Professional Associations in Support of Child Well-Being in Uganda:

Establishment of ECD Newsletter Series

by

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M.Ed., Makerere University Kampala 1991

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School of Child and Youth Care,

Faculty of Human and Social Development

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The main objective of this project was to establish an early childhood development (ECD) newsletter series through which the ECD professional associations will exchange views in support of child well-being in Uganda. Specifically, the newsletter provides a channel of communication between the children and other ECD stakeholders. It highlights ECD-related projects in the country so as to reduce duplication of projects and promote formation of ECD professional associations. Thus, the outcome of this project was the production of the Early Childhood Development Newsletter series. The newsletter was called *The Uganda Early Childhood Development Link* because it intends to form linkages between different stakeholders by forming ECD professional associations.

The many organizations in Uganda which specialize in different aspects of ECD activities are not well coordinated. Many of the private investors who own nursery schools and other ECD centres are mainly concerned about enrolment numbers and income but not the quality of services given to children.

One of the challenges identified by Museveni (1999) was the limited public awareness of child rights among both the adults and children, which this newsletter will address.

To compile this project report and the newsletter, information was collected using discussions with different people and using guided questions to solicit articles. Findings were described based on what people reported during data collection. Findings indicated
that there was inadequate communication between children and their caregivers and a lack of coordination between the child-focused organizations and institutions.

The report concludes that the presence of a clear policy and government involvement in ECD is essential for ECD programming and implementation. One of the important recommendations includes formation of new and strengthening of existing ECD professional associations to spearhead the coordination of ECD services.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the contribution of different persons, institutions and organizations that assisted me in many different ways in order to complete this project report.

First, I would like to acknowledge the guidance given to me by my supervisors Dr. Alan Pence, Dr. Jessica Schaffer, Dr. Roy Ferguson and Mrs. Jolly Nyeko, without whose effort this project would not have reached its present state.

I would also like to acknowledge Ms. Lynette Jackson’s tremendous contribution of keeping me informed, reminding me of deadlines and encouraging me to continue to the end.

I cannot forget to mention the CHILD PROJECT, under the Nutrition and Early Childhood Project in Uganda and ECDVU, who supported me to meet the course costs in form of tuition fees, transport, accommodation, meals during the face-to-face sessions and provision of study materials that assisted me during the course.

Lecturers from Makerere University and those from Kyambogo University and the members of the editorial board did a great job of reading through my work, guiding me and making suggestions for improvement.

My research lecturers, course mates from Uganda and other African countries participating in the ECDVU course contributed a lot to the development of this project. May the good lord reward you.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background

Early Childhood Development (ECD) refers to the policies and programs for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers. The purpose of these programs is to protect children’s rights to develop full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential (UNICEF, 2001).

ECD in Uganda is defined differently by different sectors depending on what they intend to do for the child. In the education sector, early childhood education refers to the educational experiences a child goes through from ages 0-8. Their intention is mainly to provide rich experiences for the moral, emotional, physical, social and cognitive development of the child. In the health sector, ECD refers to the stage when the child is supposed to be immunized against the six killer diseases: polio, tetanus, diphtheria, tuberculosis, polio, whooping cough and measles (ages 0-6 years).

In the nutrition sector, ECD is taken to cover those years when the child is most vulnerable to nutritional deficiencies (ages 0-3 years). There is no single ECD definition that combines all sectors that have a stake in ECD. So, the services that are offered are compartmentalized though they are intended to address the same child. The education sector, in most cases, does not know what goes on in other sectors and such is the same with the health and nutrition sectors. This lack of coordination has caused a setback in the provision of services to the children and, therefore, there is a need for the formation of more professional associations in support of child well-being in Uganda. The one that is in existence is the Uganda Nursery Schools Association, which is highly urbanized and does not represent the whole country, as may be implied in its name. The associations
will use this newsletter as a vehicle for dissemination of ECD information to a wide audience in the country and beyond.

The professional associations will help to document what takes place in each of the sectors as far as ECD services are concerned so that researchers can refer to them and interventions be made. Therefore the ECD Newsletter will be used as a channel to disseminate ECD information to a wider audience in and outside Uganda.

Statement of the Project Activity

There are many newsletters in Uganda that focus on children’s issues like child abuse, children’s rights and nutrition, but none specifically focused on ECD issues or which bring out the ECD issues adequately. Therefore, there is a gap in our understanding of ECD issues in Uganda. Some want to see ECD holistically, while others see it in terms of small independent units. This project activity, which aims at producing a newsletter series in support of child well-being in Uganda, will also help to strengthen and direct the ECD professional associations to address ECD issues holistically.

The outcome of this major project was the production of a newsletter, *The Uganda Early Childhood Link*. The newsletter contains a number of ECD-related issues and topics that will be used to promote early childhood care in Uganda. This newsletter will be the first in the ECD newsletter series to be produced in Uganda. It examines ECD issues holistically to promote an all-round development of the child instead of fragmenting them into smaller, independent components in the ways it has been done in Uganda in the past.

This project involved designing the appropriate format for the newsletter to cater to all the targeted readers. The content of the newsletter was developed through the input
of various stakeholders who were asked to contribute to the content of the newsletter in terms of articles, expert advice, policy-related issues, research findings, opinions, poems, stories, experiences and photographs. The largest space in this newsletter was reserved for the children, parents, teachers and caregivers who are the primary beneficiaries of the project to participate actively by giving their views about ECD in Uganda. This was done to create a communication channel which does not currently exist between teachers, children, parents and caregivers.

The ECD professionals and policy makers contributed to the newsletter by writing articles and providing direction on issues of policy and what they conceive to be the best practices in ECD. To complete the planned activities, an editorial board consisting of technical persons was involved in coordinating and directing the newsletter’s organization, administration and production. The board was also responsible for the distribution of the finished newsletter to different stakeholders.

*Rationale for the Project*

There are many governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions in Uganda who specialize in different aspects of ECD, such as nutrition, health, advocacy and education. Some of these organizations are run by ECD professionals, while others are run by lay people who have invested their private capital in ECD institutions to make profits. Many of the private investors are concerned about the enrolment and the money collected but not the quality of services given to children.

The ECD professionals and other caregivers in many of the institutions work in isolation and are independent of each other. They may not even know what other organizations in their areas do. This has led to duplication of work, poor coordination,
neglect of other important areas in ECD and failure to support the holistic development of children that is emphasized in ECD.

This newsletter project is a very important tool that will be used to promote and emphasize the importance of quality early childhood years for a better later life of children in Uganda. It will also act as a link between the key players in ECD to help avoid duplication and improve on the existing services to children. This will be possible because the newsletter will open a channel of communication between children and ECD stakeholders that has been missing in our society. Presently, ECD stakeholders do what they think is right for children without consulting them. This violates children’s right to participate in making decisions that affect them. The ECD newsletter series will sensitize ECD stakeholders on child participation and how it can be done with ease. If the project is sustained, it may also act as reference for research and policy development. The ECD professionals will benefit a lot by sharing views and sensitising other caregivers regarding the current trends in ECD practices. Consequently, children will benefit by receiving quality ECD services both at home and in the ECD centres.

Context of the Project

The newsletter project is conceived against the background that there is absent or inadequate communication between children and ECD stakeholders. Despite the global trends in childcare and development of which Uganda is a part, there is still clear evidence that in most of the African societies, very little opportunity is provided for children to interact with adults to sharpen their intellect (Durojaiye, 1976). Children simply obey adults without question. The scenario of children obeying adults without question has also given rise to increased violation of children’s rights through physical,
sexual and psychological abuse. This is perhaps due to the unequal power relationship between adults and children that is compounded by other factors. The children therefore are left to suffer silently, yet if they were given an opportunity to express their feelings to the relevant people somewhere, they might be helped or guided on what to do.

The present trend of African modernization that is influenced by Western ideas and practices is weakening the traditional African family ties that acted as a support system to the children. Traditional extended families had members who would interact with children in the absence of their parents. In the past close relatives, especially grandparents, would act as mediators between children and their parents to open communication channels that would improve relationships. This mediation would help provide a more stimulating environment for children than the present nuclear family arrangement where parents tend to delegate their responsibilities to housemaids who may not be well prepared for that role. The situation is even worse in households that cannot afford house help. There are reported cases of parents locking up their children in the houses and stopping them from communicating with any outsiders. Such children miss out so much compared to those who are allowed to interact and play with their peers.

Westernization has also made parents busier and unavailable to their children. Previously, as Sekamwa (1996) notes, parents or elders would have classes with children around the fireplace and give children opportunities to interact with them. But now, many children spend days without talking to their parents yet they share the same house. This argument is supported by Njuki’s (1998) finding that children whose parents were highly educated and both in full-time employment were the most disadvantaged in terms of quality interactions compared to those children whose parents were less educated and
were at home full time. The situation is made worse by the ignorance of many parents on what their roles are in child upbringing, by the lack of accessibility to available information on childcare, and by the low literacy rates in the country.

The literacy rate in Uganda has fortunately started to improve due to continued interest and focus on adult literacy classes and the government’s introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. UNICEF (2001) reports that in Uganda, the adult literacy rate has improved from 60 percent for males in 1980 to 74 percent in 1999 and from 31 percent for females in 1980 to 50 percent in 1999. The urban elites who have housemaids and the adults who attend the literacy classes together form a large percentage of the current targeted population for this newsletter. Some of these people have the urge to read either for pleasure or to practice their reading skills, but find problems getting appropriate literature. Much of the available literature on ECD is either too expensive or contains information that is not easy to read and understand, while other types of literature have too much political information that some people try to avoid. The people who attend literacy classes and read the ECD newsletter will help disseminate the information to those who may not be able to read. They may also use it for the betterment of the services to their own children.

In light of the above, the ECD newsletter will try to fill that gap by providing user-friendly information that affects all families. The newsletter is presented in simple language to cater to those people with inadequate reading skills and is highly pictorial to cater to children’s interests and adults too. Efforts will be made to make the newsletter affordable whilst taking into consideration the issue of sustainability. Special consideration will be made to cater to marginalized groups of the readership where
appropriate subsidies may be applied in order to cater to all readers. Beneficiaries in this
regard may include, among others, readers with disabilities and those who are extremely
poor, because advertisers will cover some of the costs.

**Beneficiaries of the Project**

The mission of this project is to advocate for our children to be heard and not only
to be seen. It will encourage children to express their views and feelings on issues that
affect them for the attention of parents, caregivers, ECD professionals and practitioners,
so as to promote holistic and quality ECD.

Through the ECD newsletter series, ECD-related projects and programs being
undertaken by various organizations would be highlighted so that children and others
who need their services could approach them. It is hoped that the newsletter will also
reduce duplication of ECD projects, which is common due to lack of communication in
this area.

The ECD professionals will also have a platform on which to interact and can use
the newsletter to fill the current knowledge gap by disseminating ECD information in
Uganda to a wide audience in jargon-free language that addresses child development
issues holistically.

The newsletter will provide knowledge and become a source of reference to the
lay ECD practitioners, investors and the general public on how they should handle
children to promote better early childhood development. It will also provide information
to help guide parents and caregivers on giving quality care to children, listening to
children, and providing a stimulating environment to enhance children’s holistic
development. The newsletter will also give parents and caregivers an opportunity to
express their views and perspectives, thereby creating a dialogue between themselves and the children.

Summary of the Project

This newsletter project will try to fill the information gap that presently exists among ECD practitioners, children, parents and other stakeholders by highlighting the present ECD-related programs and organizations involved in them such that duplication of programs is reduced. It will also provide information and expert advice to the private ECD practitioners on the best and well-researched ways of handling children so as to improve their work.

Previously isolated ECD professionals will have a platform to interact with other ECD professionals; this may help in the formation of other ECD professional associations that may in turn help guide other practitioners and suggest ECD-related policies to government to strengthen the institution.

Specific Project Objectives

This project will strive to achieve the following objectives:

1. Provide a channel of communication between children and other ECD stakeholders so that the children’s views can be heard and considered.
2. Highlight ECD-related projects and programs being undertaken by various governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions to direct children and those in need to the relevant organizations.
3. Help reduce duplication of projects.
4. Provide a vehicle for communication that may promote formation of ECD professional associations.

5. Be a source of information to guide policy makers and those ECD practitioners and investors who provide private daycare services on what is best for children.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED WORK

Introduction

The discussion in this chapter is based on three themes relevant to ECD as viewed by other stakeholders and practitioners. The objectives of the project are based on these themes that it hopes to explore further and endeavour and achieve holistic ECD. The literature will provide insights on some of the possibilities that may suite us best in our situation. Also presented are issues pertinent to current trends in the field of ECD globally. The main themes are:

- ECD Information Sharing in Uganda
- ECD Programs in Uganda
- ECD Professionals in Uganda

ECD Information Sharing in Uganda

The government of Uganda, under the leadership of His Excellency President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program to help cater to poor parents who cannot afford school fees for their children. There were mixed reactions among the populace as to what the program would be like and how it would be implemented. Several ways such as radio adverts, local council meetings, and civic education workshops were used to sensitize the masses on the program and to enhance communication between individuals, groups and communities on the benefits of UPE. The UPE Newsletter was then launched to share nationally the experiences of all stakeholders. Its main goal was to highlight UPE’s progress, achievements and problems so that all the stakeholders would have a chance to express their views and make
suggestions to improve the program (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2000). This approach made the newsletter popular, thus achieving its objectives of being a medium of exchange of UPE-related information among the stakeholders. The readership of this newsletter, however, is affected by political talks especially among those people who do not support the government.

One of the challenges identified by the President of Uganda in his speech at the commemoration of 10 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was the limited public awareness of child rights among both adults and children. This lack of awareness is compounded by persistent negative social and cultural attitudes and practices at all levels of society which contribute to high levels of various forms of child abuse in homes, schools and communities (Nakanjako, 1999). There is an urgent need, he noted, to speed up dissemination of information on child rights to the public. This challenge was put squarely on the ECD professionals in the country to sensitize the masses and try to provide quality stimulation to the children. To answer this call, Child-Link Magazine, which promotes the rights of children, was started by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) Uganda. However, this magazine is limited in its scope to mainly child abuse (although other children’s issues are included) and does not give a holistic picture of ECD in Uganda.

An ECD needs assessment done by Bellamy (2001) revealed a range of social beliefs on early childhood development. In Uganda in particular, the war in the north has made many children witness the murder and torture of family members that may have a great effect on their development. The Gulu psychosocial team, which was instituted by
the Ugandan government to assess the psychosocial needs of children in the war area, reported that mothers seemed not to be aware of the psychosocial effects of war on their children. On stimulation and learning, Obonyo and Annan (2001) reported that mothers in Lira said, “We do not know the importance of storytelling and songs on the improvement of learning skills” (p. 12). Mothers in Mpigi in central Uganda also observed, “We do sometimes interact with our children at times but we do not realize its importance” (p. 13). It was therefore found necessary to raise the awareness of mothers and other caregivers on the importance of interacting with their children and stimulating them through songs and storytelling so as to improve their learning abilities. The Uganda government is presently implementing a new initiative entitled the Community and Home Initiatives for Long-term Development (CHILD) Project as a sensitization strategy.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation newsletter is another newsletter that focuses on the sharing and dissemination of ECD issues. It compiles articles from various participating countries according to the newsletter themes to allow ECD practitioners to interact with each other and share their experiences. Various stakeholders, interested parties and the general public are encouraged by the foundation to develop low cost, community-based initiatives in early childhood care and education for socially and culturally disadvantaged children from birth to eight years of age.

Many African societies still downplay the importance of the early years of children. Many of the children are taken care of as adults with no special considerations or treatment. To address this issue, the Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child came up with a newsletter, *The Early Years*, to highlight the importance of the early childhood years. Different stakeholders are given themes to come up with the bi-annual
newsletter. This newsletter is presently promoting the sharing and dissemination of ECD information to families, communities and ECD practitioners. (ECD Ghana Newsletter, 2002).

*ECD Programs in Uganda*

There are many ECD initiatives in Uganda, some community-based, others started by individuals or initiated by the World Bank through the government of Uganda. The key challenge in these initiatives is to develop a system that links community mechanisms with accessible and appropriate legal, psychosocial, and material resources (Obonyo & Annan, 2001). While every attempt has been made to provide the child with the best possible care, a review of existing legislation needs to be realistic. Accessible standards of care should be based on what is actually possible within the community, with recognition of child-headed households and other alternative models.

The Kitgum psychosocial team in Northern Uganda that is supported by UNICEF recognizes that children do not live in a world of their own. They have siblings, parents, relatives and neighbours. Obonyo and Annan (2001) argue that the way these and other people behave toward children influences their attitudes and beliefs, their knowledge and behaviour, their chances of survival to adulthood, and their physical, mental, emotional and social development. Since children are part of and greatly influenced by their own communities, the Kitgum psychosocial support program uses a community-based approach to supporting children in the midst of conflict, violence and insecurity. It aims at helping communities understand the behaviour of these children so as to help them develop coping mechanisms. However, Obonyo and Annan (2001) note that some people keep stigmatising the children, calling them rebels, overworking and harassing them.
In Uganda, there are many child-headed households due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has robbed them of their parents. These children need to exchange ideas with fellow children and caregivers to express their plight. Norma (2003) carried out a research project to integrate ECD at the household and family level. The aim of the project was to develop cost-effective family/home and community-based ECD strategies. It highlighted research undertakings and findings in various areas of ECD such as children’s rights, nutrition, cognitive development, socialization and moral development. He found out that most communities were happy to participate in ECD activities and programs that had already been established on the ground.

The concept of children’s best interests has become a widely accepted notion in such international instruments as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Children’s Statute (1996). These interests can be expressed through different channels like the ECD newsletter, radio, newspapers, magazines and television.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation (1997) noted that the development of young children is greatly helped by the key elements in ECD programs. These programs take ECD to mean holistic development of young children in the areas of physical, social, intellectual, emotional and moral aspects. Good programs consist of all those activities that assume that children are proactive and self-motivating learners who need to experience, explore and discover, and greatly enjoy doing so.

The ECD newsletter of Ghana (2003) highlights the holistic concept that underlies ECD as that which draws attention to the fact that efforts which support health, nutrition, cognitive and social development of children in the early years should be emphasized. To it, a holistic approach to ECD considers all the developmental needs of the child as
opposed to compartmentalising child development into health, nutrition, education, social, emotional and spiritual variables or other single-focused aspects of the child’s development. The Ugandan government shares the same concerns. Its views are reflected in the Government White Paper on Education (Ministry of Education and Sports, 1992), which emphasizes holistic development of children at pre-primary levels onward.

To implement this policy, Universal Primary Educational (UPE) was introduced to provide equal educational opportunities for all school-age going children irrespective of gender, ability and social economic status, including persons with disabilities (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2000). The communities were encouraged to support this initiative. The main aim of working with communities is awareness-raising and sensitization, so that people with disabilities and their families can be accepted as part of the society. Increased knowledge and information about disability within communities results in improved attitudes towards adults and children with disabilities. Communities begin to realize potentials instead of inabilities of adults and children with disabilities.

The Ugandan public, including some of the leaders, did not fully recognize the importance of children’s early years. When the World Bank and the Uganda Government Nutrition and Early Childhood Development Project presented their proposal of buying materials for the country’s ECD centres to the parliamentary committee, they thought they were only going to buy toys. They thought it was not cost effective since there were other pressing issues to address. According to Armstrong (1981), this indicated a lack of awareness of the importance of ECD and the role of play in influencing the development of children. He noted that few people were aware of how the qualities of education for
young children impacted on their further education, hence the need for flexible channels of communication.

As one of the ways for increasing public capacity to access information, the UPE program in Uganda was launched. Since its inception, the program has provided opportunities for millions of children who would have otherwise not had access to education. This has been possible through publicising it through different media like the radio, newsletters and newspapers. Other intervention programs that have been put in place to cater to the needs of children include; Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE), Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK), National Forum for Education (NFE) and Basic Education for the Urban Poor (BEUPA). Each of these programs has a unique curriculum that takes into special consideration the needs of children in different settings. Special emphasis is paid to contentious issues such as girl child education, child upbringing and community participation in ECD. Another important aspect has been the Educational Assessment and Resource Services (EARS)/Special Needs Education (SNE) based in the 56 districts of Uganda and coordinated by the Directorate of Education in the Ministry of Education and Sports. The activities of EARS/SNE include, among others:

- identification of children with special learning needs, including those with disabilities;
- assessment of special learning needs among children;
- making referrals to other service providers for further management of impairments/disabilities;
• making placements to relevant educational institutions at preschool, primary, secondary and/or tertiary institutions and making necessary follow-ups; and,
• counselling and guiding parents, particularly on issues of acceptance of their children’s disabilities.

It should be appreciated that despite the many ECD programs as reviewed there is still inadequate literature on the subject because of lack of adequately prepared and organized ECD professionals. In the next section ECD professionals are discussed.

ECD Professionals in Uganda

According to the Bernard van Leer Foundation (1997), there are policy issues on early childhood care and development which need to be addressed. These include expansion of protective services, building political will, supporting the development of national action plans, and investing in poor countries. The Foundation further suggests that protective services to children need to be addressed through campaigns to inform all citizens of child rights and the protective, welfare and judicial services available. This can be done with the help of ECD professionals in countries.

The World Conference on Education for All was held in Jomtien, Thailand on March 5-9, 1990. Uganda was one of the 155 countries that sent delegates to the Jomtien conference. The purpose of the conference was to lay strategies on how to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade. Since 1990, governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and the media have taken up the cause of providing basic education for all children, youth and adults (UNESCO, 2001). After the conference, the Ugandan delegation formed an ECD task force to help direct the country on ECD-related
issues. In one of their bulletins, titled “Eight is Too Late,” the following issues were identified: lack of awareness of the importance of ECD; low parental involvement; inadequate information and data; weak interrelationships and lack of synergy among the various interventions; lack of coordinated regulatory framework and limited technical capacity (ECD Task Force, 2000).

The Child Health Development Centre (CHDC) at Makerere University also has a group of ECD professionals who specialize in early childhood nutrition and health care activities. They also participate in a number of research studies that promote early childhood care and development. In one of their studies they found out that in Uganda, fathers play a minor role in early childhood development. Mothers play a major role but are hampered by many constraints. They also learned that adults have a good understanding of the physical needs of small children, even if they cannot meet them, and are aware of the emotional needs of small children but have very little understanding of their cognitive needs (ECD Task Force, 2000).

Another upcoming group of ECD professionals in Uganda is the newly launched Uganda Nursery Teachers Association (UNTA). This association will focus on the training of nursery teachers, advocacy in ECD-related issues, streamlining of the nursery school curriculum and promotion of the acceptable minimum standards requirements for nursery schools.

At Kyambogo University, there exists an ECD department that has professionals who directly specialize in various fields of ECD. Their main work at the university is to train ECD teachers, caregivers and other stakeholders in the best ways and methods of
working with children during their early years. They also work with other ECD non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote ECD programs.

In summary, the ECD professionals need to strengthen their networking strategies so that every stakeholder in ECD gets to know what is happening in different organizations in Uganda that are child focused. They should also use the ECD newsletter to disseminate information among themselves and other caregivers in and outside Uganda.
CHAPTER 3: MAJOR PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the study design, study area, target sample and sampling technique. It also highlights the instruments used to collect information from the target group and describes how the information was put together to be compiled in the newsletter. The main objective of this project was to provide a channel of communication between children and other ECD stakeholders so that the children’s views can be heard and considered.

Study Design

In order to collect balanced information that covers the concerns of all the stakeholders, a cross-sectional survey design was used to get opinions from different strata of respondents.

Study Area

This study was carried out in all the five regions of the country in order to take into account the feelings of the whole country on ECD-related issues in order to build a national consensus. To do this, regional workshops were conducted to sensitize the masses and to stimulate them into thinking about ECD issues. One member of the editorial board, who is the assistant commissioner for preschool education in Uganda, was requested to help organize these regional workshops. Regional inspectors of schools were used to mobilize the respondents at the parish level. This was done with the help of head teachers who sent school children from the school near the regional headquarters, with the message of inviting their parents to go to the regional headquarters or designated
schools to attend the workshops on specified days perceived as convenient to them. In all the regions, the workshops were held in primary schools as identified by the regional inspectors of schools.

Sample/Target Group

The audience in this project included children between the ages of 3 and 18 years, in part because they are able to make their feelings known so easily through such a medium, and in part because constitutionally in Uganda, they are children. The project also targeted caregivers, especially those who handle children 0-8 years of age, parents, and teachers. Most of these people, especially the parents, comprise of elites, people taking literacy classes, marginalized groups, and the poor; later it will also target readers with disabilities.

Sampling Technique

After the sensitization workshops, various participants who felt they had something to say to others through the newsletter were purposively sampled. Special considerations were made to ensure that all the categories of stakeholders were represented, by stratifying them and then purposefully sampling those who wanted to contribute their ideas to the newsletter. A total of 310 respondents were sampled for the study. They included 80 teachers, 80 parents, 120 children, 20 college tutors, 5 ECD trainers, 4 policy makers from the Ministry of Education and one ECD specialist from the National Curriculum Development Centre. A group of 20 teachers and 20 parents was randomly sampled after purposeful selection at the end of the workshops. A convenience sample of 30 children was selected on the advice of their teachers as those who had
useful information to give from each region. The schools the children were sampled from were randomly selected. Ten children were sampled from each of the three schools that were identified in each region.

*Project Activity*

The project objective was to produce an ECD newsletter that will fill the current knowledge gap by disseminating ECD information in Uganda to a wide audience in jargon-free language that addresses child development issues. It is proposed that for the beginning the newsletter should be produced bi-annually. With time, production schedules will be reviewed depending on the assessment of demand and resources available.

*Procedure*

The current project execution involved putting in place an editorial board that comprised ECD professionals from the National Curriculum Development Centre, policy makers from the Ministry of Education and Sports, trainers from Kyambogo University, ECD practitioners in the field and a parent. One person from each of these organizations was requested to become part of this board because they are technical people in this area and represent various interest groups in the area of ECD. Their major role was to help direct the production of the newsletter through provision of relevant technical information in the field of ECD. This would help the newsletter disseminate factual and accurate information from different perspectives.

One member was selected from the National Curriculum Development Centre. This participant was selected to provide views on what the curriculum for children aged
0-8 years should entail in terms of content, objectives, activities, materials and learning outcomes for different age groups. Another member was selected from the Ministry of Education and Sports to provide views on issues relevant to ECD policy and how it is developed and implemented in the country without leaving some of the stakeholders out. The third member was selected from an institution that trains nursery school teachers in Uganda. The participant was selected because of her experiences in training of teachers. The aim was to solicit experiences as a teacher trainer and the challenges that she encounters in her job as a trainer. The fourth member was also a trainer but mostly basing on the community model of training. She was selected to share her experiences with the group on how she involves the community in the selection of trainees, their participation in the management, monitoring and evaluation of the ECD activities that her students and tutors get involved in the communities where they work. The editorial board members participated in making decisions relevant to the content of the newsletter considering the targeted population, that is, the caregivers, parents, teachers, children and ECD professionals.

With the editorial board in place, the next focus was to decide on the content of the newsletter to cater to the interests of the targeted beneficiaries. To do this, the newsletter was subdivided into sections that catered to different interests. A technical team was then appointed by the editorial board who used the newsletter theme decided by the board to collect articles, stories, pictures, photographs and letters that were incorporated into a complete newsletter ready for printing. This technical team consisted of three people: an editor to coordinate the group, a critical reader to proofread the articles, and an illustrator to handle the graphics. The printed newsletters were to be
distributed to various beneficiaries in the field through the district education officers who would send the copies to the head teachers to distribute to the pupils, parents and caregivers in their respective schools.

*Data Collection*

The following instruments were used to collect the articles and information that were incorporated in this newsletter: questionnaires, interviews, observations and focus group discussions.

**Questionnaires.**

The questionnaires given had open-ended items that were used to direct the thinking of the respondents towards the theme of the newsletter. After responding to all the items, one would have come up with an article. Others were also allowed to consider only one item and expand more on it. The items used were guided questions. (See Appendix II.) A total of 190 respondents were given the questionnaires. These included 40 teachers, 40 parents, 80 children, 20 tutors, five trainers, four policy makers and one ECD specialist. The questionnaire for the children was not the same as the one for the adults. (See Appendix III.)

**Interviews.**

This instrument was mainly used for those respondents who felt they had ideas to share with others but could not express them in writing. They were therefore interviewed and their responses written down for consideration. (See Appendix IV.) A total of 80 respondents were interviewed. They included 20 teachers, 20 parents and 40 children. These were convenience samples, with equal numbers selected from each region. The
children, teachers and caregivers interviewed from the schools visited were also requested to put their ideas in the form of pictures, poems and stories to be included in the newsletter. The children were given their own questions. (See Appendix V.)

Observations.

I observed some children in some learning centres in Gulu district to find out how the teachers were handling the children of different grades in one classroom. Some children of the ages 0-8 years were in the same classrooms with the older children because they lacked enough room to teach them separately. This information is useful in the development of the newsletter because it highlights the gravity of the situation in which young children are being handled in some parts of the country due to war and poverty. Through the newsletter, it is hoped that more attention will be focused to this area of class population so that the government and the community can come in to build more classrooms to separate younger children from the older ones. More teachers may also need to be recruited to reduce the teacher/pupil ratio from the current 1:150 to a much lower and acceptable ratio that will promote better early childhood development.

Focus group discussions.

In order to get the general feel of the people’s concept of ECD and their perspectives, it was necessary to hold focus group discussions. The discussions helped the researcher look at the regional perspectives of people as far as ECD-related issues are concerned. In addition, discussions with teachers, parents, trainers and children were held to find out what they were doing in the field of ECD and how these services could be improved in Uganda. An interpreter was used to help translate into English language in
instances where a different local language was used. This generated a lot of information because the respondents were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses. They even suggested ways of overcoming their weaknesses. A total of 60 respondents were used for this purpose. Fifteen were from each region, that is, five teachers, five parents and five children. The discussions were done jointly for the parents and the teachers at each of the four regional centres. In some cases the discussions attracted other uninvited people who got interested in what was being discussed. (See Appendix VI for the guiding questions.)

The articles were collected and compiled by the technical team after two weeks. They were sorted and presented to the editorial board in a meeting for further scrutiny and sorting. Articles were organized under different headings. The newsletter was then typeset, and pictures were scanned and inserted in the appropriate places.

Challenges Met and How They Were Overcome

Time management was a problem because collecting articles was done concurrently with the researcher’s routine duties at Kyambogo University, where she works. The challenge was minimized by the researcher asking for a few days off to go to the field and collect information and also by asking the school inspectors to help in the collection of articles.

Coordination of all the members of the editorial board members was not easy because they work in different places and sometimes go to the field. So, when invited for meetings, they kept postponing, thus delaying the process.

Another challenge was insecurity in some parts of Uganda (i.e., the northern and southern regions). We first got the security personnel to escort us to those regions. They would first communicate with their counterparts in those areas and get assurance that it
was safe to travel. Then the board travelled in a convoy, met the teachers in one place, talked to them about the project objectives, and held discussions with them about their experiences with formerly abducted children and how they help them to cope.

Newsletter Design

The newsletter includes articles, poems, stories, news, experiences and professional information that relates to the theme of a given newsletter issue. It also includes pictures to cater to individuals who may not have adequate reading skills. At a later stage, people who are blind will also benefit because Braille copies will be printed. The proposed layout of the newsletter follows.

Cover page.

This will be in colour if possible and will contain the title of the newsletter, the theme, a photograph or picture depicting the content or theme of the issue, and a highlight of salient issues in the newsletter.

Editorial.

The editorial page will introduce the theme to the readers, acknowledge inputs in the newsletter and direct the readers on any issue or objective that needs to be achieved.

Opinions.

This section will focus on opinions, views or suggestions from the readers in reaction to the issues raised in the newsletters. It also provides a platform for a wider interaction and channel of communication among all the primary stakeholders.
Experiences.

This area will focus on articles that reflect the experiences of various people nationally or internationally on the theme of the newsletter. It provides opportunities for the readers to compare their experiences with those of other people and find ways of overcoming or coping with their situations.

Professional advice.

This area will focus on policy, parental or professional advice to help the readers find proper direction as far as the issues raised in the newsletter are concerned.

Evaluation.

The last area has a set of questions that will be used for evaluation purposes of the newsletter to help improve on the next issue. It will also suggest the theme of the next issue to help readers participate in it. It is hoped that the newsletter will have between 20 and 30 pages.

Funding

Funding will be solicited from various stakeholders like CHILD Project, UNICEF, SCN, UNESCO, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and Kyambogo University.

Another way to solicit for funds will be after formation of the ECD associations, members of the associations will subscribe to the production and distribution of the newsletter and other ECD activities such as workshops, exchange visits, collection and compilation of ECD-related information.
Costs involved:

- transport to the district to collect the articles for the newsletter
- announcements
- transport for the board members
- lunch and tea for board members
- stationery
- printing charges/production
- secretarial services
- dissemination of the newsletter
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter is a summary of findings of the project. Findings are based on the interactions with different stakeholders in ECD through questionnaires, focus group discussions, and interviews. The items were open-ended and gave opportunity for more than one response on each theme. Results are summarized into tables that show the frequency and percentage of the responses. Results have been presented basing on the following themes:

1. ECD Information Sharing in Uganda
2. ECD Programs in Uganda
3. ECD Professionals in Uganda

ECD Information Sharing in Uganda

Teachers’ views.

One of the objectives of this project was to encourage information sharing among the ECD stakeholders. From the 80 teacher respondents, 40 teachers were randomly selected and given questionnaires. Their responses are summarized in Table 1 below:
Table 1: How teachers share information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During joint preparation for teaching in schools</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During staff meetings</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We hold seminars and workshops in schools</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some teachers write articles in the newspapers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40

Table 1 shows that 90 percent of the teacher respondents share information on ECD in their schools with their fellow staff members during joint lesson preparation, while only 15 percent reported that it is through articles that some teachers write in newspapers.

The teachers, through the questionnaires, were also asked to identify some of the challenges they faced in the promotion of ECD that they would like to share with other teachers. Their responses are summarized in Table 2 below.
Table 2: Challenges met by teachers in the promotion of ECD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues raised</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pressure from parents on the content to teach</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods to be used in teaching influenced by parents</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of assessing progress influenced by parents</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate information sharing with teachers from other schools because they fear competition</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching materials available were not adequate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in attending to each individual child due to the big numbers enrolled in lower primary classes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate storage facilities for the few teaching/learning materials available</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40

Table 2 shows that 67.5 percent of the respondents reported that the challenge they experienced most was being forced by the parents to teach the content the parents wanted instead of teaching the content the teachers felt was appropriate for the respective age range. Failure to adhere to the parents’ wishes would cause the parents to withdraw their children and take them to other schools. The teachers interviewed reported that, in their schools, there is inadequate interaction between the teachers and children because children sit in rows and the teacher sits in front of the class and teaches. At the end of the lesson, she or he gives an activity to the children to write in their books. In the nursery schools, teachers give some materials to the children and ask them to do some work in
their books. Then the teacher goes around and marks their books. This may be a reflection of how they are trained, as well as the parents’ expectations.

During the discussions with teachers from different regions, many issues on information sharing were raised. In the eastern region, teachers said that they were using some teaching/learning aids in the nursery and primary schools that they made after interaction with other teachers from different schools, especially those who had been trained in preschool teaching methods. However, they complained that when children go to upper primary classes, the conditions change abruptly. They are taught without any teaching/learning aids, so it is difficult for them to learn abstract concepts. They expressed a need for workshops on ECD and the best methodologies to use in class.

One teacher expressed concern that before entry into ECD programs, some children receive inadequate stimulation resulting from inexperienced caregivers, which makes further learning difficult. Some of these caregivers referred to included house girls, stepmothers, relatives and matrons in institutions. They also expressed fear for the children who were being handled by some untrained personnel in some daycare centres that had become nursery schools. One teacher remarked, “If I had the powers, I would lock up all these schools because they are not fit for the young children.”

Teachers in Gulu reported that children who were formerly abducted were not easy to handle. One teacher said, “These children are stubborn, aggressive, unruly and militant. They believe in their former commanders who were with them in the bush rather the teacher.” They reported that children could decide to walk out of the class even when the teacher is teaching. One teacher narrated a story of child who was always coming to class with a rope. When the child asked why he had a rope, he would not respond. They
called in a social worker that counselled the child. The child revealed to her that they were told in the bush that the rope is a very important tool for safety and security. The child reported that in the bush, they would tie themselves with a rope to a branch of a tree if they sensed that government forces were tracking them. Then, they would keep swinging under the leaves of the branch so that they would not be seen by anyone passing under the tree. Later, they would untie themselves after their enemies had gone and take another direction.

Parents’ views.

A total of 40 parents were randomly sampled after purposeful sampling of only those parents who felt they were able to competently fill out the questionnaire. In the questionnaires, the parents were asked about information sharing. Their responses are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: How parents share information on ECD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During social gatherings in the evenings</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During local council meetings</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During parents teachers meeting</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through mass media like radios, television and newspapers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When couples are being prepared for marriage</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=40
Table 3 shows that 95 percent of the parent respondents share information on ECD through small social gatherings, at home for women and at the drinking clubs for men. The least frequent way (47.5 %) is when couples are being prepared for marriage. During the discussions with the parents, the following issues were raised on information sharing:

- Cultural limitations make them reserve some of the information they would want to give to their children. They said, “How can a normal parent tell a child that a baby comes when you sleep with a man?”
- Economic problems take many of the parents away from home most of the day.
- Some parents lack information to share with their children or neighbours since were also not told by their own parents.
- Some parents refuse to listen to advice from others on how to bring up a child in the most acceptable manner.

The above points by the parents reflect the challenges they face in sharing information on ECD-related issues.

When discussing with the parents in Kasese about their roles in child upbringing, they reported that they were supposed to pay school dues and buy uniforms for their children. They also said that they provide their children with meals and other school requirements like books, pencils and pens only. When asked about children’s meals, some parents expressed a fear that they were unable to provide mid-day meals or break snacks for their children. This was a challenge because we are advocating for integrated
ECD programs, and the parents are supposed to contribute to their children’s welfare by providing the above items that they presently seem not able to afford.

Children’s views.

A total of 120 children were asked, on recommendation of their teachers, to write articles according to their interests. Their choice of topics is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Choice of topics chosen by the children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School requirements</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and entertainment</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play at home</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to parents telling them stories</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal hygiene</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>274</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=120

Table 4 shows that 27 percent of the topics chosen by the child respondents related to sharing information about their school with their parents and, at the same time, requesting scholastic materials that seem not to be adequately provided by the parents to help the children learn. The topic shared least was personal hygiene (4.3 percent).

During the interviews with the children, they revealed that they need their parents to provide them with scholastic materials, adequate meals, pay their school fees, and give them time to play. They need to be treated well both at home and school. Their responses indicated that they were not getting the basic requirements at home and were not treated
well at school. Children said teachers and parents were using corporal punishments as a way to discipline them.

*ECD Programs in Uganda*

The ECD programs in Uganda that seem to be more evident are that of teacher training. In this project, the teacher trainers were asked to identify the challenges they face in the process of training the ECD teachers. A total of 25 trainers were purposefully sampled based on their expertise in the area of ECD. They included 20 college tutors and 5 private ECD trainers. Their responses from the questionnaires are summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5: Challenges faced by trainers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate involvement by government in the training of ECD personnel</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for selection of trainees still which leaves out some who are interested and capable but cannot afford the high course costs.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of trainees towards ECD</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=25

Table 5 shows that 68 percent of the trainers reported that inadequate involvement of government in the training of ECD personnel was their biggest setback in the provision of quality ECD services in Uganda. Only 16 percent reported that the main problem was
with the selection process of the trainees which leaves out those who are interested and capable but may not be able to afford the high course costs.

In the discussion, the trainers revealed that, sometimes, those who take the course are those who can afford it but are not necessarily interested. They also expressed concern about inadequate involvement of government in the training of ECD personnel as recommended by the Government White Paper on Education (Government of Uganda, 1992). Another trainer from the University reported that very few people register for the course in ECD and therefore there is inadequate capacity in the field to carry out ECD activities competently.

More than three quarters of ECD programs in Uganda are run privately. The objective of this project was to identify them and to help them share information on their activities with other stakeholders to avoid duplication of services and to enhance networking. The trainers identified some of the ECD programs that are being implemented in Uganda. The responses are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6: ECD programs and their roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training programs at Kyambogo University and affiliated institutions</td>
<td>• train ECD personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• monitor and evaluate ECD training activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• develop ECD curriculum and materials for training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• carry out research and child study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrasa Community-based ECD Program</td>
<td>• train ECD personnel in the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
community
• develop ECD materials for use in ECD centres
• advocate for good ECD practices in the community

| Educational Assessment and Resource Support (EARS) | • identify children with disabilities
• assess needs of children with disabilities
• provide assistive devices to children
• raise awareness about disabilities |

It can be noted that most of the programs available engage in training or raising community awareness about ECD-related issues.

Policy makers’ views on ECD programs in Uganda.

A total of four policy makers from the Ministry of Education and Sports were purposefully sampled to get only those involved in this area of ECD. Through questionnaires, the policy makers expressed different views as to why there are gaps in implementation of ECD programs in the country. They reported that although the programs are in place, they still face challenges in implementation, due to different reasons as shown in Table 7.
Table 7: Issues raised by policy makers on ECD implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unclear ECD policy on holistic development of the child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funding of ECD activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate staffing for supervision of ECD activities in the country both at the Ministry headquarters and the district</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=4

Table 7 shows that 100 percent of the policy makers reported that there is unclear policy on ECD that hinders the implementation of ECD programs in Uganda. Additionally, 75 percent reported that inadequate staffing in the ECD departments hindered the implementation of ECD programs in Uganda.

During the interviews with the policy makers, they pointed out that there is lack of an integrated policy on ECD. Each sector (e.g., education, health, nutrition, labour, gender, and local government) has different policies on children. Others reported that there is inadequate staffing in the preschool section at the Ministry of Education headquarters and district levels. So, supervision of ECD activities at all levels is inadequate. They said that there is no multisectoral body to coordinate ECD activities in the country and that information sharing is still a challenge. They said that the ECD policy making is still in progress and not yet concretized due to inadequate funding.

*ECD specialist’s views.*

The ECD specialist from the National Curriculum Development Centre was also given a questionnaire to fill. She reported some of the challenges on implementation of
the ECD programs in Uganda, as summarized in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate capacity of preschools to use the developed ECD learning framework</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funding for orienting preschool teachers on how to use the ECD Learning framework</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate networking between different ECD providers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=1

The specialist indicated that there is a newly developed ECD learning framework created by the curriculum developers. However, she reported that there is inadequate capacity in most of the preschools to use it. She also expressed concern about inadequate funding and networking among the ECD program implementers.

Parents’ views on ECD program implementation in Uganda.

During the interviews with parents, they reported that they lacked awareness of what their children are taught in nursery schools. They particularly wanted their children to learn to read and write in the shortest time possible and this would be seen from their books.

When asked about the importance of early years in the lives of their children, they said they did not know. They said that to them, it was like any other stage of development. One parent said, “A child must not be treated like an egg, because they get
spoilt. We used to walk long distances to school on an empty stomach, yet we were able to study and become what we are now.”

Children’s views on ECD implementation.

The children on the other hand seem to know their rights. In their questionnaires, the children were asked what they wanted their parents and teachers to provide for them. A total of 120 children were sampled. Their responses are show in Table 9.

Table 9: Needs of children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provision of scholastic materials</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect of their rights (minimize punishments)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of basic needs: food, clothing and shelter</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with their parents</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=120

Table 9 shows that 60.8 percent of the children reported that they need more scholastic materials, while the least reported need was interaction with parents (33.3 percent). It should be noted here that each respondent gave more than one response.

Observations on implementation of ECD programs in schools.

Observed classrooms in Gulu-Northern Uganda had children who were drawn from different schools and converged in one learning centre in a big hall. This was caused
by the war situation in the northern region whereby many people were displaced and lived in camps. This deprived them of the basic necessities like safe water, adequate drugs when ill, food, money, education, good sleeping facilities and emotional stability. Teachers were seeking advice on how to handle the formerly abducted children, some of whom were in Primary One, Two or Three though they had outgrown those classes. When interviewed further, it was discovered that even some of the teachers were at one time abducted and returned from captivity, which compounded the problem.

UNICEF, in collaboration with Kyambogo University, tried to empower the teachers to give psychosocial support to the children they taught. These teachers were trained in using integrated approaches in psychosocial support. These approaches included Mediated Learning Experiences, Child-to-Child, as well as the Play Way method and life skills training. Uses of these approaches, it was hoped, would help the children develop coping mechanisms so that they could attend to their schoolwork and integrate more easily in the community.

In Kasese, located in the western region of Uganda, the situation was different. Children had begun to settle down and were attending school. However, most teachers observed did not use teaching/learning aids. One teacher said that she did not have money to buy the materials to use and yet the environment was very rich with local materials, which could be used for improvising learning materials.

In the central region, the teachers were more organized than in the other regions visited; they had enough teaching/learning aids and classroom arrangement was better than in the rest of the schools observed in the western, northern and eastern regions. There were no children seated under tree shades though they were a bit squeezed in the
classrooms, which affected their handwriting. Each class had two teachers to handle the big numbers of children. One teacher would be teaching as the other one would be marking children’s books or preparing learning aids. Teachers looked more motivated and committed to their work than their counterparts in the northern, western and eastern regions.

*Early Childhood Development Professionals*

Trainers/tutors’ views.

The trainers, who are considered to be the pillars of the ECD professional association, were asked in the questionnaire to identify some of the ECD professional associations they have worked with in the country. A total of 25 trainers were sampled. Their responses are summarized in Table 10.

**Table 10: ECD professional associations in Uganda**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uganda Nursery Schools Teachers Association (UNSTA)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda Nursery Teacher Educators Association (UNTEA)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda National Early Childhood Teachers Association (UNECTA)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=25

In the discussion with the trainers, they reported that many of them had heard about UNECTA during its active days before it collapsed in the early 1980s. UNSTA appeared to be more popular among the ECD caregivers. This association has been holding workshops and assisting in the use of the newly developed learning framework
for ECD. UNTEA has just been formed, so many teachers did not know much about it. UNTEA is still making its constitution so that they can officially register with the government of Uganda.

On the training of early childhood education teachers, the trainers said that they are trying their best but have limited time for taking students for demonstration lessons and child study. They expressed their concern about the selection of student teachers; that some students come to teaching as a last resort when they fail to join Senior Five or any other institution of higher learning. These students have a misconception that teaching in lower primary classes is losing respect because one will be taken as having low reasoning capacity. They do not like to do tiresome work like making and using teaching/learning aids.

The trainers also expressed concern regarding a lack of proper communication among the professionals. This indicated that most of them work in isolation instead of pulling their resources together to promote a holistic development of the child. They also expressed willingness to network with other ECD professionals in other areas that are not directly under the education sector. Their problem was how to begin such activity.

When talking to a trainer of teachers for special needs education, he said that this is an area that attracts the least attention by the professionals and child caregivers. Children with disabilities are considered last. He attributed this to low social-economic factors, that their economic value might be very low as compared to children who can contribute more to the household income. He noted that the caregivers themselves cause some of the special needs among children. Such caregivers include:
- Divorced and frustrated mothers
- Young and inexperienced children who are continuously abused
- Poorly motivated and depressed caregivers and those who are ignorant about child care

The lecturer highlighted the needs, which caregivers have to meet and these include:

- Love, warmth and tenderness
- Clothing suitable for weather conditions
- Shelter in good housing with ventilation
- Protection from illness, injury and abuse
- Constant stimulation during play and participation in different activities
- Praise and opportunities to develop self confidence

He concluded by saying that the quality of early childhood learning and development is dependant on the quality of care providers.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In Chapter 4, the results of this project were presented based on the data collection methods used. In this chapter, discussion of the results will be done in connection to the outcomes of this project and their implications. The limitations will be further discussed and how they may affect the results of the project.

ECD Information Sharing

The teachers reported that most of them share information on ECD during joint preparation for teaching in schools and in staff meetings. This may be because the teachers have only these avenues to constructively share ECD information that will be used in the teaching of children. A few of them, however, noted that sometimes they share information through seminars and workshops or through exchanging articles in the newspapers. The use of the newspapers seemed to be limited because teachers could not afford buying them. Some complained that their articles are sometimes rejected and not published due to limited space in the newspapers, and thus there is a need for an ECD newsletter. This view is supported by the Ministry of Education and Sports in the UPE newsletter when they point out that their newsletter would help stakeholders to share information that would be used to improve the UPE program.

The teachers who were interviewed about classroom organization revealed that there was limited interaction between the teachers and the children because they were making children sit in rows and teachers would sit in front of the class and teach. This contradicts the principle of participatory methods where children are expected to move
freely around the class and to interact with each other, the teacher and the learning materials. This is in agreement with one of the challenges identified by His Excellency Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda (1999) as the limited public awareness of child rights among both adults and children. One of the rights of children is that of participation, which the children were denied.

The problem with classroom organization may have been as a result of training on the part of teacher. Traditionally, teachers were trained to organize classes in rows and to play a dominant role in a lesson. They were trained to be information providers rather than learning facilitators. As a way forward to positive development, there may be need to retrain teachers at all levels into modern methodologies, which encourage child participation.

When asked about the use of materials, teachers said that they were using them but not adequately since the numbers were high in their classes (e.g., one teacher to a hundred children). Yet, one of the main objectives of Universal Primary Education is to let every child, including those with disabilities, access quality education regardless of gender, social economic status, race or ability. This is in agreement with what Armstrong (1981) observed, that few people were aware of how the quality of education for young children impacted on further education. When children do not interact with teaching/learning materials, the quality of education gets affected.

That teachers did not use materials adequately may be due to social economic factors such as lack of space and insufficient remuneration which forces them to move from school to school in search of extra pay to meet their daily needs. For this reason, they may have no time to concentrate on making educational materials.
Another reason may be the pressure of the teachers’ syllabus. Today, the syllabus seems to be more congested than before, an issue that can be related to the ever-changing needs of society. The primary school curriculum is also congested, from the former four examinable subjects to 13 to be examined in 2004.

During the discussions, the parents pointed out that many of them lacked time to share vital information with their children. They also noted that culture could not allow some of them to discuss certain issues freely with their children. This may call for another approach that allows the parents to share information without breaking any cultural rules, probably through the ECD newsletter. Some of the parents seemed to lack information that would be shared with the children. This finding is supported by Obonyo and Annan (2001), who reported that mothers in Mpigi, central Uganda, confessed that they sometimes interacted with their children but did not know its importance.

**ECD Programs in Uganda**

For effective ECD implementation, there may be a need to strike a balance between innovations, duration of training for teachers, remunerations, children’s abilities to learn given concepts, and special needs.

In addition, one needs to appreciate that up until 1992, preschool education was a private enterprise as already noted. It is the White Paper of 1992 which highlighted the need for government to get involved into preschool education in Uganda. The recent developments after 1992 include:

- Establishing a section of preschool education in the Ministry of Education and Sports
- Launching the training of nursery school teachers at certificate and diploma levels
• Establishing a degree-level course to train ECD teacher trainers at Kyambogo University

• Developing an ECD learning framework for use in nursery schools, which was done by the National Curriculum Development Centre

• Establishing an ECD section in the department of teacher education and development studies at Kyambogo University with an objective of training the tutors for this level and overseeing other ECD teacher training institutions in Uganda

• Launching a children’s statute in 1996 which has since been implemented as a guide to the implementation of children’s rights

• Appointing a Minister for Children’s and Youth Affairs

The process of developing an integrated ECD policy has already started, to be completed soon. It is being coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Sports much as the above initiatives are in place. However, there are some factors which may affect the implementation of ECD activities in Uganda as reported by the policy makers and the trainers. Such factors include:

• Political instability in some parts of the country like the northern, eastern and western regions of Uganda

• Government ability to facilitate all these initiatives, such as availability of funds required by different initiatives

• Some of the departments are understaffed (e.g., the section of preschool education in the Ministry of Education and Sports)

• Some potential trainees may not be able to pay tuition fees for the courses
• Lack of awareness of the importance of ECD among different stakeholders involved in preschool education

Generally, for successful implementation of ECD programs in Uganda, there may be a need to reconcile the prevailing potential and challenges.

Discussions with the children in the semi-urban places of Kampala district revealed that their needs are not being met adequately. They expressed a need for clothing and food because some spend the whole day at school on an empty stomach. This compels them to indulge in unwanted behaviours like stealing their friends’ food or sugarcanes from the community.

Clothing, food and shelter are some of the basic needs essential in the early childhood years. Children also requested their parents and teachers to treat them well. Some caregivers mistreat their children both physically and psychologically, yet it is one of the rights of children in Uganda that children are not supposed to be subjected to physical or psychological torture. This supports the views of Yoweri Museveni (1999) when he asserted that there was limited public awareness on child rights among both adults and children. He continued to note that this was coupled with the persisting negative social and cultural attitudes and practices at all levels which he said contributed to high levels of child abuse in homes, schools and communities. He continued to say that there was urgent need to speed up dissemination of information on child rights to the public.

Children may be continuously abused because they do not report cases of abuse and do not know their rights or even where to report in case they are violated. Culturally, most African children and Ugandan children in particular are not expected to challenge
their parents or teachers when they are abused. They are expected to take orders from these caregivers without any questioning why or challenging adults’ authority. This denies them the right to express themselves freely and not to be subjected to physical, social or psychological harm. This scenario, according to the teacher respondents interviewed, may be attributed to the following factors:

- Poor social economic status of parents. For example, some parents are not well educated and may not have access to any educational materials on child care.
- Some of the parents are too poor to afford nursery education, which is still privately funded, unlike UPE which is sponsored by government.
- Lack of awareness by parents about the need for preschool education and early stimulation.
- Lack of enough ECD learning centres in the communities, particularly in rural areas.

There is need to appreciate the existing structures which enhance information sharing within communities. These include the ever increasing number of Frequency Media (FM) radio stations broadcasting in different languages. However, the limitation to this facility is that educational programs have to be paid for because the radio stations are privately owned and highly commercialized, yet most people are poor.

The information tallies with what the teachers also had reported, that the parents are more interested in written work done by their children and the performance as indicated on their test papers and reports. “This has forced us to use the primary school syllabus in nursery schools because the one of nursery does not encourage examinations. If we do not examine the children, parents will take them away to other schools,”
reported one of the teachers. They also expressed a challenge where children are sent to school and are not given anything to eat. Teachers complained of children who come to school without any books or pencils to write and yet their parents expect them to read and write.

Another problem teachers expressed was the lack of classroom space; children squeeze themselves into the available space, seated on the bare, dusty floor to learn. In some schools, they reported that they sit under tree shades to learn. When it rains, their lessons are disrupted to give room to the upper classes that run into their classrooms for shelter. One teacher remarked, “Children cannot concentrate under such harsh conditions. Therefore very little or no learning takes place.” Another problem is that there is no security for the teaching/learning aids on display in the classrooms because they are never closed.

Teachers also reported that before entry into ECD programs, some children receive inadequate stimulation from inexperienced caregivers, which makes further learning difficult. Some of these caregivers include house girls, stepmothers, relatives and matrons in institutions.

**ECD Professionals in Uganda**

The trainers reported that they have so far only three ECD professional associations in Uganda, with only two associations currently active. These are the Uganda Nursery School Teachers Association (UNSTA) and the Uganda Nursery Teacher Educators Association (UNTEA). The Uganda National Early Childhood Teachers Association (UNECTA) is no longer functional due to lack of a clear policy on their existence and lack of funding to carry out ECD programs in Uganda.
Results from discussions with some trainers show that despite the lack of a harmonized ECD strategy, different trainers were trying their best to train nursery school teachers. Trainers raised issues of concern that influenced the quality of training provided to the teachers, which included lack of a standardized syllabus; difficulty in identifying the right candidates to train; lack of educational materials for the trainees, including up to date library services; and negative attitude of trainees towards ECD, as they think it is of a low profile compared to teachers teaching in higher levels. They also noted that there was a lack of ongoing staff development for teachers who did not get experience in their initial training.

At least not withstanding the challenges highlighted by trainers, one may need to appreciate the current developments that the government of Uganda has put in place to address the imbalances. Some of these strategies include:

- Creation of Educational Standards Agency (ESA) in the Ministry of Education and Sports to oversee the implementation of different levels.
- The process to harmonize the training curriculum/syllabus for all institutions training preschool teachers has already started at Kyambogo University.
- Kyambogo University is taking stock of all training institutions for possible affiliation and the staff involved in training teachers for appraisal and retraining.
- The government of Uganda, with assistance from the World Bank through the CHILD Project, has established resource centres in all the 34 districts where they operate. It is hoped that they will start some more in the remaining 22 districts of Uganda.
The process to sensitize preschool teachers in ECD has already started by the Ministry of Education and Sports in conjunction with Kyambogo University and the National Curriculum Development Centre.

Policy Makers

When interacting with some of the policy makers from the Ministry of Education and Sports, they revealed that monitoring and supervision was not adequately done because of having very few staff on the ground. They continued to say that now there is a body in place known as the Educational Standards Agency (ESA) that is charged with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating all educational activities in the country. However, there is no person yet who has the necessary qualifications to monitor ECD activities and programs.

The implications of this scenario are that the personnel available will do the job themselves the way they deem fit and incorporate the ECD specialists where necessary. This may have its limitations that take long to be realized. They may not know the needs of young children and therefore not meet them adequately, they may neglect the ECD section since they are more conversant with other levels of learning than with lower levels and identification of the properly trained people in this field may also be a problem. Therefore, there may be a need to increase the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Sports to carry out the supervisory role and dissemination of relevant information on ECD to the teachers and other caregivers.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the statement of the project activity, the rationale and the objectives of the project. Chapter 2 addressed the related work to this project. In Chapter 3, methods that were used to collect data were presented. In Chapter 4, results of the project were presented; these were discussed in Chapter 5. The conclusions presented in this chapter are based on the previous chapters, but with a strong bearing on objectives, findings of the project and the discussions presented in Chapter 5.

Conclusions

The project objectives were to provide a channel of communication between children and caregivers, highlight the ECD-related projects and programs to reduce duplication of services, promote formation of ECD professional associations, and inform and guide other ECD practitioners and policy makers on what is best for children.

Based on the findings of this project and the discussions, it was concluded that parents lack awareness of children’s needs for growth and development. On information sharing, it was found out there is lack of awareness on the part of parents, children and teachers on how they can collaborate in service planning and delivery to improve ECD in their areas. It was concluded that information sharing is important in ECD programming, implementation and policy development. This ECD newsletter would therefore provide a useful communication channel to promote the holistic development of children in the country.
The various stakeholders who have been in charge of ECD-related projects realized that working in isolation was not helping the development of ECD in the country. Through the newsletter, they may now be able to inform other stakeholders about their projects so that a collaborative process can be designed to benefit all the intended recipients.

It was also found out that there is no clear integrated policy that integrates the services to enhance the quality of ECD. This was attributed to lack of a competent ECD professional association that would ably advise government on ECD-related policy issues and also monitor the implementation of ECD guidelines to maintain standards. It was also noted that the ECD professional associations like the Uganda Nursery Schools Association had relaxed in their operations. Its operations had been concentrated in the central region of Uganda only – Kampala City and the surrounding areas. The newsletter would now provide the linkage to help mobilize these professionals to work together in an umbrella organization to uplift ECD in the country.

This newsletter, being the first of its kind in Uganda, will be useful in providing up-to-date information on ECD to all stakeholders. It will therefore become a source of authoritative reference to any other interested scholars in this field of ECD.
CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The information for the project was collected in different ways, through discussions with children, trainers, teachers, parents and policy makers. Sending guidelines, which the respondents used to write articles for the ECD newsletter, also collected it. Basing on the findings of this project, therefore, the following recommendations were derived:

Recommendations

1. There is need for a body to coordinate all the ECD activities in Uganda to avoid duplication of services.

2. The coordinating body should have ongoing monitoring and evaluation for quality assurance.

3. There is need for integrated ECD planning and implementation to ensure quality in the services provided to the children.

4. The Government of Uganda should be a key stakeholder in the formulation of an integrated ECD policy.

5. The Ministry of Education and Sports, together with other line ministries like Health, Finance, Gender and Local Government, should form a task force to ensure ECD policy implementation in Uganda.

6. Communities and families should be sensitized on their roles in planning, implementing, and monitoring ECD programs.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX I: BUDGET FOR DEVELOPING AND PRODUCING THE ECD NEWSLETTER

Table 11: Budget for developing and producing the Early Childhood Development Newsletter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>No. of people</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selecting the editorial board</td>
<td>Transport/Fuel</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,740=</td>
<td>50,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding meetings with the board</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,000=</td>
<td>100,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20,000=</td>
<td>1,000,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refund</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of potential contributors</td>
<td>Safari day allowance</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10,000=</td>
<td>250,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting the articles</td>
<td>Per diem</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48,000=</td>
<td>480,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,740=</td>
<td>400,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication to the board members.</td>
<td>Air time</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10,000=</td>
<td>50,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorting and compiling the newsletter articles</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,000=</td>
<td>50,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5,000=</td>
<td>125,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport refund</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15,000=</td>
<td>375,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typesetting the newsletter</td>
<td>Typing charges</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10,000=</td>
<td>50,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proofreading the script</td>
<td>Honorarium</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20,000=</td>
<td>200,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launching of the newsletter</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>500=</td>
<td>725,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5000=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td>100,000=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publicity</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td>200,000=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>195,000=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,050,000=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II: GUIDED QUESTIONS USED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRES

1. What are the roles of your institution in ECD? (For tutors, lecturers and teachers)
2. How do you share experiences with other teachers in preschools? (For teachers)
3. What teaching/learning aids do you use in teaching children? (For teachers)
4. How do you sensitize other people on ECD, if you do? (Policy makers, curriculum developers and lecturers)
5. What influences your teaching in nursery schools? (Nursery school teachers)
6. How best can we improve on information sharing in ECD? (All respondents)
7. What problems do you experience in communicating with other stakeholders in ECD?
APPENDIX III: CHILDREN’S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear pupil,

Please look at the topics shown below and write down a story or article on any of them that you feel may have been done to you or you would like somebody to do for you. Indicate the person you feel should help you achieve that goal.

- Personal hygiene at home
- School requirements
- Leisure and entertainment
- Play at home
- Listening to and telling you stories

Please write your article and give it to your teacher, who will bring it to us to include in our newsletter.

Thank you.
APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- What would you consider as early childhood education?
- When should a child’s education begin?
- What are your roles in the promotion of early childhood development?
- What challenges do you face in the process of helping your child to grow up well?
- What would you suggest as the best way forward in promotion of better ECD in Uganda?
APPENDIX V: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CHILDREN

- What is the best thing your parent has done for you?
- What would not want your parent to do to you?
- What good things do you expect from your school?
- What message would you want to give to your teacher or parents?
APPENDIX VI: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDING QUESTIONS

- When would you say a child is old enough to be independent?
- Who should be responsible for proper early childhood development of children?
- What challenges do people face now in your area in the process of trying to promote better early childhood development?
- What should be the best way forward in addressing the above challenges?
APPENDIX VII: DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR THE TRAINERS

- Identify some ECD professional associations you have ever worked with in Uganda.
- What are their roles in the promotion of ECD services in Uganda?
- What are some of the challenges that the professional associations face in Uganda?