, Susari through PCES home based program. She belongs to a very cultured, average income family. She used to earn her school expenses through PCES program. She has not only provided services to children but also contributed to develop capacity of parents /care giver. She provides knowledge and skill to the parents in quality child rearing, caring, stimulation, and interaction at the family level. So the parents are able to ensure the rights of their children from the beginning of their life. Nirmala says there are other who want to join this training. She also says, "Parents monitor me and I monitor them" .So it is a self-regulatory activity, if implemented as a program but not as project. She believes PCES is a means of developing child, parents, home visitors, and community.

Like program effectiveness the evaluation team also explored systemic efficiency of the ECCD program. In doing so the team reviewed ECCD from management's CIPP model. Following this model, we found that ECD organizing context that the Plan Nepal could avail was appropriate in a sense that it could reach to the un-served, under served, and ill served groups of people in both the hill and the Terai districts. In case of the input from the Plan Nepal it was worth mentioning. The table below displays the program inputs for PE, PCS, ECCD, and school.

Table 14: Plan Nepal's program inputs for ECCD related activities that of 2009

Program beneficiaries			
Inputs for PE	Inputs for PCES	Inputs for ECCD	Inputs for school
Though PE was conducted back in 2004 the informants mentioned that they received educational materials, training, refreshment and incentives. There were also documentation and publication facilities.	Training cost and posters for ECCD teachers Monthly remuneration to the ECCD teachers Discussion posters Meeting and workshop cost and learning materials for partners Health check up facilities for the children, door step training to the parents and caretakers,	Facilitator training, building and other physical facilities, learning materials, Play materials, Management committee members' training, and supervisor's training Remuneration to the facilitators and supervisors Milk and <i>Bhuja</i> for midday meal, refreshment and incentives. There was also documentation and publication facilities CM trainin	No support provided for Pre-primary classes Training for pre-primary school teachers Learning materials were provided for PPC.

The table above shows that Plan Nepal had provided physical, human, material, and money as inputs for the aforesaid program. But the analysis of the inputs over the years shows that they have been gradually reduced in a hope that the community will supplement it. The communities on the other hand were expecting more from the Plan Nepal. If it says no, then the community used to meet their needs with the limited resources that were given to them. For example, the evaluation team found that the none of the communities had organized trainings; they had no provisions for health checkups anymore. But there were some exceptions as well. For instance some of the ECCD centers had managed midday meal to their children with parents' expenses. If we exclude these exceptions we found that ECCD parents retained their "dependency syndrome". It was partly because of their low level of earning, different priority, and the presence of ECCD as "alien culture" to them.

ECCD children's home

It is the case of PCES at Purbikuswatra of Sunsari district, Dahiyar of Bara district, and Sanischare as well as Rangeli of Morang district. In these homes, parents interacted with their child, collected play materials, created child friendly home environment, and maintained family reflection. Mothers were playing excellent roles. Children's play materials were collected in local container. The home environments were found safe (except in Bara district where cooking place and sleeping place were together). Fathers involvement was found increased in caring, interaction, and play (as mothers told) .One more strength was PCES repel effect within family and neighbors. Parents' request home visitor to register their names for the program. They have also started to enroll in ECCD program when their child completes two and half years (26wk). Out of ten observed children four of them were 4 yrs old while 6 were <3 yrs old. PCES was found cost effective 1: Rs 275 (one child: Rs 175) though it's budget has decreased to (1: Rs 135). The developmental observation of the children were remarkable ((Physically good-8, moderate-2; Social-8, m-2; Emotional balance –G-7, M-3, Cognitive-G-6, M-2, Satisfactory-2).

The communities and parents who had given midday meal were found highly mobilized. This gave the hope that Plan Nepal's initiative to give something and reduce that inputs gradually had also worked in the highly mobilized communities. But it was not the case of the less mobilized community. It is where Plan Nepal's blanket approach to take off its inputs from all the communities at the same time was questioned. In other words Plan Nepal's strategy to reach at the POP requires to be used even at its phase out plan. This means Plan Nepal needs community specific phase out plan. Amidst this differential treatment strategy the evaluation team could find out the brief account of the community peoples' encouraging input in one hand and the no inputs on the other. The table below displays them.

Table 15: Community inputs for ECCD related programs that of 2009

Program beneficiaries			
Community inputs for PE	Community inputs for PCES	Community inputs for ECCD	Community inputs for school
Participat in meeting, provide space	- Participate in meeting and training, provide space, local resources and play materials - Create learning environment at home	Organize meeting, help to facilitator for cooking; contribute labor for ECCD building construction; inform parents to bring children in ECCD centers; coordinate with Plan Nepal, DEO, and CBOs; observe ECCD to understand whether their children are participating in learning or not; be watch dog during the distribution of midday meal for the children. Monitoring of ECCD facilitator and the center. Coordinate and lobby for fund raising from community forest.	Help ECCD completers to be enrolled in school

The selected cases above give the information tat they are the sporadic inputs for the ECCD related activities. But they are yet to be made regular inputs to ensure the sustainability of the Plan Nepal initiated programs. Despite these uncertainties, there was a strong hope that ECCD and its related activities will receive inputs forever.

The evaluation team also assed the overall facility of the ECCD centers as inputs and found the discrepancies in them. These input discrepancies have been given in the table below.

Table 16: Available facilities in the visited ECCD centers

	Banke	Bara	Makawan pur	Morang	Rautahat	Sunsari	Total
Physical facilities	7H 8M 1L	3H 4M 1L	4H 11M	4H 2M 2L	1H 3M 1L	2H 4M 2L	21H 32 M 7L
Access to learning materials	3H 8M 5L	2H 5M 1L	10M 5L	3H 4M 1L	3M 2L	2H 3M 3P	10H 33M 17L
Play ground	5H 3M 8L	2H 4M 2L	1H 7M 7L	6 M 2 L	2H 2M 1L	3M 5L	10H 25M 25L
Room environm ent	5H 6M 5L	4H 3M 1L	3H 10M 2L	3H 3M 2L	4M 1L	2H 4M 2L	17H 30M 13L
Record and reporting	3H 7M 6L	3H 4M 1L	1H 7M 7L	2H 3M 3L	2H 2M 1L	2M 6L	11H 25M 24L

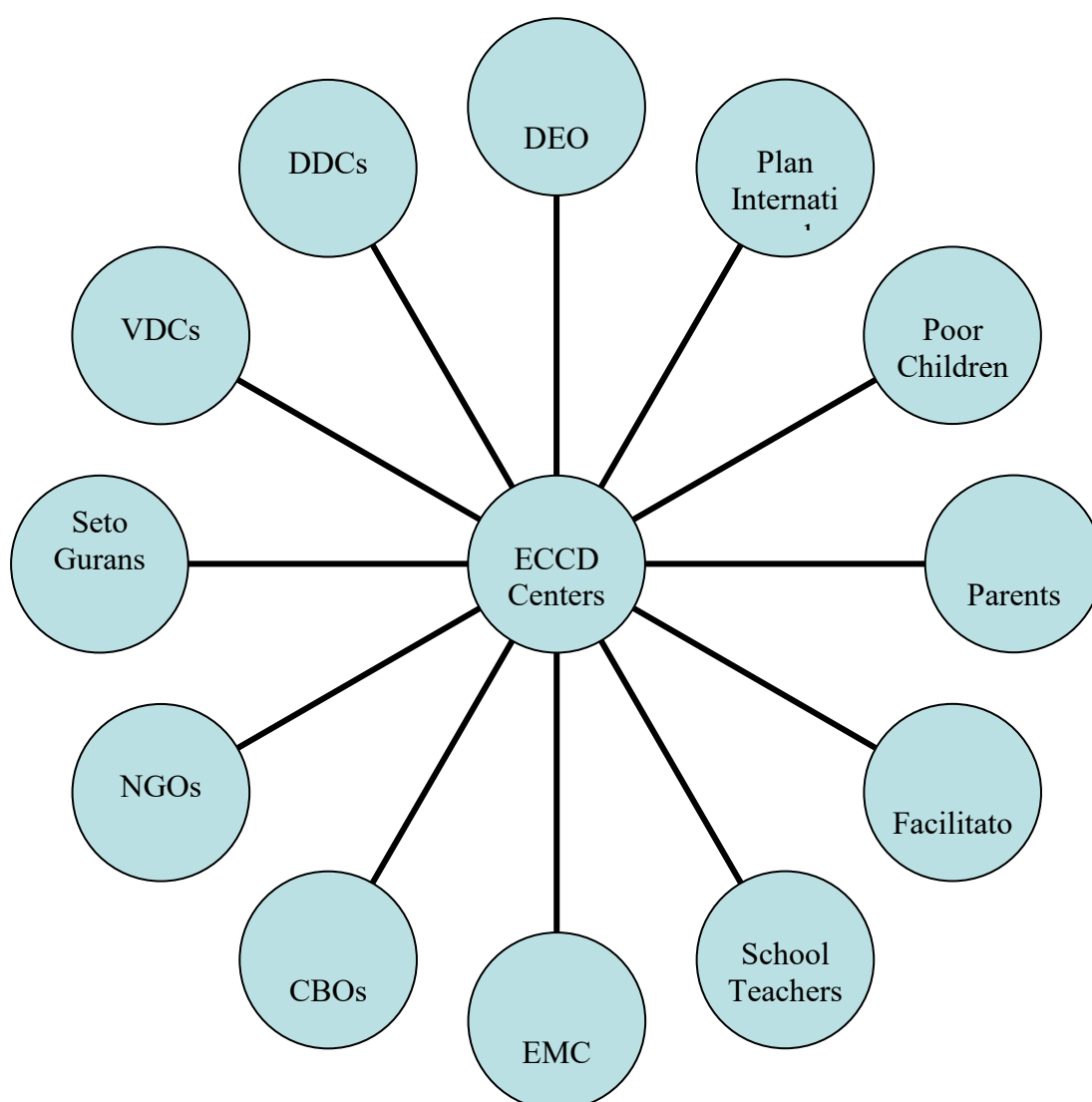
The table above indicated that most of the observed ECCD centers had either high or the medium facilities. The slim number of low facility ECD centers stands as a proof to claim that the Plan Nepal initiated ECCD centers had adequate facilities. The centers with inadequate facilities had also possessed workable physical facilities. In this sense Plan Nepal had ensured a minimum level of ECCD facilities in all its centers.

Process is the next area associated with the systemic efficiency. In the process, Plan adapted welfare approach in the beginning, gradually it geared to awareness approach, then moved to empowerment approach, and finally it is working for the right based at the demand side and duty consciousness at the supply side through "corporate planning" (Plan documents of different years). These paradigm shifts in Plan Nepal's doing has nurtured different processes in the field. However the common process that the evaluation team could figure out was participatory initiatives, collaborative undertaking, networking, and local institutionalization. It is in this context we assessed the field and found the results below. This shows Plan Nepal's operational relations with different agencies.

Table 17: Plan Nepal's operational relations with other agencies

Ongoing relations			
Participatory initiatives	Collaborative undertaking.	Institutional networking	Local institutionalization.
Setoguras, DEO, CBOs and community.	DEO, mothers' group, community forest users' group.	VDC level ECCD management committee network was started	ECCD centers were linked with DEO

The evaluation team tried to understand the above working relations of the ECCD centers against its potential stakeholders mentioned in the chart below. We found that there are many other stakeholders that require to be invited for collaborative undertakings.



The chart above showed that ECCD of the study districts were linked with the above agencies in one or in other ways. But they were yet to be coordinated for combined synergic effect on ECCD program even after the withdrawal of the Plan Nepal's support. For this DEO and DDC could work at the district level. So could be done at the VDC, CBO, and local school. With this hope the evaluation team studied the collaborative process of the ECCD centers and found that they were exercising participatory planning and decision-making at some levels. For example, Plan Nepal, Setoguras, DEO, and CBOs were engaged in annual operational plan closely. They had also developed proposals for Plan Nepal. But the question was that would the ECCD centers continue this effort for long. The discussion with the stakeholders led the evaluation team to think that ECCD centers require facilitating agency to do so and that could be lacking at the ground level.

The table above also shows that Plan Nepal has adapted almost the same process in its ECCD program districts. In this sense this became the "corporate process" as well regardless of the nature and the characteristics of the working communities. This demands Plan Nepal's community specific strategies. For instance, Plan Nepal had worked in with the Muslim of Banke district and Tamang of Makawanpur with the same process. In this sense it could not maintain variations as it has its CBOs to provide logistic support, national NGO like Seto Guras to provide the technical backstopping, and POs as consumer group. This implies that it has yet to use the traditional organizations of the ethnic, caste, and the religious communities such as Choho of the Tamangs, Majans of the Musahars, Badhghar of Tharus, and Madarsas of Muslims in its working areas. The mobilization of such ethnic, caste, and religious organizations could have developed community specific strategies to supplement the Plan Nepal initiated "corporate policy".

At the product/output level, Plan Nepal could show the difference between the results of the ECCD and non-ECCD children. The table below presents these differences. It also shows the gender differences in the academic performances of the children. These differences were captured through the specific test that was taken during the course of this study. The table below gives the account of the ECCD groups of grade one.

Table 18: Test result of the ECCD group in grade I

District	Physical status			Social			Cognitive			Emotional		
	High	Mdm	Low	High	Mdm	Low	High	Mdm	Low	High	Mdm	Low
Banke	6	10	9	3	15	7	3	14	8	1	14	10
Bara	1	4	2	3	4	-	3	4	-	2	3	2
Makawanpur	8	11	-	5	11	3	6	10	3	8	11	-
Morang	3	4	-	3	4	-	3	1	3		6	1
Rautahat	1	3	-	3	1	-	2	1	1	2	1	1
Sunsari	2	6	1	2	4	3	2	6	1	3	4	2

In the same vein the evaluation team took the same test with the non-ECCD groups of grade I students. As we found there was the visible differences between the ECCD experienced and the non-ECCD children. The table below displays the result of the non-ECCD grade I children.

Table 19: Test result of the non-ECCD group in grade I

District	Physical Status			Social			Cognitive			Emotional		
	High	Mdm	Low	High	Mdm	Low	High	Mdm	Low	High	Mdm	Low
Banke	2	2	1		4	1		5			4	1
Bara	1	2	1	-	3	1	-	2	2	-	-	4
Makawanpur	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	-
Morang	2	1	-	1	2	-	-	2	-	-	2	1
Rautahat	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	-
Sunsari	1	1	1		3		1	1	1		1	2

The comparison of the two tables above gives the information that ECCD experienced children were found better in their physical, social, cognitive, and emotional states. These visible differences provided the knowledge that ECCD program have been a contributory initiatives to the human beings that the Plan Nepal introduced in its working areas. The perceptions of the people of varied walks of life also reiterated the same findings. Amidst these findings the evaluation team conducted achievement test of both the ECCD experienced and non-ECCD children. The table below gives the account of it.

Table 20: Results of the achievements test of ECCD and non-ECCD children in grade II

District	Boys		Girls		Total	
	ECCD	Non-ECCD	ECCD	Non-ECCD	ECCD	Non-ECCD
Banke	8	1	14	4	22	5
Bara	5	2	3	1	8	3
Makawanpur	6	-	13	2	19	2
Morang	4	1	4	2	8	3
Rautahat	2	1	2	1	4	2
Sunsari	5	1	3	2	8	3

In addition to the cognitive test of the ECCD and non-ECCD children of grade I, the evaluation team took achievement test of both the ECCD and non-ECCD children. This test also highlighted the differences that the ECCD program could yield. The table below presents it.

Table 21: ECCD and non-ECCD centers' results of the achievement test in grade II

District	Boys		Girls		Total	
	ECCD	Non-ECCD	ECCD	Non-ECCD	ECCD	Non-ECCD
Banke	4H 3M 1L	1M	7H 4M 3L	3H 1M	11H 7M 4L	3H 2M
Bara	3H 1M 1L	1H	2H 1M	2H	5H 2M 1L	3H
Makawanpur	3H	3H 5M,	8H 7M	2H 2M	11H 7M	5H 7M
Morang	2H 2M	1H	1H 2M 1L	1M 1L	3H 4M 1L	1H 1M 1L
Rautahat	3H 4M	2H	3H 1M	1M	6H 5M	2H 1M
Sunsari	2H 1 M 2L	1L	2M 1L	M2	2H 3M 3L	2M 1L
Total	17H 11M 3L	7H 6M 1L	21H 17M 5L	7H 6M 1L	38H 28M 9L	14H 13M 2L

The table above explicitly shows that many ECCD experienced children of the study districts could secure high and medium level achievement. In other words the low achievers were relatively few in numbers. This indicated that ECCD experience had given the positive results and for this Plan Nepal had given its inputs.

Besides the CIPP framework, the evaluation team tried to review the promotion and the dropout rate of the ECCD and the non-ECCD students of grade 1 and 2. But because of the liberal promotion policy the team could not get the intended information. Moreover in the absence of student tracking system it was difficult to find out the dropouts rates of the children. But the sporadic information that we could collect did not give us adequate base to claim that dropout was reduced, promotion rate was increased, and retention rate was decreased. It also did not help us to find out the gender issue associated with these aspects. However, the sporadic information that we could collect from Makawanpur district provides the clue that more girls (52%) could complete ECCD than the boys (47%). In total, 51% children could complete two years ECCD cycle. The case of Rautahat was different. There were 68% ECCD cycle completers in which boy-child (52%) surpassed the completers' rate of their girl counterparts (47%). This provides the knowledge that ECCD program should work more for its systemic efficiency.

The evaluation team also tried to examine the relationship between the statuses of ECCD centers and their graduates' academic performance in school. For this we categorized the ECCD centers as high, medium, and low and tried to see its relation with their graduates' academic progress in school. But the result did not give us a definite trend that high status ECCD centers' child could bring high scores in school or vice versa. This result demands further research in this area.

Apart from the analysis based on the quantitative information, the evaluation team also generated the qualitative information as well to assess the effectiveness and the efficiency of the ECCD program. Below is the table that mentions the perceptual information of the stakeholders of ECCD program.

Table 22: Perceived effectiveness of the ECCD program

Informants	Verbatim in favor of the ECCD efficiency	Any other Testimony/Proof	Verbatim that goes against the efficiency of the ECCD program	Any other Testimony/Proof
Parents	When my child is in ECCD, I can do my field and house work freely.	My child is safe in ECCD because my child gets milk and <i>bhuja</i> and opportunity to play.	ECCD center is just for playing, singing, and dancing	We expect that our children learn more but in ECCD center teacher teaches more to play
Teachers of primary school	The children who come from ECCD are confident, easy for communication with good conduct			
Community leaders	ECCD children are more vocal, confident, understanding and easily mixed up			If Plan stops support, it may not function well.
DEO personnel	Since ECCD has been found effective we decided to			

	mainstream this program through MOU signed between Plan Nepal and DOE			
Plan Nepal staff	This program reached to disadvantaged and marginalized people and the community		We have faced some difficulties to maintain the quality of the ECCD centers in the distant future	

The qualitative information helped understand that Plan Nepal's ECCD program turned out to be effective initiatives. Even if we compare the district specific information with the overall findings we can find the similar result. This similarity tells that ECCD program had been effective in all the study districts no matter they were located in the Terai and/or in the hills.

Perceptions related to the efficiency of the ECCD program were also generated from different stakeholders of education. This gave us the impression that Plan Nepal's ECCD programs were efficient. The table below displays the stakeholders' perspectives on the efficiency of the ECCD program.

Table 23: Efficiency of the ECCD program

Informants	Verbatim in favor of the ECCD efficiency	Any other Testimony/Proof	Verbatim that goes against the efficiency of the ECCD program
Parents	ECCD teachers work very hard, care our children, she does not discriminate, and treat all children equally. This program could change the feeding habit of our children; It has also made our children confident; The PCES program has made us aware at our door step; We do not beat our children but let them enjoy freedom	We used to quarrel before the children. But PCES encouraged us to listen to each other. So we decided not to quarrel before the child.	One ECCD teacher can only either educate the children or care for them and cook food for them.
ECCD teachers	The training taught me many types of skills to handle the children with love and adequate care.	ECCD centers have different materials to develop the abilities of the children	CBO members do not bring materials with them. So I go to collect them. On that day I usually close the center.

Community leaders			The quality of ECD is reduced because there is no health check up, no weighing machine, no <i>Sebika</i> (helper) for cooking and cleaning. We cannot send our children to the ECCD center because we live far away. So our children cannot walk that long.
DEO personnel	Plan Nepal is one of the members of the District ECD board. So we closely work with it while distributing the ECCD quota.	Additional support of capacity building and educational materials definitely made ECCD center efficient.	In my resource center catchments there is a space problem for ECCD children. This is so outside the Plan Nepal's working areas. It is also challenging to maintain ECCD centers with the inadequate human resource in DEO.
Plan Nepal's staff	We work closely with other development partners for ECCD centers. Setoguras has capacitated us technically. We are concerned for the expansion and mainstreaming of the ECCD centers	We must appreciate the dedication of ECCD teachers within the limited facilities they get. CMC are able to lobby for resource mobilization at the local level.	There have been difficulties to organize meetings for the distribution of ECCD quotas. New staffs still need training on ECCD.
Any others	Plan Nepal has established partnership with different NGOs for efficient monitoring and supervision. CBOS(Bara) are found efficient to manage ECD center by forming Net work of CBOS. Most of CBOS are qualified and committed. CBOs in Morang are not capable taking ownership for effective implementation		Plan Nepal has not given authority to the Setoguras of the concerned districts to harness and\ or match the available resources for the benefit of the ECCD children

In line with the above perceptions we could claim that ECCD program has been efficient. The parameters to do such claim were (a) ECCD centers were reaching to the far-flung villages as well (b) This implies that ECCD program has been found efficient in all the program districts. However the turnover rate of the ECCD teachers of Morang, Sunsari, , and Makawanpur districts did not allow the evaluation team to claim that the ECCD program was efficient at least in teacher retention. But the alternative provision of volunteer teachers had worked there as well.

Relevancy of the ECCD program

A program is considered to be relevant when it serves the dire needs of the people. Among these dire needs are the needs of the mothers and the children. Keeping this in mind the evaluation team tried to find out the relevancy of the ECCD program at the field level. For this the team organized group discussion sessions, crosschecked the information by in-depth interview with the articulating personnel. The informants organized the information thus obtained. Efforts were also made to find out other statistical inferences as proof. The table below gives account of the representative information about the relevancy of the ECCD program.

Table 24: Relevancy of the ECCD program

Informants	Verbatim in favor of the ECCD relevancy	Any other Testimony/Proof	Verbatim that goes against the relevancy of the ECCD program	Any other Testimony/Proof
Parents	➤ ECCD program could make us free from child care ➤ We could find our children safe and secured in the ECCD center than at home ➤ ECCD program prepared our children to go to the primary schools. ➤ It also helped improve the health and hygienic conditions of our children. ➤ ECCD could develop the language and social behavior of our children		ECCD encouraged our children more for singing, dancing and playing than in studying.	I enrolled my child in Nursery level to make him able to read and write English.

Teachers	➤ We found easy to teach the ECCD experienced children. ➤ These ECCD children could develop good habit that we opted for ➤ Our children became active and assertive.	ECCD graduates have shown good performance in school and some of them have taken positions too.		
Community leaders	➤ ECCD children have been found as accountable human beings.	Lost ECCD children could introduce them properly and hence police could help them find their parents.		Some parents said that they send their children to the ECCD center to guarantee the salary of the teacher
DEO personnel	Since this ECCD program is worth conducting we mainstreamed it by providing the salary of the teachers		ECCD centers are yet to made a part of the action research during supervision	
PLAN staff	➤ We used ECCD as our core program. ➤ PCES is essential for parents' involvement. ➤ It could help develop culture to send children in school even at the Musar community.	➤ This program is a salt for the curry to taste good	PCES and PE program have given least priority.	
Some others	➤ Seto Gurans and supervisor of the partner NGOs are satisfied with this ECCD program.	➤ They showed high level of dedication to mobilize the community when plan withdraws.		

The table shows that ECCD has been regarded as the needy program for all. This consensual information had the statistical proof as well. The information that the evaluation team obtained from different districts was also similar. But their was of expressions was a bit different. In other words they were the same in essence. It means all the informants of the study districts saw the relevance of this program. But they had different reasons. For instance, the poor people thought ECCD as relevant to get the similar taste of the private boarding school. The rich parents regarded it as a venue to tame children to make fit for the school that they want to send their children. The middle-income group felt ECCD relevant to help their children learn life skills. The schoolteachers on the other hand regarded the importance of ECCD for ensured easy handling. The working mother thought this ECCD as a daycare center to release their burden and also a venue to get free midday meal to them. Moreover the children felt the importance of ECCD for play and entertaining environment. In this sense ECCD though valued differently was found relevant for all groups of the people of the study locations.

The table above also gives clue that both PE and PCES were also equally relevant to support ECCD initiatives in the study districts. But the problem was that they were not used as a program in a continuum rather they had been one-shot discrete program.

Adequacy of the ECCD program

Any program is considered adequate if it can reach to the entire population of the targeted community. In the case of ECCD the targeted population is the vulnerable group. Here the question is whether this program has reached to these groups in Plan Nepal's working area. It is in this context the evaluation team assessed the ECCD program. For this the team regarded the percentage of the ECCD children in grade one as benchmark. The second benchmark was the number of ECCD centers in the working VDC. The third benchmark was the perception of the people. On the basis of these benchmarks, the evaluation team found that following result.

Table 25: Researchers' assessment on the adequacy of the ECCD program

Researchers' assessment on adequacy of ECCD center	Researchers' benchmark to claim the adequacy and non-adequacy of the ECD center		
	Benchmark 1	Benchmark II	Benchmark III
In remote rural Area of Makawanpur and interior part of Bara children are yet to be enrolled in ECCD centers. Both underage and overage children of the ECCD centers had consumed the resources in the studied districts. The case of Morang and Sunsari was different: there were 100% ECCD experienced children in grade 1	Presence of underage children in the ECCD centers	Presence of overage children in ECCD center	Rural area needs small class size center Growing demand of ECCD program as a benchmark

The analysis of the table above shows that ECCD was adequate in some of the Plan Nepal's working districts and in others it was not so. But even in the non-adequate situation, ECCD facilities were expanded by the Plan Nepal's initiatives. Besides the researchers assessment, the evaluation team generated stakeholders' perception to crosscheck it. A scenario of the crosschecked result is given in the table below:

Table 26: Adequacy of the ECCD program

Informants	Verbatim in favor of the adequacy of ECCD program	Any other Testimony/Proof	Verbatim that goes against the adequacy of the ECCD program	Any other Testimony/Proof
Parents	Parents lining near the ECCD centers got access to it.	Some parents have enrolled their underage children in ECCD center. In other cases the quota of 25 children per ECCD is already full	Geographical distance has debarred the children to be enrolled in the ECCD center	Community based ECCD enrolls only 25 children and others do not get chance to be enrolled there
Teachers	Family member of ECCD teachers use to look after the center in the absence of the authorized teachers.	Kinship process has been practiced to assign job for ECCD teachers.	The helper does could not ensure quality ECCD.	All the ECCD teachers have low remuneration for their job
Community leaders	Social leaders such as Chameli Devi Waiba have helped in ECCD center in the absence of its teacher.		Some community members said that the ECCD teacher is a caretaker of their children.	These parents also expect that their children should be fetched from their houses to the center by the teacher herself

Like the informants above DEO, Plan Nepal's staff, and others also reiterated the researchers' assessment on the adequacy of the ECCD program. This shows that Plan Nepal needs to expand its ECCD program in remote areas of the hill districts and interior part of the Terai districts. It also needs to pull out its resources from its program locations like that of Morang, Sunsari, and Bara for the interior parts.

Equity of the ECCD Program

Equity is related to the distributive justice. This justice requires unequal treatment to the unequal groups for the same result. In this sense, the unequal groups require more ECCD programs than the "equal" groups. Keeping this in mind the evaluation team explored the equity of the Plan Nepal' ECCD program. The team found that Plan Nepal initiated ECCD program had reached to the vulnerable groups. The second indicator was the stakeholders' perception about the equity of ECCD program. Herein below is the table that depicts the equity status of the ECCD program at the Plan Nepal's working districts.

Table 27: Stakeholders' perception on the equity of the ECCD program

Informants	Verbatim in favor of the ECCD equity	Any other Testimony/Proof	Verbatim that goes against the equity of the ECCD program	Any other Testimony/Proof
Teachers/Facilitators	I am only 8-class pass but I am very confident to run this ECCD because of the training that I received.	ECCD teachers are females.		
Community leaders	In our community, many beggars (Moute) are also enrolled in ECCD centers. They are never discriminated while feeding and teaching.	ECD graduates were enrolled in school. They are regular in school as well PCES has helped female youths to expose them with outside world		
PLAN staff	We target to reach ultra poor and marginalized children, including disable children.	Home visits have helped improve our family status		

The analysis of the above perceptions provides a clue that ECCD program has been reaching to the vulnerable groups. In this sense it has broken the road corridor development approach (Chambers, 1976). Parents thus had perceived ECCD as a support system to them while teachers had used it as employment opportunity along with the social work.

If we go through the district specific information we can find almost the similar response. These responses provide the information that ECCD program had ensured equity to the:

- Girl children whose presence was more or less equal to their boy counterparts
- Children of the ethnic group whose number surpass the number of other caste and the religious groups
- Children of the Dalit community though their number was slim in the list of the program beneficiaries
- Disable children whose number is very low
- Children of the so-called high caste people whose presence was relatively low.

Impact of the ECCD Program

Usually impacts are assessed in three levels viz., quantitative output, qualitative outcome, and long-term effect. On the basis of these parameters, the evaluation team evaluated the impact of the ECCD program. Quantitatively speaking this program could reach to many communities than before. The statistics says that back in 1999 Plan Nepal started with 390 ECCD centers and by 2009 the number of centers grew almost three times reaching to 883. As per signed agreement /MOU between Plan Nepal and Department of Education, Plan Nepal has expanded its resource to other ECCD centers or pre primary classes for quality promotion. By the end of June 2009, Department of Education has mainstreamed 609 Plan supported ECCD centers into government system and Plan Nepal also provide inputs – training, learning materials to DEO run pre-primary classes / ECD centers (382 other centers). The MOU also reiterates that the terms and conditions that recurrent cost has to be entitled to government and event based quality inputs and capacity development supports goes to Plan's responsibility. At the end year 2011, the Plan supported ECCD centers will mainstream into government system and Plan Nepal will be providing training and learning materials support to all the ECCD centers /pre-primary classes (3600 centers) of the Plan Nepal's working districts (7). Because of this provision, the ECCD beneficiaries were found increasing every year.

At the qualitative outcome level, this study showed that ECCD could make impact on the people that it is a most needed program to start the head of the child. The statements of the people that we could generate from the people (refer to the tables related to the relevance of ECCD) also provided the testimonies that this program has made impact on peoples' life. Moreover, parents' perception as daycare center; teachers' perception as preparatory class; poor peoples' perception as boarding school for quality education; and boarding school teachers' perception as children's taming venue also ensure that ECCD program has been able to give positive impact on the society. Its effort to bring domesticated women as ECCD teachers/facilitators was another form of impact that this program could yield. The table below has shed lights more on it.

Table 28: Impact of the ECCD program

Informants	Verbatim in favor of the ECCD impact	Any other Testimony/Proof	Verbatim that goes against the impact of the ECCD program	Any other Testimony/Proof
Parents	Our children are always ready to go to school; they wash hands before eating; keep their body clean; and also learn Nepali language. Living style has been improved due to children's demand for good food and hygiene including toilet use.		We want to enrolled children in school when they complete 2 years in ECCD.	

School Teachers	ECCD experienced children have inculcated good habit and behavior. These children are disciplined, obedient and friendly	The ECCD experienced children easy to teach. They are also full of social skills.		
Community leaders		ECCD has benefited to the ultra poor	ECCD teachers still collect children from the houses of the poor parents	
DEO personnel	Plan Nepal and Department of Education have signed MOU to mainstream the ECCD programs			
Plan Nepal's staff	ECCD centers were not closed during the Maoists and the Government's armed conflicts.			

The evaluation team also tried to see the impact of ECCD program on parents, teachers/facilitators, and community. Following this effort the team could generate the perceptions of the peoples of different walks of life. The analysis of these perceptions shows that ECCD has given positive impact on parents, teachers/facilitators, and community. At the parents level it could give positive impact by releasing them from their hectic time for childcare. The second impact it could give was that it promoted mothers for income generating jobs. The third impact was that the mothers knew to raise the child and train them for their better future. They also reported that the midday meal could make their children healthy. The observation report of the study team also reiterated the mothers' reporting.

At the teachers/facilitators level the ECCD program could teach psychological ways to deal children. It also prepared them for child friendly environment both in home and he working locations. Similarly, at the community level, ECCD program could raise awareness, motivate peoples, and ensure their continues support for its progress.

The long lasting impact of this program was also assessed from different ways. These ways include stakeholders' perception analysis; researchers' reflections; schoolteachers' response; and the parents' understanding, and the supporting organizations and individuals' reflections. On the basis of these approaches the evaluation team could see ECCD's long-lasting impact. These long-lasting impacts were (a) the mothers, new mothers, and the potential mothers were aware of the importance of ECCD program. Because of these awareness they have been active to construct cemented building in some of the study districts including Bara (b) the local government has began to contribute its resources that was varied from the district to the district and the center to the center (c) parents of some ECCD centers had been providing midday meal to the ECCD children of Rautahat district which was once considered as Plan Nepal's business (d) the Department of Education through DEO began to bear ECCD teachers' honorarium of Rs. 1800 a month and other contingency supports (e) some of the communities of Morang district have began to provide on top remunerations for the ECCD teachers (f) some ECCD centers of Sunsari districts have developed their plan with the help of mother schools to continue this initiative. The following were the overall impacts of the ECCD program.

Table 29: Overall impacts of the ECCD program

At children's level	At parents' level	At teachers' level	At community level
Children became curious to know many more things. They became creative, critical and self-corrective. Children developed learning habit by playing with dolls and other play materials.	Parents got relief and at the same time they knew how to raise children	Teachers at the ECCD level felt easy to handle the children. Similarly the schoolteachers found ECCD children very disciplined and easy to handle for self initiated learning. They also realized that this program helps ensure quality education in the long run.	Community realized the importance of ECCD and hence it has come up to render their contribution in favor of children's joyful learning

With the above impacts, ECCD program witnessed gaps as well. These gaps were identified as follows:

The gaps

The evaluation team had observed both Plan Nepal and government run ECCD centers. It had also taken interview and organized group discussions with varied forms of stakeholders of the ECCD program. On the basis of these information the evaluation analyzed both the quantitative and the qualitative data and/information to find out the gaps between the intentions and the actual happenings. The following is the list of the gaps that were identified during the course of data/information generation, processing, and interpretations.

- ECCD environment and School environment were not matching in terms of dealing, sitting, teaching, and the availability of the educational as well as play materials. Gaps like these also demanded smooth transitions at different levels.
- Community and School based ECCD programs were found different in terms of their management, operation and supervision. The first had congenial management, practical operation, and intense supervision. But there were exceptions in Morang and Sunsari districts' school based ECCD programs. Since the head teachers were active and dedicated to ECCD program, their school based ECCD centers were also equally effective to that of the community based ECCD program.

- Under age children had high attendance rate but the rate was different with the overage and the exact age children. This gap required rethinking over the ECCD initiatives, rethinking in a sense that how to raise the attendance rate of the exact age children.
- PCES had provided the home delivery health and nutrition, and childcare support. But this popular program was regarded to be inadequate in the study districts.
- ECCD experienced children had been enrolled in grade one in government school and only in nursery grades in private boarding school. In this sense the private boarding schools were not doing justice to these children on the name of their so-called desired "academic standard". This is where the gap was observed.
- Both the cognitive and achievement that the evaluation team took showed that ECCD experienced children had preparatory life skills while the non-ECCD children had more cognitive skills. This evident gap required to be bridged at some points and at some levels.
- Teachers no matter they used to work at school or home-based ECCD centers had put their time and energy for the holistic development of the children. But the teachers of the community based ECCD center was found as more powerful than the school based ECCD teachers. Here the gap was evident in the credibility of the ECCD teachers at their workplaces. In other words the community based ECCD teachers had social credibility, which was lacking with the school based ECCD teachers.
- Plan Nepal initiated ECCD centers had followed a uniform standard but it was not so with the school based ECCD centers in terms of their physical facilities, materials' availability, and community resource mobilizations. This gap demands continued reciprocal sharing at ECCD teachers, management, and the children.
- Plan Nepal could mainstream its ECCD centers through MOU with the Department of Education. Under this provision, the DEOs of the program districts will provide the ECCD teachers' remunerations. But how to ensure the intensive supervision and monitoring that Plan Nepal used to provide was yet to be sorted out. It is where the evaluation team observed the gaps.

Capacity of the ECCD promoters

Different people contributed to the promotion of the ECCD centers in the study districts. These peoples belong to CBOs, NGOs, local government, ECCD management committee, ECCD teachers, and some others. They in one or in other ways received capacity development support through training, refresher programs, guest lecturing, exchange programs, and many others. The table below displays the capacity support related to ECCD program.

Table 30: Capacity enhancement program for ECCD promoters

For parents	For EECD management committee	For ECCD teachers	For community leaders
PCES facilitators equipped parents through their door step training on health, nutrition, and childcare related knowledge and skills	CBOs volunteers were trained as ECD supervisors while the Management committee members were trained on record keeping and reporting	ECCD teachers were capacitated with adequate knowledge and skills to run ECCD center properly	CBOs oriented community leaders about the importance of ECCD. They also sought help for smooth operation of the ECCD centers. Setoguras of the concerned district provided both the basic and the refresher trainings to the ECCD teachers as pedagogical support.
ECCD campaign in the Plan Nepal's working VDCs	Workshop and interaction on thematic issues	Training, monitoring, and supervision as technical backup to the teachers	Workshop and interaction

Because of the above inputs from Plan Nepal, the ECCD promoters were instrumental for their assigned and/or ascribed accountability. Amidst this situation the evaluation team made efforts in assessing their capacity. As the team found the following had been the identified capacity of the ECCD promoters of all the study districts.

Table 31: Identified capacity of the ECCD promoters

Of the parents	Of the ECCD management committee	Of the ECCD teachers	Of the community leaders
Parents were aware of the importance of ECCD for their children. They were in a position to use their potentialities for ECCD campaign at least in their communities	The management committee had the technical know-how to operate ECCD centers	Teachers had possessed the skills and knowledge to handle ECCD centers. They were very much comfortable to engage children in educational activities through play and songs	The community leaders were knowledgeable about the importance of ECCD program. Some of them were instrumental for smooth operation of the ECCD centers.

The analysis of the table shows that each of the stakeholders of ECCD program had their own capacity. But the study team could not find enough proof to claim that these stakeholders of ECCD program had hardly organized sharing and the planning meetings in their own. They always required outsider, as manager no matter it was CBOs, NGOs, DC of the Plan Nepal, and any others. Even the VDC was not coordinating for such activities, which comes under its jurisdictions (LSGA, 2058BS). This implies that the capacity of the ECCD stakeholders was yet to be harnessed at their own level even in the absence of the outsiders.

The table above also showed that each group of the stakeholders possesses a specific capacity. This capacity had always looked for synergy making enterprise. But the question was that who would take care of this business and ensure the benefit of the ECCD program to the current beneficiaries even after the withdrawal of the Plan Nepal's resources. With this question in mind the evaluation team tried to find out the sustainability measures of the ECCD program.

Sustainability measures for the ECCD Program

Usually sustained activities are those, which could be reproduced even after the exhaustion of the outsiders' resources. For this the project implementers like Plan Nepal usually develops phase out plan. With this assumption in mind the evaluation team tried to find out the ECCD sustainability measures adapted by the Plan Nepal. As we found the following was the sustainability measures applied by the ECCD promoters of the study districts.

Table 32: Applied ways to sustain ECCD program

From the parents' side	Form the EECD management committee's side	From the local government's side	From the community leaders' side
Fund raising for midday meal to the ECCD children.	Lobby for local resources	Periodic financial support from the VDC and the DDC	Occasional donation to the ECCD centers
Group saving and credit of the ECCD children's mothers	Collect donations for repair and maintenance of the ECCD building	Mainstreaming of the Plan initiated ECCD program by providing the remunerations of the facilitators and stationary support to the ECCD centers	
ECCD support from forest users' group	Mobilization of the labor forces for construction activities		

The table explicitly shows that each and every type of stakeholders was putting their efforts to sustain ECCD initiatives. Some of them were creating environment and others were giving their hard earn money, time, and also harnessing the available resources around them. These were almost similar approaches that were practiced in Australia (susan.eliott@rmit.edu.au) as well. In addition to these approaches, the evaluation team found the following practices to sustain ECCD initiatives of the study districts even after the withdrawal of the Plan Nepal's resources.

Table 33: Identified ways to sustain ECCD program

District\stakeholders	By Plan Nepal	By CBO partners	By NGO partners	By local peoples
Banke	Mainstreaming with government's ECCD program	Establishing network for the institutionalization of the ECCD program	Strengthening District level coordination committees	ECCD mothers' meeting for the generation of periodic support
Bara	Advocating for the need of ECCD program at the local to the national level	Social mobilization for the importance of ECCD program	Linkage with the other development partners and local authorities such as VDCs DDCs.	Forest users groups' donation to the ECCD centers.
Makawanpur				
Morang				
Rautahat				
Sunsari				Fund raising by giving loans from the ECCD centers' fund.

The table above shows that different efforts have been made towards sustaining the ECCD initiatives. The greatest thing that the Plan Nepal did is to handover its ECCD centers to the DEO by signing MOU with DOE. This greatest effort was supported by the other initiatives that had been going on the ground. In this sense the evaluation team came up with the understanding that Plan Nepal's ECCD program will sustain despite the government's inadequate monitoring and supervision system that we observed in the field. In other words, there will be the slackness in the monitoring and supervision system. At the same time the ECCD centers might not get the resources that Plan Nepal is giving now.

Upahar Balbikash Kendra
(Urlabari-7 Morang): A case for sustainability

A community based ECCD center was providing ECD opportunity since 2060 BS. It was established with initiation of community and NGOs. The process of establishment of the center was systematic i.e. orientation to community on EDC, EMC formation, Facilitators selection, ECD center establishment and resource collection, involvement of community, parents in decision making. NGOs (Setoguran's Morang) played vital role in sensitization advocacy, capacity building and monitoring of ECD form the beginning. There are all together 20 children (girls 11 and boys 9) from Dalit janajati Brahman/ Chhetri community. Children come from 10-45 meter distance. Parents prefer this center though it takes more than 15 minutes.

The strength of this center is in management as well as pedagogical aspects. Likewise quality of ECD service and sustainability measures is remarkable. Parents are actively involved in fundraising program. The center has 67500 as revolving fund, which has generated Rs 12512 of interest. It has also generated Rs 7340 from parent's contribution. This center is also generating its income by the interest of its loan to the parents (Rs 1000 min to Rs 4000 maximum) i.e. 2% interest for small-scale income generating activities per Rs 100 per month. Apart from it, it has got land for cultivation, from which it has acquired 80kg of potato and 40 kg of garlic for use as well as sells. Parents, ECCD teachers, and helpers are committed for making the center a model. The management committees especially chairperson is dedicated for ECD center's sustainability. She is the real actor who sincerely accomplishes her responsibility in handling children as well as daily management of the ECCD center. The ECD environment is child friendly as mentioned in the proposal, 2063 BS (Child friendly VDC, 2063 BS).

The table also shows that all the stakeholders have been extending their hands to support ECCD centers. But these hands, as the evaluation team found, were looking for a strong mobilizers and that was lacking in all the study districts.

ECCD investment

Plan Nepal has invested a huge amount of money for its ECCD centers. This amount is more than the investment of the Government of Nepal for individual ECCD center. The table below displays the investment of both the organizations for ECCD program.

Table 34 : ECCD investment (In NRs.)

Areas of investment	Of Plan Nepal	Of the Ministry of Education
Material cost	5000 to 6000 per year	1000 per year per center
Building construction	25,000 to 60,000 per year	No provision
Snacks for children	25 to 28,000 per 25 children	No provision
Teacher's remunerations	1800 per month	1800 per month for the Hill and Terai and 2000 for Himali district teacher/facilitator
Helper's remunerations	1400 per month	No provision
Per child PCES investment	1: 275 and now reduced to 1: 135	No provision
ECCD teacher's preparation cost	12,000 to 14,000 per person for basic and 4,000 for refresher training	5000 per person for both the basic and the refresher training

The table shows that Plan Nepal's ECCD program is expensive not because of its resource misuse but because of the investment in many areas. For instance, the government has PE training but it has no provision for PCES program. In the same way, both material and the building construction cost were also different. Because of these cost differences, Plan Nepal was often charged for high investment.

But the evaluation team came to the understanding that since this is a human investment for head start this amount of money was worth investing.

Keeping the above discussions in mind, the evaluation team prepared a rundown of this study that appears in the table below:

Table 35: Rundown of the study findings

Key Variables	Parameters of Assessment	Tools Used	Findings
Relevance	Expectation of different stakeholders	Interview, group discussion	ECCD as panacea for all forms of stakeholders' expectation. For busy parents it is a child care center; for Public School it is a Preparatory Center; for Private School it is a taming center; and for Community it is a socialization center
Effectiveness	Academic qualification Holistic development Nutrition Monitoring and supervision	Questionnaire, achievement test	Low qualification of the ECCD teachers had high dedication and high qualification holders were looking for other options as well. People need more awareness in terms of holistic development of child.
Efficiency	Maximum utilization of available resources ➤ Time ➤ Support system ➤ Linkage/coordination ➤ Age group of children ➤ Physical facility of ECCD center ➤ Sufficient play ground ➤ Access to learning materials ➤ Room environment ➤ Recording and reporting system	Observation, interview, group discussion, case study, and record analysis	Presence of under age children challenged the intent of ECCD program Parents also demanded childcare center.
Capacity	Training, workshop, meeting, application of knowledge and skill, Problem solving, and need identification	Group discussion, interview	Need of self-reading resource materials and continuity of refresher workshop and other activities
Equity	Girl/Boy participation Ethnic groups participation Dalit and disable presence	Record collection, observation	More or less equal participation of girls and boys. High participation of ethnic groups Little participation of Dalit and disables.

Adequacy	Accessible of ECCD center	Group discussion	Sparsely populated area demands small size ECCD center. Parents of the Terai districts had demanded more ECCD centers
Sustainability	Fund raising, Social mobilization Linkage system development Future planning	Questionnaire, Group discussion, Observation, record collection	ECCD centers have their funds though they varied in their size. Many stakeholders have been mobilized but their efforts are to be synergised. Community people have understood the importance of ECCD but there is an absence of collaborative ECCD plan for the entire VDC
Impact	Benefit to the children Health and hygiene	Key informant	➤ ECCD have been the part of parents' life ➤ It has been a good alternatives for poor peoples' quality education ➤ ECCD children are more socialized ➤ It has given support to the holistic development of child ➤ Both the parents and schoolteachers have found ECCD helpful: the former found it helpful for socialization and the second for critical and creative learning ➤ ECCD has been a head start program of primary school

In a nutshell, ECCD program had been found effective in those areas where parents, community leaders, and teachers were well informed about the intent, content, method, and directions of the project. It was also found effective where the CECD promoters had developed positive attitude in them. Intensive basic training and frequent refresher training had also contributed to the success of the ECCD program. Moreover social mobilization was the next determining forces for the success of the Plan Nepal initiated ECCD program.

Findings, issues and recommendations

Findings

On the basis of the above analysis the evaluation team generated the following findings:

a. Effectiveness of ECCD program

1. ECCD program was found relevant for all the stakeholders of education. But in case of the adequacy it differed. For example there were enough ECCD centers in Plan Nepal's working VDCs of Sunsari and Morang districts while it was inadequate in Banke, Bara, Makawanpur, and Rautahat districts to ensure its access to the children of the vulnerable groups. And yet there were some locations where ECCD program was to be made available. These locations were the sparsely populated hilly area of Makawanpur district and interior parts of Banke district.
2. ECCD program was found effective in the heterogeneous communities than in the homogenous communities. The reason was that the heterogeneous communities were competitive, and also very much assertive. This assertiveness was observed more in the migrant communities than the homogenous communities of the study districts. In some ECCD centers of Sunsari and Morang districts the disable children were also getting benefits.
3. This program was found efficient in terms of ECCD children's cognitive, social, emotional, and other forms of development. Both the statistical and the qualitative indicators had supported this finding.
4. From the equity point of view this study found that this program had reached to the unreached of all the study districts. But the beneficiaries were the underage and the overage as well.

b. Impact of ECCD program

5. This program has made positive impact to all the stakeholders of education. But their perception towards it had huge gaps. For instance, ECCD program was not conceptualized in the same way as thought out by the Plan Nepal. In other words poor people thought it as a boarding school for quality education to their children; the parents of the underage children regarded it as daycare center to release them from the care taking drudgery; but for the school teachers it turned out to be a pre-school and for the private boarding school it was regarded as taming center. Besides this, the Muslim parents of Banke regarded ECCD as supplementary food giving venue and hence overage children were available there. The teachers there could not do different treatment to the children of the different age groups. Despite these findings the ECCD impact as people perceived remained similar to the findings of the selected countries of the world as the finding goes, children developed confidence, and mothers became knowledgeable, child related problems reduced (www.comminit.com/ennode/293682/303).

c. Capacity of the ECCD promoters

6. ECCD promoters and the implementers had adequate capacity to run the program. But this program had to synergise their capacities for the desired intent. With sporadic cases, Plan Nepal with its technical partner Seto Guras, logistic partner CBOs of each program district, and co-working partner NGO could capacitate ECCD program organizers including teachers.
7. Parents were mobilized in those centers where PCES program was effective but in other situation it was not found so. The ECCD center of Makawanpur district represented the first scenario and the second scenario was observed in Banke districts.
8. Parents could receive message on health and nutrition but they too lacked other types of development messages. This case of Bara was also observed in other study districts as well.
9. PCES program could help families change their food pattern for the benefit of their ECCD children. But there were rooms for the inculcation of holistic development of the child even at the household level.

10. ECCD teachers were dedicated to their assigned jobs but a trend was observed in all the study districts that less educated teachers were more dedicated than their more educated counterparts. The reason was that the second sets of teachers were getting options elsewhere including that of mother school with on top remunerations.
11. ECCD teachers provided more care to the children but remained lenient to ensure all-round development of the child because she had to prepare midday meal and clean the utensils. But the case of some ECCD centers was different because there was a helping hand to the ECCD teacher.
12. ECCD of the study districts became success because of its strong social mobilization. But the question remained who could be accountable for its continuation though the ECCD center operation guideline clearly spells out that it should be continued with recurrent support of the local government and the community.
13. There was a systematic documentation of the ECCD activities including the individual profile of the child especially in Bara, Sunsari and Morang. But in other centers of Rautahat, Makawanpur, and Banke districts the situation was not found that encouraging.

Sustainability of the ECCD program

14. Under the partnership arrangement between Plan Nepal and Department of Education, 609 out of 883 Plan supported ECCD centers have already been mainstreamed into government system. Plan Nepal has also expanded its service to DOE run 3538 ECD /PPC centers for quality promotion in 7 districts (Morang, Sunsari, Bara, Rahutahat, Makwanpur, Banke and Bardiya).
15. Plan Nepal could generate local resources for the sustenance of selected ECCD centers of all the study districts. But it has yet to develop systematic phase out plan to ensure that all the ECCD centers will run smoothly. For instance, VDCs, management committee, and other stakeholders could phase in Plan Nepal initiated ECCD program. But the evaluation team could not find the locally phase in ECCD centers however there were some ECCDs in all the study districts where local people had rendered their services in one or in other ways.
16. Because Plan Nepal provided lots of inputs and gradually exhausted them, some of the communities of all the study districts were found still dependent on the external support. This dependency syndrome was yet to be treated from the Plan Nepal side.

e. Transition of the ECCD graduates

17. Plan Nepal had put its efforts to ensure smooth transition of ECCD graduates from their center to the mother school. But the observation report shows that there are many gaps. The gaps were observed in sitting arrangement, provision of the midday meal, teacher preparation, learning style, and the content load.
18. Despite the efforts to ensure linkages between ECCD and in grade one as compared to the ECCD centers, there were visible gaps in teaching, material display, and midday meal facilities.
19. In ECCD centers of the study districts there were enough play as well as other forms of learning materials. But some of them were to be replaced by the new ones.

e. Overall result of the ECCD program

20. In a nutshell the strength of the Plan Nepal's ECCD program were:
 - It has reached to the vulnerable groups
 - It could expand ECCD facilities in a massive way
 - It could develop and test PE, PCES, ECCD, and school support continuum for all-round development of the child
 - Moreover, it could handover its ECCD centers to the government for their ensured continuation.

Issues

The evaluation team could figure out some of the issues out of the findings above. The following were the major issues to be sorted out for smooth implementation of the ECCD program. They appear in the question form below:

1. How to promote functional linkages between PE, PCS, ECCD, and primary school?
2. How to develop and implement home delivery ECCD program for the remote rural isolated households?
3. How to ensure systematic documentation of the ECCD initiatives including individual profile of the child?
4. How to maintain the balance between the expectations of the parents from ECCD program- the expectation to terminate ECCD as pre-school for the public school; boarding school for the poor parents and the likes?
5. How to gear parents and the teachers of different knowledge generations for the holistic development of the child?
6. How to make local government accountable for the increased investment, expansion, development, and the sustenance of the ECCD programs in the decentralized federal Nepal?
7. How to develop community potentials for technical backstopping at the doorstep?
8. How to address the ECCD needs of the mobile family.
9. How to introduce teacher research and institutionalize it at the local government level?
10. How to retain high qualification holders as ECCD teachers?
11. How to link ECCD program with School Sector Reform Program, which envisaged ECD only for 4 and 5 age group children?

Recommendations

Reflecting upon the findings and the issues to be sorted out the evaluation team came up with the following recommendations:

Recommendation for pedagogical continuation

1. Develop a chain of support from PE to PCS, to ECCD center, to primary school so that the ECCD children will not loose their abilities that had been enabled by the Plan Nepal's initiatives. This demands series of the functional interactions among the concerned authorities at the ground level. It also demands curricular, pedagogical, teacher training, and material revisits to ensure PE, PCS, and ECCD coherence.
2. Develop bridge course to fill the gaps of the ECCD children as they were found high in activities, low in cognition, and weak in contents to fit will all the potential avenues for them. This bridge course will help ECCD graduates to cope with the grade I curriculum.
3. Develop underage, overage, and exact age corners in each ECCD center. In line with these corners, prepare ECCD teachers, school administration, and the stakeholders of education. For this, Plan Nepal should revise ECCD teacher training package and incorporate some contents to manage underage, overage, and exact age children.
4. Revise the training packages to accommodate the local strength and institutionalize ECCD as the priority program of the parents under local government. This can be done by collecting the feedbacks of the PCES facilitators, ECCD teachers, and grade 1 teachers. The collected feedbacks can be analyzed and the training packages be revised.
5. Introduce and implement various modalities of ECCD program for different communities /VDCs/municipalities. The potential modalities could be home based, semi center based, open center based, and some others. Home based ECCD will follow PCES model. Semi center based ECCD will apply weekend ECCD center model. Open center based model will follow the mix model i.e. the blend of PCES model with the occasional drop-in center. Models like this could be identified during parents' discussion sessions.

Recommendation for expanded access to ECCD program

6. Ensure the access of ECCD age children of the remote rural areas by developing pictorial materials for parents and by promoting home delivery ECCD program like that of the PCES initiatives.
7. Develop parent support special scheme for those who are poorest of the poor. For this Plan Nepal can use Dalekhi approach to figure out the pregnant lady by putting the blue flag on the roof of the concerned house.
8. Make PCES mandatory for all the ECCD centers and also scale up its access
9. Advocate and lobby for ECCD at national, regional, district, and VDC level with ensured functional linkages with different stakeholders, resource allocation, material support, and mainstreaming with the government initiatives

Recommendation for technical backstopping

10. Develop shared monitoring and supervision system at the VDC level under the coordination of its authorities. This in fact complies with LSGA envisaged rights to the local government. The CBOs and the ECCD network can do this business.
11. Prepare local volunteers as ECCD social mobilizers. These mobilizers could be the parents, local youths, retired professionals, and other interested groups of people.
12. Lobby for job security of the existing ECCD human resources including their professional updating. For this, self-reading and/or self-taught ECCD reading as well as training materials can be developed.

Recommendation for effective monitoring and supervision

13. Activate and systematize M/E system through I/NGOS, CBOS, VECS, EMC, Experts, Professionals
14. Assess children's progress and report to the parents and other stakeholders as mandatory so that the children could get easy transition to school.
15. Reward/reinforce human resources involved in ECD implementation
16. Promote participatory M/E through social audit of ECD program

Recommendations for partnership and collaboration

17. Like the MOU with DOE, Plan Nepal should do MOU with the VDCs and the DDCs for their perennial support of ECCD sustenance and expansion. Such MOU could be helpful for leveraging the local resources. For this, ECCD centers can be networked at the VDC level. This network can do MOU with VDC and the DDC. Plan Nepal can facilitate this process at the VDC and the DDC of its program districts.

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Appendix

Study tools

Group discussion	Key informant Interview	Observation
ECCD Management committee members	ECCD facilitators	ECCD centers
	PCES facilitators	Preprimary class of the school based ECCD
Parents	CBOs	Grade I and II
	PLAN staff	
	ECCD management committee chairperson	
	Primary school teachers	
	Community leaders	