



Editor's Note

The first eight months of 2020 has been extremely busy for the Institute of Early Childhood Development with a wide variety of projects and activities operating simultaneously - all intending to make an impact on the lives of our children and the social life of our communities.

In this ninth issue of our Children 1st Newsletter, you will find a wealth of information on the Institute's undertakings and collaborative ventures since the beginning of this year. This ranges from unit-based enterprises to new initiatives including COVID-19 related actions.

Through this edition we hope to share our accomplishments and excitement with you our loyal readers, and look forward to sharing more success stories in the upcoming months.

My heartiest gratitude and thanks extends to all sectors and partners in Government and external stakeholders for their unflinching support and professional accompaniment during our journey to reach a critical milestone – the designation of a UNESCO Category II Centre for ECCE. Another significant advance towards our common and shared vision 'A Winning Start for All'.

On a final note, we hope you find the write-ups in this edition informative and enriching. We encourage you to share it widely among colleagues, families and friends, to spread the ECCE messages in the community and our country.

Happy Reading!

Mrs Shirley Choppy
CEO of IECD

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Government Financial Assistance for Childcare

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The Financial Assistance for Childcare is a new Government-led initiative that is being offered to parents. This was announced by President Danny Faure during his State of the Nation Address (SONA) in February 2020. This will help reduce the cost of childcare for parents before children enrol in preschool and to encourage parents to choose registered childcare facilities with approved and high-quality standards for their child's holistic development.

The assistance took effect in April 2020.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BEFORE SONA 2020

UP TO
MARCH
2020

480
CHILDREN

Assistance offered was on a means-testing approach.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AFTER SONA 2020

The Assistance was offered to all children aged 0 to 3 years. The means-testing system has been discontinued.

APRIL
2020

1,574
CHILDREN

The number of beneficiaries more than tripled (from 480 to 1,574).

OCTOBER
2020

1,868
CHILDREN

Number of beneficiaries continues to increase reaching 1,868 to date.

1,166

CHILDREN IN REGISTERED DAY CARE SERVICES

702

CHILDREN IN REGISTERED HOME-BASED CHILDMINDING SERVICES

A very popular scheme that has been well received by parents and childcare service providers.



For more information visit www.iecd.gov.sc or contact us on 4675700

A new financial assistance for childcare is being offered to parents by the Government of Seychelles. This was announced by President Danny Faure during his State of the Nation Address in February 2020.

As President Faure proclaimed, this universal subsidy will be offered to parents whose child is enrolled in registered Day Care or Childminding Services. Under this enhanced financial programme, parents of any income level are entitled to receive SCR750 per month, per child as childcare payment. To be eligible, the child must be a Seychellois national and between the age of 0 to 3 years old.

Parents have started to benefit from the financial assistance since April 2020. The financial assistance is paid directly to childcare providers on behalf of their parents. In return, childcare providers have to deduct the sum of SCR750 from parents' monthly fee.

The financial assistance is being implemented by the Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD) with the support of the Agency for Social Protection (ASP) and the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD). A registered childcare is regulated by the MEHRD, (for Day Care services) and the IECD, (for Childminding Services). Through their regulatory functions, they ensure that standards are being met so that children are provided with quality care and education, which is vital for their holistic development and safety while preparing them for formal schooling.

Pertinent information relating to the implementation of this programme was provided in the Press Conference, held on Monday 9th March, 2020. Speaking at the conference, the Chief Executive Officer for the IECD, Mrs. Shirley Choppy highlighted that the financial assistance is in line with government policies that relate to health, education and social, and promote equal opportunities for every child, including their holistic development and readiness for formal schooling.

To date, the number of children who are benefitting from this assistance has more than tripled; from 480 to 1868 (1166 children in Day Care Centres and 702 in Home-based Childminding Services). It is a very popular incentive that has helped many parents to meet the increasing costs of childcare. Refer to the infographic above for more details.

Parents and members of the public can get access to more information about the Financial Assistance from a Ten-Step Guide on the IECD website: www.iecd.gov.sc





Minister Jeanne Simeon as she delivered her opening speech

The consultation and validation workshop on the proposed National Standards for Centre-Based Childminding Services was held on Friday 14th February 2020 at the Seychelles Trading Company (STC) Conference Room. This was one among a series of national stakeholders' consultation and validation forum, convened to deliberate on the proposed draft multi-sectoral National Standards for Day Care Services in Seychelles.

In her opening speech, the Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Mrs. Jeanne Simeon noted the growing emphasis globally on the importance of high quality early childhood care and education. This does not

only involve the provision of stimulating and developmentally appropriate education programmes, health and nutrition practices but includes nurturing and supporting young children's social, physical and cognitive skills in a safe and secure environment that will guarantee children's holistic development and wellbeing.

Minister Simeon stated that since children of young age in Seychelles are spending a substantial portion of their time in childcare settings, the quality of care and development that we provide for them, is a fundamental matter, which should not be taken lightly. It warrants the need to ensure that the provision of childcare services meets at least acceptable standards. She referred to the Baseline Assessment carried out by the SEED Institute in Singapore earlier this year that identified several gaps in service provision, which needs to be addressed.

She noted that standards are critical in any child service-related activity and commended the work of the multi-sectoral Technical Working Group who has done a great job so far in developing the draft standards. She urged all participants to reflect in a rational manner and take on board invaluable input for further enrichment of the document.

Mrs. Juhi Jha, a Research Officer from the Programme Coordination and Research Section at the IECD gave a comprehensive presentation on the draft National Standards Framework. This includes the domains of health and education, physical, social and emotional wellbeing, as well as the expected skills, knowledge and practices of the adults working with young children.



Participants at the workshop



CEO of IECD, Mrs. Choppy presenting the project's way forward

This presentation was followed by the extremely important task at hand, which was group deliberations on the proposed standards. The participants discussed and presented added information, concerned reservations and valuable inputs to enrich the policy framework among other challenges, for considerations by the Technical Working Group.

IECD and its partners teamed up to spread joy of Children's Day by gifting Childminding Operators and their children with various care and educational resources for their establishments in efforts of enhancing ECCE in Seychelles. They were presented with the gifts, funded by the National ECCE Trust Fund, in a symbolic handover ceremony that was held on Monday 1st June, 2020.



Children enjoying a souvenir photo together



Day Care Operators with their set of 'Big Books'

Among the gifts was a set of 'Big Books', which was presented to Day Care Operators as a resource aimed at promoting early literacy. Whereas the registered Home-Based Childminders received some 'Stacked Beds' for children in support of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Childminding Services, to help promote social distancing during nap time.



Home-Based Childminders with their 'Stacked Bed'



Kempinski Seychelles Resort contributes to national ECCE projects implemented by IECD



Gran Kaz supports the implementation of IECD's national ECCE projects

Part of the ceremony also included a presentation of cheque, in which IECD was presented with monetary contributions from two external partners – Kempinski Seychelles Resort and Gran Kaz, in support of the ECCE projects implemented by the Institute. Tokens of appreciation were also presented to the Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Mrs Jeanne Simeon and the CEO of IECD, Mrs Choppy.



Minister Simeon presented with a token of appreciation



Mrs Shirley receives token of appreciation

IECD through its COVID-19 Sub-Committee Day Care and Childminding Services along with Childcare Operators have been working tirelessly to ensure the return of young children to their childcare establishments amid the pandemic.



Launching of the Training and Sensitisation Workshop on Mahe



Participants during the Training and Sensitisation Workshop on Mahe

One of the first step undertaken by the IECD is the development of the COVID-19 Recovery for the Childminding Sector along with the Guidelines on the health and safety measures for Childcare Providers, based on the three broad principles – Vigilance, Social Distancing, and Hygiene. Following this, Childcare Providers were trained and sensitised on the health and safety measures set forth in the Guidelines in a workshop held on Mahe (5th May), followed by a second one held on Praslin (6th May).



The Training and Sensitisation Workshop on Praslin



Cleaning of in-door Childminding area



Child-friendly floor demarcation stickers

On their part, Childcare Operators have been striving to implement these Guidelines, whereby they have been applying several good and innovative practices. A series of monitoring visits have been conducted by IECD and Health Officers, including staff from the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to provide support to Childcare Operators and ensure compliance with the Guidelines for Childminding sub-sector.

Together, we can ensure to support early childhood care and education during these unprecedented times!



IECD officers following health and safety measures during monitoring visit



Members of the IECD Sub-Committee for Childcare Services

Welcome Aboard!

The Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD) is delighted to welcome on board a few new staff, all female employees, for the year 2019 and 2020, respectively.

Presently, the IECD comprises a small team of 16 staff members. Together, we strive to provide every young child in Seychelles with a winning start in life through several ECCE programmes and shared commitment of partners to support children's holistic development and well-being. Our effort is aligned with the National Strategy and Vision of 2033, which is to develop the potential of our children for the future of Seychelles.



Our beautiful ladies!

Celebrating International Women's Day with Partners in ECCE

"A Woman with a voice is by definition of a strong woman. But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult" - Mrs Melinda Gates

International Women's Day is celebrated every year on March 8th. It is a day that recognizes the achievements of all women regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, political beliefs, language, or their cultural or economic situation. This year's Women's Day was celebrated as a "call to action" to increase gender equality under the theme: 'I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights'.

Cognizant of the importance of this day, the Institute of Early Childhood Development took the opportunity to celebrate the hard work, invaluable contribution and dedication of women professionals across disciplines in Early Childhood Care and Education. *(continued on next page)*

Part of the celebration included a small-scale media campaign, featuring seven women professionals promoting a career in ECCE were broadcasted on national television with the support of the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), as well as IECD social media channels. The seven ECCE advocates are Mrs Alexandrine Zelia, Mrs Celine Faure, Ms Clothilde Malcouzane, Mrs Chantal Cadeau, Mrs Peggy Vidot, Ms Antoinette Alcindor and Mrs Jeanine Arrisol, all of whom have devoted their career or part of their career in ECCE, thus contributing to the holistic development of young children.



Some of the women professionals in ECCE as they are presented with their token of appreciation from Mrs Choppy (from left to right: Mrs Alexandrine Zelia, Mrs Jeanine Arrisol, Mrs Chantal Cadeau and Mrs Clothilde Malcouzane)

In appreciation for their hard work and support for ECCE, the IECD presented four of them with a token of gratitude in a small ceremony held on March 9th at the IECD Head Office. Mrs Choppy also presented two former IECD employees –Mrs. Louis Marie and Ms Talma, with a thank you gift for their dedicated service to the Institute. This was followed by the presentation of a celebratory gift to all of IECD’s women employees .

The IECD staff and invitees also had the chance to hear a reflection from the Director of Programme Coordination & Research, Ms Marie-France Barra, on the role and achievements of women in the Seychelles.



Souvenir Photo of International Women's Day 2020 Celebration

Professional Development

The IECD Director of Regulatory Affairs, Ms. Lianette Morel, completed a professional course on Training Methodology for Development Professionals at the Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in Hyderabad, India. Ms. Morel was attending the training in her capacity as the Project Officer for the development of an accredited training programme for childcare providers in collaboration with SITE. This training opportunity is also an example of the Institute's strong emphasis on the continual growth and development of its staff.

The training was aimed at extending knowledge and skills associated with different teaching approaches in professional development settings and providing opportunities for observational visits. Twenty-four participants from 14 different countries attended the training sessions and shared experiences. Professional visits to other cities, namely, Bangalore and Mysore were organised for participants to experience good practices in other related fields.

The Institute would like to thank the Government of India for granting this opportunity to professionals in Seychelles, in particular Ms Morel.



International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study: Release of Findings Webinar

During the first quarter of 2020, staff members of the IECD joined the Director for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Directorate of Education and Skills, Andreas Schleicher and Rowena Phair, an analyst in the Early Childhood and Schools Division in a webinar as they discussed the results of a new study. The study is entitled 'Early Learning and Child Well-being Study'. The study puts a spotlight on how children at five-year-old in England, Estonia and the United States are faring across a range of early skills.



Overall, the webinar provided the IECD team with the chance to gain deeper insight and build their understanding of Early Childhood Care and Education issues from an international perspective. It was also an opportunity for them to reflect on the Institute's national approach towards children's early years of development vis-à-vis the findings of this study.