Establishing the Status of the Childminding Programme in Seychelles: The Study

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Introduction

With greater recognition of ECCE nationally and increased emphasis on quality of early childhood experience in the growth and development of children concerns have been raised about childminding services which form part of the non-formal early childhood services but is not regulated by the Ministry of Education. From the Seychelles Country Report produced by the World Bank on ECD, (paper presented in the 2nd ECCE conference March, 2013) specific recommendations were made on the need to develop and implement standards for childminders, and regulations on infrastructure and service delivery at childminding facilities. In July 2013, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a proposal by IECD to carry out a comprehensive study on the conditions and quality of childminding services in the country.

The Conduct of the Study

Against a backdrop of sensitization and awareness campaign, IECD built a technical team of specialists inside IECD and experts outside to conceptualise the study, develop the research instruments and undertake the fieldwork. Over 100 officers from the health, social services, education and community development sector were recruited and trained to carry–out the data collection (which was completed in August 2013). Observation and questionnaire data were collected from 147 Childminders (the whole of the population of childminders minding 4 or more children), parent questionnaire were administered to

763 parents whose children were enrolled in those childminding establishments, supplementary data was obtained from 52 Assistant Childminders and qualitative information was gathered from focus group interviews of childminders, parents and partners from key sectors (September 2013). A database was set-up and officers from IECD, the Ministry of Education and other private individuals were trained to carry out data entry which was completed in October 2013. Several workshops organized (during the month of November) and facilitated by IECD for the cleaning, merging and analysis of the data from which Policy Briefs were derived and produced (December 2013).

Policy Briefs

Some context information, disaggregated by districts, on the number of childminders, assistants, parents and children have been given in Annex A (Tables 1 and 2), more specific analytical findings of the study are reported in seven policy briefs.

1. The first brief provides information on the level of provisions of the childminding services in Seychelles and sets up a framework to develop standards. Four essential aspects of the childminding provisions were assessed: space and furnishings, health and safety, education programme, interaction and communication. The derived levels were described as: "Essential", "Recommended", and "Excellent". However, an additional level was included to cater for a group of childminding operations with "Limited

Provisions". While it was found that about half of the childminders was operating at the recommended level and about one quarter at the excellent level there was another quarter operating at the essential and limited. It was recommended that a standards framework should be established and that strategies should be developed to help childminders to deliver a superior service.

2. In the second brief the quality of the childminding service has been evaluated by identifying three quality inputs necessary for registration purposes. These are: "Structural Inputs" which include space per child and adult per child ratios; "Level of Safety" indoor, outdoors and includes supervision; "Institutional Support" which rates the working relationships with community professionals. It was found that whilst childminding services in Seychelles were quite good in terms of "Structural Inputs", it was rather poor on "Level of Safety", particularly outdoor, and "Institutional Support", especially from health and social workers. The recommendations emphasized the establishment of minimum requirements in terms of space and staffing, improving outdoor facilities and enhancing support roles of community professionals.

3. The third brief addresses health and safety issues in childminding establishments. The following conditions and practices were selected: nutrition and hygiene, health and safety equipment and facilities, routine for personal care. It was found that there was a need for improvement in all aspects, more attention need to be given to the type of food children were eating, facilities for hygiene needs improving, the provision for health and safety equipment was low, there was limited child-sized toilets and bathing facilities for children - childminders must be educated and empowered.

4. The financial affairs relating to the childminding service were outlined in the fourth brief. Calculations of profit and loss indicated that most childminders were breaking even or running at a loss. It was also found that for single parents childminding fees were not affordable. Financial support strategies for childminders and parents were advocated.

5. In the fifth brief the provision of early learning activities and experiences for young children were examined. It was found that there were gaps in the learning activities for the children - activities involving story-telling, drawing, and use of blocks and lego were missing and outings were not very frequent. It was a concern that childminders did not receive educational materials from donations. It was suggested that an early learning framework should be developed, that play should be promoted, and access to educational resources should be increased.

6. Some of the training needs of childminders were identified in the sixth brief. It was also possible to find out previous training support through potential training providers from health, social services, and community services. The necessity to develop a training framework and continuous professional development programmes was highlighted.

7. In the final brief the needs of parents in relation to childminding in particular and childcare in general were explored. It came to light that finding a childminder was an informal activity and quite worrying for a substantial group of parents. It was suggested that more formal information on childminding should be made available and this should be linked with an integrated maternal health programme.

Recommendation

This nation-wide study on childminding is expected to pave the way to improve the quality of the service and develop support structures to help childminders achieve superior standards. Through the analysis of the conditions of the childminding service incisive policy interventions have been recommended. However, individualized descriptive data is available to further clarify issues and guide evidence-based decisions.

The Cabinet of Ministers is invited to give due consideration to the results of the childminding study for endorsement, and approval of recommendations for action.

Annex A

Table 1: Childminders and children by district

Region	ID	District	Number of Childminders	Number of Children	Number of Assistant Childminder
Central 1	1	Bel Air	5	30	1
	2	English River	4	50	2
	3	Mont Buxton	8	92	4
	4	Perseverance 1	2	13	1
	5	Perseverance 2	3	22	0
	6	St Louis	4	61	3
Central 2	7	Les Mamelles	4	21	0
	8	Mont Fleuri	7	33	0
	9	Plaisance	6	34	2
	10	Roche Caiman	9	104	4
East/South	11	Anse Aux Pins	9	77	5
	12	Au Cap	8	46	0
	13	Anse Royale	4	26	1
	14	Cascade	6	49	2
	15	Pointe Larue	4	27	1
West	16	Takamaka	4	25	1
	17	Anse Boileau	5	43	2
	18	Baie Lazare	3	27	4
	19	Grand Anse Mahe	5	26	1
	20	Port Glaud	6	44	2
North	21	Anse Etoile	6	34	3
	22	Bel Ombre	4	21	1
	23	Beau Vallon	3	22	1
	24	Glacis	2	19	2
Islands	25	Baie Ste Anne	8	61	1
	26	Grand Anse Praslin	14	119	6
	27	La Digue	3	29	3
		Silhouette	1	4	
		Total	**147**	**1159**	**53**

Table 2: Number of Parents by District

Region	ID	District	Number of Parents
Central 1	1	Bel Air	23
	2	English River	32
	3	Mont Buxton	55
	4	Perseverance 1	16
	5	Perseverance 2	21
	6	St Louis	39
Central 2	7	Les Mamelles	16
	8	Mont Fleuri	30
	9	Plaisance	44
	10	Roche Caiman	17
East/South	11	Anse Aux Pins	24
	12	Au Cap	14
	13	Anse Royale	11
	14	Cascade	19
	15	Pointe Larue	4
West	16	Takamaka	2
	17	Anse Boileau	38
	18	Baie Lazare	17
	19	Grand Anse Mahe	38
	20	Port Glaud	40
North	21	Anse Etoile	40
	22	Bel Ombre	21
	23	Beau Vallon	22
	24	Glacis	11
Islands	25	Baie Ste Anne	67
	26	Grand Anse Praslin	74
	27	La Digue	26
		Silhouette	3
		Total	**763**