

## Editor's Note



*Warm greetings to our readers,*

Welcome to the 10th edition of the IECD newsletter with details of our achievements and news from the second half of 2020 to March 2021. And, what a busy and fruitful few months it has been! So much happened, and we are delighted to present you with some highlights and stories of our most recent initiatives, all of which aim to build a strong foundation for the holistic development of children.

In this issue, we bring you a little bit of everything, from information about our work, ECCE programmes to the latest news about our ECCE projects. You will find articles about the Early Learning Readiness Assessment of Children in registered Home-based and Centre-based Services and the Data Management Project in the Education Sector. You will further read about our new ECCE Awareness Campaign and recently launched Poetry Publication amongst other accomplishments of the Institute.

Indeed, I am proud of what the Institute has achieved during this period, although we experienced some delays as a result of the pandemic. I am confident that the remaining months will be as eventful as last year.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our sincere appreciation to the former Chairperson and Members of the High-Level ECCE Policy Committee, the IECD Board Chairman and Members, Chairpersons and Members of Technical Teams in Education, Health, Social Affairs and Local Government, other Partner Agencies, Consultants, other Professionals, Childcare Providers, Parents and Friends for their unflinching support towards the various initiatives in ECCE. Together, we are closer to ensuring that every child is empowered with high-quality care and learning opportunities she or he deserves.

We look forward to continue with this great and collaborative works to ensure that no child is left behind, and to sustain our country's resilient ECCE System, which has been recently recognised as a best practice by the UNESCO.

Lastly, I cannot but commend my small team of dedicated staff for their contribution in 2020. Let us continue to focus on our strategic priorities to bring about tangible results, and forge ahead with our mission of ensuring 'A Winning Start for All'.

I also take this opportunity to wish our readership good health and success in 2021, in spite of the unprecedented challenge of the pandemic.

**Mrs. Shirley Choppy**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Institute of Early Childhood Development

### NEWS INSIDE



Assessment of Early Learning Readiness of Children in Registered Childcare Services



National Action Plan ECCE 2019-2020: National Evaluation Workshop



IECD CEO Meets New IBE-UNESCO Director



Seychelles' First Accredited Training Programme in Childcare and Development



IECD Launches New Publication



IECD Holds Certificate Award-Ceremony for Prospective Childminders



Some Highlights of 2020



Courtesy Visit by New Minister for Education, Dr Justin Valentin



One Year Since COVID-19 Pandemic



Data Management in ECCE: Pre-Piloting of Early Childhood Development Indicators in Education Sector



New ECCE Awareness Campaign: Saying #YestoEarlyChildhood# during the COVID-19 Pandemic



IECD Brings Festive Joy to Children



End-of-Year Blessing and Reflection

# ASSESSMENT OF EARLY LEARNING READINESS OF CHILDREN IN REGISTERED CHILDCARE SERVICES

Assessment of Early Learning Readiness of Children in early years settings play a critical role in preparing children for formal schooling and easing the transition from childcare to school. Observations of individual children in these settings provide invaluable insights for parents about their child's readiness for school.

In 2019, the IECD introduced a new initiative as one of its projects in the National Action Plan for ECCE 2019-2020 to determine the readiness of children aged 3 to 4 years old before they start crèche or preschool. This first assessment targeted children from registered Home-based Childminding Services. The project included: (1) developing an assessment tool to establish early learning, (2) identifying socio-educational factors that may be associated with the level of early learning readiness and (3) determining the challenges faced by childcare services in preparing children for crèche education. The findings of the assessment were disseminated in a National ECCE Forum last year and it was revealed that 88% of the children assessed have the necessary prerequisite skills and were ready to commence preschool or crèche education.

As an extension to this initial project, another assessment was carried out between September and October 2020. This second study took on a new dimension, targeting children from registered Day Care Centres, which fall under the remit of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD). As a result, some 696 children were assessed in 2020 compared to 178 in 2019. Both collaborative projects were coordinated by the Institute's Programme Coordination and Research Section with the support of a team of experienced, retired educators among other practising professionals in the field of ECCE. The Institute was also fortunate to receive the expert assistance of an external consultant, Mr. Egbert Benstrong, whose technical forte is in the area of assessment, education, and statistics.

The results of the 2020 study were revealed in March this year, in a National ECCE Forum that was held at the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE). It was attended by the Minister for Education, Dr. Justin Valentin, Chairman of the IECD, Captain David Savy, Principal Secretary for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education, Dr. Odile De Comarmond, the CEO of the IECD, Mrs. Shirley Choppy, Education Consultant, Mr Selby Dora among various other ECCE professionals from key sectors.

The results were presented by Mr. Benstrong, followed by a panel discussion with the participation from different sectors and organisations, including Day Care Centres and Home-based Childminding Services. Described as engaging and insightful, the panel discussion provided participants the opportunity to discuss their perspectives on the findings, as well as their experiences vis-a-vis this new national initiative. The audience also had the opportunity to interact with the panelists.

## Some key findings of the study:

- 92.2 % of children in registered childcare services were ready to commence crèche and preschool education. This percentage was higher than the 2019 result (88%), which showed an increase of 4% of children.
- The majority of children have reached proficiency levels of preschool readiness.
- Similarly to the 2019 results, there was a slight difference between the performance of boys and girls. It was shown that girls had a better head start in the acquisition of the early learning skills.
- A significant percentage of children from Day Care Centres attained the highest level. This formidable outcome was beyond the expectation of the Institute and its partners.



*Early learning activities in practice at a registered home-based childminding establishment*



*Participants during the first National ECCE Forum of 2021 as the findings of the 2020 Early Learning Readiness study were being presented*



# NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ECCE 2019-2020: NATIONAL EVALUATION WORKSHOP



The National Action Plan (NAP) for ECCE is a binding document for the main ECCE sectors, which supports detailed action plans for creating an enabling environment that promotes the holistic development of children. Implementation of this cross-sectoral plan is coordinated by the Institute as the leading entity mandated to build a strong foundation for every child by addressing fundamental issues concerning early years care, learning and development. Its implementation spans over two years.

As with all National Plans on ECCE, an evaluation is conducted at the end of each cycle to provide information on the implementation level of projects. In October 2020, this assessment was in the form of a national-level workshop that was held at the SITE. Present were members of the former High-Level Committee for ECCE, led by the then Designated Minister and Minister for Local Government, Mrs. Macsuzy Mondon, Chairman of the IECD Board, Captain David Savy, the ECCE Technical Team members: Health, Social, Education, Local Government, and supporters of early childhood development.



This half-day workshop served as a platform for the different sectoral teams in ECCE to showcase and share progress and challenges in implementing their respective ECCE projects. The main feature of this workshop was the discussion on setbacks and strategies for implementation of the projects. Problems presented included project management, recurrent delays, lack of funds, communication and support.

Speaking during the workshop's opening session, the former Chairperson of the High-Level ECCE Policy Committee, Mrs. Macsuzy Mondon applauded the Institute for taking this bold step to bring the heads of organisations together

and talk about ECCE. Moreover, she thanked all ECCE teams for their commitment and hard work delivering on the outcomes of their projects, contributing to the advancement of ECCE both within sectors and nationally.

"Countless reviews of research literature revealed that the first five years of a child's life shapes his or her future. This is dependent on high-quality early childhood care, education, child protection programmes and services, which are beneficial to children's holistic development. Effective leadership and structures to monitor and evaluate policies and programmes are all important ingredients, needed to provide children with opportunities to reach their full development potential, and prepare them for formal schooling," she highlighted. Further, she commended the Institute for its leadership role, valuable contributions towards the holistic development of our young children.

Based on feedback received, the National Evaluation workshop is a great initiative, which has provided opportunities and a platform for professionals to deliberate and share experiences on ECCE issues. It was well attended and ended on a high note.

## IECD CEO MEETS WITH NEW IBE-UNESCO DIRECTOR

In a virtual meeting, facilitated by the IBE-UNESCO Office in December 2020, the CEO of the IECD, Mrs. Shirley Choppy met and welcomed the new interim IBE-UNESCO Director, Mr. Yao Ydo. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Cristian Fabbi, the Programme Officer for ECCE at the IBE.

Mrs. Choppy provided an overview on the role of the Institute, its plans and future projects. She also provided an update on the status of the establishment of the IECD as a Global Category 2 Centre for ECCE, under the auspices of UNESCO, and the government's plan for a proposed facility to house the Centre.

The meeting also served to set the tone for further cooperation as the two heads also discussed opportunities for future collaborative projects and initiatives. This hour-long meeting concluded on an optimistic note with both Mr. Ydo and Mrs. Choppy reaffirming their commitments to promoting early childhood care and education.



**MR. YAO YDO OF IBE-UNESCO**  
(SOURCE: WWW.IBE.UNESCO.ORG)

# SEYCHELLES' FIRST ACCREDITED TRAINING PROGRAMME IN CHILDCARE AND DEVELOPMENT

Since 2015, the IECD has been conducting an informal ten-week long Pre-Registration and Sensitisation Training Programme for non-registered Childminders. This was done in partnership with other ECCE Sectors, namely Health, Education, Social Affairs and Local Government, including the Seychelles Fire and Rescue Services Agency. After successfully completing the training programme, the participants were awarded a Certificate of Attendance. To date, over 200 Childminders have received their certificate. This achievement in the 0-3 sub-sector, is an important step towards registration of service with the Institute.

The IECD's Strategic Plan 2018 -2022 places emphasis on the harmonisation of the 0-3 sub-sector and capacity building of childcare workforce. In line with this, the Institute initiated a project in collaboration with the SITE to develop a new accredited training programme – 'Certificate in Childcare and Development'.



(From Left) Mrs. Choppy, Mrs. Simeon, Dr. De Comarmond & Mrs. Jules during the Press Conference

This training programme is targeting Day Care Assistants, Childminders or Assistant Childminders, as well as secondary five students. Implementation of this flagship programme is being delivered by the SITE.

Another new training programme in ECCE on offer for 2021 is the 'Certificate in Education for Teacher Assistant' for existing and prospective Teacher Assistants at Primary One and Two levels. This programme is jointly being undertaken by the MEHRD and the SITE.

Research has shown that a well-qualified childcare provider is of crucial importance for quality early childhood care. Certified knowledge, skills and competencies in the areas such as child development, early learning, and health and safety, will be beneficial to childcare workforce. It will empower them for the provision of superior early education and care services, which will contribute towards the holistic development of children and prepare them for formal learning.

The training programmes were launched by the former MEHRD Minister, Mrs. Jeanne Simeon; in the presence of the Principal Secretary for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education, Dr. Odile De Comarmond; CEO of the IECD, Mrs. Shirley Choppy and Director of the SITE, Mrs. Rosianna Jules during a Press Conference, held in August 2020.

## IECD Releases New Publication

Another bold initiative undertaken by the Institute was the production of a new Poetry Collection. This publication was in support of the 2019 National Theme - 'Valoriz Kiltir Travay Dir'. A group of 43 professionals from Education, Health, Social Affairs and the IECD took part in a poetry competition organised by the Institute in 2019.

The project provided a platform for ECCE professionals to showcase their talents and creativity in poetry composition. Through this project, the IECD also sought to maintain and further enhance its promotion and advocacy campaigns on ECCE.

The publication was launched in a ceremony to coincide with Universal Children's Day on 20th November and it was attended by high officials in the ECCE sectors, representatives of the National Archives, participants and members of the judging panel. The invitees were presented with a complimentary copy of the publication.

The publication can be purchased at the IECD Office.



The cover page of the new IECD Poetry Collection on ECCE



# IECD HOLDS CERTIFICATE AWARD-CEREMONY FOR PROSPECTIVE CHILDMINDERS

The IECD has, since 2015, been coordinating the Pre-Registration and Sensitisation Training Programme on the National Standards for Home-based Childminding Services for potential Childminders. After five successful and consecutive years in conducting this training programme, the IECD hosted its last certificate award ceremony last year. This was held on September 26, 2020, at the Eden Bleu Hotel. It was organised in honour of the 7th and 8th cohort of participants, who completed the training programme with success.

The training programme was conducted over 10 consecutive Saturdays for participants on Mahe, Praslin and La Digue. The IECD delivered last year's training in partnership with the key sectors and partner agencies in ECCE.



**IECD Board Chairman, Capt. Savy addressing guests at the certificate award-ceremony**



A total of 50 Childminders received their Certificate of Attendance, which proved to be a momentous evening for the recipients and other guests. The ceremony opened with a welcome address by the Chairman of IECD Board, Captain David Savy who congratulated the training participants on their achievement.

“The importance of caring for the very young, aged between 0-3 years, cannot be overemphasised. It is an instrumental part of the Institute’s Strategic Plan and national agenda for emphasizing ECCE, and the holistic development of our youngest members of society,” noted Captain Savy. He also wished them every success in their forthcoming venture and journey in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector.

Following Captain Savy’s address, the ceremony ended with entertainment by guest performers, including the training participants themselves, and a series of fun games. The highlight of the evening was a surprise performance from renowned local artist, Ms. Sandra Esparon.





# Some Highlig



## International Women's Day

IECD staff celebrated International Women's Day 2020 together with a group of ECCE women professionals, who took part in the Institute's campaign promoting careers in ECCE, in line with the 2019 National Theme. A short ceremony was organised in honour of these women professionals and, together with staff, they were presented with a token of appreciation.



## Children's Day

To coincide with Children's Day 2020, the National ECCE Trust Fund donated a set of 'Big Story Books' and a batch of 'Stacked Beds' to representatives of Childminders and Day Care Operators. The resources will be used to support early learning programme and implementation of the COVID-19 guidelines in the childcare facilities.



## Gran Kaz Supports ECCE

Gran Kaz Casino presented the IECD with a monetary donation in support of ECCE projects in a ceremony to commemorate Children's Day 2020. The funds were used to support the implementation of advocacy initiatives.

## CEO's Birthday

In a small gathering put together by the Social Committee, members of staff expressed their good wishes to the CEO on her birthday. The event was held in August 2020.

The highlight of the event was the presentation of a special slideshow in honour of the CEO and appreciation for her endless support, guidance and leadership. She was also presented with thoughtful gifts from staff as a sign of their gratitude.





# hts of 2020



## Sensitisation Session for Welfare Officers

The IECD and Agency for Social Protection (ASP) conducted a joint sensitisation session with all Welfare Officers on the new Financial Assistance for Childcare. Held in July 2020, the session aimed to enhance their understanding of this new initiative, which the Government introduced in April 2020, to support children's enrollment in registered childcare services and help parents meet the cost of childcare.

## Donation from Kempinski Seychelles Resort

The Kempinski Seychelles Resort gifted the IECD with funds for the implementation of Early Learning Readiness Project. The cheque was presented to the IECD on Children's Day, June 1, 2020.



## Training for Unregistered Childminders

The 7th and 8th cohort participated in training programmes organised by the IECD from May to August 2020 on Mahe and Praslin. The training is part of the mandatory National Standards for Childminding Services for registration and regulation of the service by the Institute.

## Farewell to Former Education Minister

In honour of the former Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, Mrs. Jeanne Simeon, the IECD hosted a farewell high-tea in November 2020. This was to commemorate her dedication towards children's development and education, more essentially, to convey our gratitude for her unwavering support and guidance during her tenure as Minister. As a tribute for her lifelong devotion towards education and ECCE, Mrs. Choppy and her staff expressed their heartfelt appreciation through a short presentation and poem recital. The short ceremony was also attended by the Board Chairperson.





# Courtesy Visit by New Minister for Education, Dr. Justin Valentin

The CEO and staff met with the newly appointed Minister for Education, Dr. Justin Valentin, in a courtesy visit at the Institute in October 2020. The visit was part of his introduction programme with all departments and agencies, which fall under the Ministry of Education, to re-familiarise himself with the education entities and identify the key issues and challenges. The Minister had a brief chat with the staff on the activities of their respective sections and units, and the CEO on a few related matters about ECCE. In an interview with the press after the visit, Minister Valentin described the ongoing and new initiatives as being in “good hands” and conveyed his support for the realization of the Institute’s objectives.



## One Year Since COVID-19 Pandemic Childcare sector remains committed in safeguarding early childhood care and education

Since the COVID-19 virus first emerged in March 2020 the IECD with the support of the MEHRD, Ministry of Health and, most importantly, the childcare workforce has been working tirelessly to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on childcare services, to ensure the continuity of early learning programmes and services for young children.

To minimize the impact of COVID-19 on children’s holistic development, as well as to ensure the safety of childcare workforce, various structures and measures have been implemented, including:

**1** In April 2020, the COVID-19 Task Force Committee with three sub-committees, one of which is for early childhood care services, was created. A COVID-19 Recovery Plan for the re-opening and continuity of service was developed in collaboration with all concerned partners. It focuses on three main underlying principles – heightened vigilance to detect possible infection in staff and the children, maintenance of social and physical distancing, proper hygiene and sanitation facilities.

Implementation of the plan is ongoing. It was recently adjusted to reflect the current situation of transmission within the community. Childminders and Day Care Operators are taking extra precautions to keep the children and their staff safe.





**2** Two information sessions were conducted for all registered and non-registered Childcare Providers on Mahe and Praslin in May last year. Attendees were provided with a pack of COVID-19 related information. There were numerous presentations based on the three fundamental principles and the guidelines, conducted by members of the sub-committee for childcare. The presentations were made available to parents and the public through a series of media-based programmes on national television and the Institute's social media channels.



**3** Another crucial step undertaken by the sub-committee is the monitoring of the COVID-19 measures at the level of childcare centres. Ongoing inspections by officials from the IECD, Education and Health were conducted to support Childcare Providers and ensure compliance with the established measures and protocols.



**4** In 2020, all registered Childminders were privileged to receive a pack of COVID-related resources, such as infrared thermometers, sanitisers among other consumables, and a batch of stacked beds for their facilities. The request for these resources was made by the IECD and donated by the National ECCE Trust Fund.

**5** Another important move to ensure that childcare facilities are Covid-secure, was to prioritise vaccination of workers in this sector. Since March, around 60% of the childcare population had been vaccinated. It shows that this sector is on the right path to reaching herd immunity.



**6** In March 2021, the Institute organised another sensitisation session for registered childcare providers with the support of the Ministry of Health. The purpose was to refresh them on the COVID-related health measures, as well as to promote the importance of the COVID-19 vaccine among childcare workers. They also shared issues affecting their services and sought more information about the inoculation programme.





# Data Management in ECCE

## Pre-Piloting of Early Childhood Development Indicators in Education Sector

Many countries in the world, including Seychelles, recognise the intrinsic value of early childhood development, and are committed to ensuring high-quality policies, programmes and services in ECCE. This commitment has contributed towards many major developments in ECCE. However, as part of its ongoing effort to ensure high-impact investments and to track progress in ECCE, Seychelles is taking steps to strengthen the policy environment, for evidence-based decision making and reporting through readily available information on ECCE.

The need for timely information on ECCE emanates from multiple sources, including the Seychelles Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (2011) and the World Bank Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) Report (2013). With recommendations from the former High-Level ECCE Policy Committee, the IECD was mandated to develop a Data Management in ECCE project to address the gaps in the management of data in ECCE nationally. This project was first initiated in the Ministry of Health in 2016, which laid the foundation for the project's replication in the other ECCE sectors.

In 2019, the project was launched in the Ministry of Education. Part of its implementation, included a pre-pilot phase which was conducted between September and October last year in five Pilot Schools. The schools were the Anse Aux Pins, Anse Boileau, Bel Eau, Beau Vallon and Takamaka Primary. It was organised to test the ECD indicators, developed specifically for this sector. This was an essential step in preparing for the main pilot phase to be undertaken in all Primary Schools in 2021.

Implementation of the pre-pilot phase consisted of several sub-activities. The first being a training workshop with school leaders from the five schools, held on September 4, 2020, to sensitise and build their capacity on data collection and analysis based on the ECD indicators. The workshop was facilitated by the Project's Consultant, Mr. Egbert Benstrong.

The second activity was the monitoring and support visits, conducted by a team from the Institute together with Mr. Benstrong and that was on October 19 and 20, 2020. The team had the opportunity to monitor progress in the collection of data and provide technical assistance to the schools. There were no major issues in this phase and the pre-pilot concluded successfully. The school leaders and participants in the project were highly appreciative of the support and assistance they received from the team.

Data collected on the 9 indicators were submitted to the Advocacy and Information Section of the Institute. A thorough analysis was conducted, after which a report was submitted by the consultant. The information gathered from the pre-pilot phase has been used to inform the implementation of the main pilot study in 2021.



*The training workshop conducted with the school leaders*



*Workshop participants from Aux Pins Primary*



*Workshop participants from Takamaka Primary*



*Visit at Anse Boileau Primary School*



*Visit at Bel Eau Primary School*



*Visit at Beau Vallon Primary School*



# New Awareness Campaign on ECCE

## Saying #YestoEarlyChildhood# During the COVID-19 Pandemic



Mrs. Choppy delivering the opening address

The IECD, mandated to advocate for and promote the understanding of the importance of Early Childhood Development, strategically launched a brand new ECCE Awareness Campaign in November 2020. This campaign strives to raise awareness on the COVID-19 pandemic in support of its role to ensuring the holistic development of every child in Seychelles.

Through this campaign, the IECD hopes to support children, childcare providers, families and the community at large during this difficult time. Due consideration has been taken in supporting the well-being of children and sustaining their learning and development in line with the Task Force Recovery Plan for Childcare Services and the country's response to managing the pandemic.

The campaign consisted of 14 informative and attractive billboards, which included influential messages contributed by various prominent, present and past professionals in ECCE and community members and photos of our beautiful children. These billboards were installed in strategic locations on Mahe and Praslin for maximum public visibility, hopefully, helping to drive the main messages about COVID-19 in the communities, minimize its spread and keep our young children healthy and safe.

As is customary every year, the project's official launch took place on the 20th November, which coincided with Universal Children's Day.

In her remarks, Mrs. Choppy noted that "Fulfilling the promise to our children is more relevant this year, as the world and our country are facing a grave and unprecedented threat. The direct health implications of the pandemic have been far milder for children than for other age groups. This is a good sign but the anticipated socio-economic impacts, if not addressed could be devastating for them, compromising their rights to health, education, protection and well-being."

The inaugural launch saw the symbolic unveiling of one of the beautiful billboards by the CEO and Chairman, that reads 'Corona ki ou'n vin fer isi? Les nou zwe. Les nou aprann. Les nou trankil' by Yael Ahkon. This exemplary project, spearheaded by the team from the Advocacy and Information Section, painstakingly underwent several stages of development.

In addition, guests had the opportunity to witness the launch of the Institute's new Poetry Publication - 'Valoriz Kiltir Travay Dir: En Koleksyon Poem Par Profesyonnèl Dan Pti Lanfans'.



### Some of the ECCE Billboards:





# IECD Brings Festive Joy to Children

On December 11, 2020, the Institute of Early Childhood Development put together a kids' Christmas party. This was organised in appreciation of the 14 children who participated in the Institute's latest ECCE Awareness Campaign, which was one of its core advocacy activities.

The Christmas party was a great way to thank the children who participated in the campaign and was a superb way to kick-off the Christmas holiday.

In addressing the children, Mrs. Choppy on behalf of the Institute, expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the children for their participation in this campaign and conveyed her appreciation to their parents for their support. She also thanked the staff for their contribution in the successful implementation of the campaign and in the organisation of the event.

This gathering coincided with the end-of-year Christmas celebration for the children of the IECD staff. The afternoon was filled with excitement and joy. The children enjoyed themselves as they got to mingle, dance, and participate in several fun activities. They also received a special visit and a lovely gift from Santa.



## END-OF-YEAR BLESSING AND REFLECTION

As is customary at the end of each year, the IECD team happily came together for a moment of blessing and reflection.

The activity kicked-off with a warm welcome by the CEO, to our special guest, Father John from the Catholic Diocese and close partners. Father John led a moment of prayers and blessing for the team at the IECD following a year of hard work and dedication. Staff members shared their personal reflection, contemplating on their achievements and good times, as well as ruminating on the challenges of 2020. They also expressed their hopes and wishes for 2021.

The event was also attended by the Institute's close collaborators, and they also shared experiences during their journey throughout 2020.

The afternoon ended with an exchange of gifts by the staff to the CEO in appreciation of her guidance and unwavering support in 2020.