

Improving Young Children's Health, Nutrition, and Education Through Family Support in Nepal: A Review of Policy and Programs



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Presentation outline . . .

- **Socio-Cultural and demographic background of Nepal**
- **Legal provisions and policies that support parents to care for young children in Nepal**
- **Major programs being implemented for young children**
- **Impact on children and families**



Nepal: Demography and Population Statistics

- Nepal is landlocked by India on three sides and [China's Tibet Autonomous Region](#) to the north.
- Spanning an area of 147,181 square kilometer (56,827 sq. miles), Nepal has tremendous geographic and sociocultural diversity.
- A population of over [20 million people](#) represents a number of castes and ethnic backgrounds
- Children [below age 6](#) comprise more than 18% of the population.

Health and Well-being of Young Children

- The under-5 child mortality rate is high (39 per 1000 live births)
- The incidence of morbidity is very high and it directly affects the psycho-social and physical development of children.
- It is estimated that 50 percent of under-5 children suffer from severe or moderate level of malnutrition.
 - Protein energy malnutrition (PEM).
 - Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD)
 - Iron Deficiency Anemia.

(Ministry of Health, 2017)

Nutritional Status of Young Children

Indicators	Status (%) 2016
Stunting <5 Children	36
Wasting <5 Children	10
Underweight <5 Children	27
Anemia <5 Children	53
Low Birth Weight	24
Anemia in adolescent women (15-19)	44

(Child Health DoHS, 2016)

Family Structure and Child Rearing Practices

- Extended family is most prevalent; children are usually taken care of by the family as a whole.
- In a nuclear family, children are cared for by older siblings or are placed in a childcare center
- Harsh treatment of children, especially in nuclear families, is pervasive. For example, infants are bound to a pole or pillar with a piece of rope to prevent them from reaching harmful objects while the parents are away to collect firewood, or to fetch drinking water, or to work in the fields (UNESCO, 1989).

Policy Supporting Parents and Young Children in Nepal

- The Government of Nepal (GON) adopted the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1990.
 - Childhood is entitled to special care and assistance.
 - For their full and harmonious development children should grow up **in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.**
- These principles have been reflected in the plans and policies developed by GON

Legal provisions in Support of Young Children's Development

- Children's right to health, education, and care has been guaranteed by the Constitution of Nepal (2015).
- The Constitution ensures affirmative action to secure children's equitable access to ECED programs through the following provisions:
 - Every child shall have the right to get education, health care, nurturing, appropriate upbringing, sports, recreation and overall personality development from family and the State.
 - Every child shall have the right to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and child participation. (Article 39)

[http: / / www.mofa.gov.np/ the-constitution-of-nepal.](http://www.mofa.gov.np/the-constitution-of-nepal)

Legal Provisions and Current Policy: Focus on Children

- Priorities mentioned in the recent five-year plans reflect an increased awareness towards welfare and development of children
 - Nutrition, health, education and other services will be made available for children from birth to later childhood age.
 - Role of non-governmental and social organizations is recognized – tasked to launch parent education programs.

Legal Provisions and Current Policy: Focus on Parents

- The Basic and Primary Education Master Plan mentions the goal of creating awareness among parents to provide facilities to help children be prepared to enter primary schools.
- Parent education programs are being implemented through DOE/Ministry of Education, which focus on health care, behavior management, family relationships, and parenting rights and duties.
 - All ECD centers in Nepal act as parent education centers and a meeting venue for parents
 - Efforts are in place to link the functional literacy programs for mothers to the early childhood care and education services.

Major Early Childhood Development Programs

- Home-based (Birth to 3 years)
- Community-based (3-6 years)
- School affiliated (3-6 years)

(Parental Education is a major component in all three types of Programs)

Rationale in Support of Home-based Programs

Home-based ECD programs recognize that:

- Children's development can be ensured only if the families are aware about its importance from the very beginning.
- ECD activities take place within the family circle.
- Parents or parent substitutes (in some cases) play a key role in rearing and caring of children.
- **Parents are easily accessible and have the key responsibility to support their children's development**
- Parent involvement is crucial for sustainability of ECD programs.

Focus on Home-based Programs

There are four types of home-based ECD programs:

- Entry point (**Birth to 3 years**)
- Home-based childcare program (**Birth to 3 years**)
- Parental education (**Conception – 6 years**)
- Child to child program (**6 to 14 year** – support younger children)











Impact of the Programs on Children

- Most of the ECE programs have shown **positive effect on children's behaviors and achievement** in primary schools. (CERID, 1997, 2012)
- **83%** of children with ECD experience got promoted to Grade-1 compared to **42% without** it (Save the Children, 2003).
- In Grade-1, children with ECD experience demonstrated (CERID, 2012):
 - Greater **familiarity** with the school environment before school entrance
 - Greater **attendance** regularity
 - **Active participation** in classroom teaching-learning and extra-curricular activities
 - Greater **ease with teachers**
 - **Lower hesitance and fear**

Impact of the Programs on Families

- Parenting education has been successful:
 - A greater number of parents support children's learning at home.
 - The lessons learned during the PE sessions have been practiced at home.
- There has been increase in parents' visit to ECD centers
- Facilitator-parent interactions have been more positive
- Parents have become more responsive to children's health, nutrition, and early stimulation needs.
- Parents, regardless of their education status, were found supporting children's learning through everyday activities at home.

(Save the Children, 2018)

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Thanks !

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