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ECCE Policies, Schemes and Programs in India: Policies and Plans

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Children are the future of our country. They are the responsibility of all the stakeholders viz. family, community, school and the government. It is well recognized that survival and development of children are dependent on what is planned and done for them. Ensuring access by all children to quality care and early childhood development is a priority. The Government of India has initiated and implemented many policies, schemes and programmes to cater to the welfare of all children.

Policies and Plans

In Article 39, the Constitution of India provides that the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring “that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.” To ensure survival, health, nutrition, care and education of young children in the early years, various interventions are done at the national, state and district levels from time to time.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) , 1986

The Government of India had formulated the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986 to promote education for the welfare of all its citizens. The policy focuses on the overall development of young children and visualizes ECCE as an important factor strengthening primary education in the country. The policy also considers ECCE as important for human resource development. It stresses on promoting a child-centered and play-based ECCE programme.

National Nutrition Policy, 1993

Adequate and healthy nutrition is vital for holistic development of children. The policy was formulated by the Government of India to tackle the problem of under nutrition and malnutrition in the country, thereby aiming to improve the nutritional status across society. It implies that mothers be given proper support and information on effective nutrition for the growth of their children. The policy also calls on state governments to take concerted efforts and recommends the setting up of State Level Nutrition Council for improving the nutritional standards.

The National Policy for Children (NPC) , 2013

The Government of India adopted the first National Policy for Children (NPC) in 1974 as one of the major initiatives for the wellbeing of children. The policy declared children as, “supremely important asset” for the nation. The NPC, 1974 was revised in 2013, reaffirming commitment to healthy development and protection of all children. NPC, 2013 identifies survival, health, nutrition, development, education, protection and participation as the undeniable right of every child and the key priority.

National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, 2013

The Government of India approved the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy in 2013. The Policy framework also includes the National ECCE Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards for ECCE. The Policy commits to universal access to quality early childhood education to all children under six years of age.



The vision of the policy is to, “achieve holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below six years of age by promoting free, universal, inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualized opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential.” The policy recognizes that young children are best cared for in their family environment and thus strengthening family capabilities to care for and protect the child will receive the highest priority.

The National Health Mission (NHM)

- The National Health Mission was launched in 2013. The NHM envisages achievement of universal access to equitable, affordable and quality health care services that are accountable and responsive to people’s needs. The main programmatic components include Health System Strengthening, Reproductive-Maternal-Neonatal-Child and Adolescent Health, and Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases.
- ECCE in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012 - 17) The Five-Year Plans have also acknowledged the importance of ECCE for laying the foundation of lifelong development. The 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) emphasizes the need to address areas of systemic reform in ECCE across all channels of services in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It aimed to redefine ICDS non-formal preschool education to ECCD, with additional and trained human resources.

India Newborn Action Plan (INAP) , 2014

The India new-born Action Plan (INAP) was launched in 2014 to reduce preventable new-born deaths and stillbirths in the country with strategic interventions. It defines six pillars of interventions:

1. Pre-conception and antenatal care;
2. Care during labour and childbirth;
3. Immediate new-born care;
4. Care of healthy new-born;
5. Care of small and sick new-born
6. Care beyond new-born survival

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) , 2030

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. There are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) , which are an urgent call for action by all countries — developed and developing — in a global partnership. Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”