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**Early Childhood and Family Policy Series**

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**Summary Report of the  
UNESCO/OECD Early Childhood  
Policy Review Project  
for Brazil, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and  
Kenya**

**The Division for the Promotion of Basic Education  
UNESCO Education Sector**

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UNESCO/OECD Early Childhood Policy Review Project  
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Presented by

The Division for the Promotion of Basic Education,  
Education Sector

**U N E S C O**

**Early Childhood and Family Policy Series n°14**

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# Summary Report of the UNESCO/OECD Early Childhood Policy Review Project for Brazil, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Kenya

*Foreword*

*Acknowledgements*

## **Part I. Brazil, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Kenya**

### **Section 1. Country profiles**

- Size of population
- Urban population
- National income
- Inequity
- Female workers
- Child survival

### **Section 2. Early childhood profiles**

- Nomenclature and age group
- Participation
- Provision structure and government auspices
- Educational requirements for the staff
- Status of early childhood within education

### **Section 3. Key policy developments**

- Brazil: Facing the challenge of integrating 0- to 6-year-olds
- Indonesia: Expanding access through non-formal services
- Kazakhstan: Providing universal pre-primary education
- Kenya: Moving from pre-school education to early childhood development

## **Part II. Q&A: Implications for other countries**

- Should pre-primary education be prioritized?
- Should pre-primary education be provided in schools?
- How can the education sector support early childhood?
- Should the auspices for early childhood be integrated into one ministry?
- Does a policy of universalization help remove inequities?
- What is a pro-poor policy?
- Does a decentralization policy help equitable access?
- Is there any neglected dimension of quality?
- Is the pursuit of quality limitless?
- Can parenting education be an option for expanding 'access'?
- Where should a government start to build an early childhood system?
- What are the strategies?
- How to develop an early childhood policy?

## Foreword

As part of its 2004-2005 planning, UNESCO launched the UNESCO/OECD Early Childhood Policy Review Project in Brazil, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Kenya. The purpose was to provide selected countries with an opportunity to review their early childhood policies and identify concrete options and strategies for improvement. Each country review involved the preparation of a background report, a review visit conducted by a review team, and the preparation of a review report. The review visits in the four countries took place between August 2004 and May 2005. The detailed review process in each country is described in the review reports.

The purpose of this summary report is twofold. First, it aims to summarize the key early childhood policy developments in the four countries. Second, it highlights some of the common policy dilemmas found in the participating countries and discusses ways and strategies to address them. The report is in two parts. Part I presents the overall country and early childhood profiles of the four countries and their key early childhood policy developments. Part II, presented in an easily accessible question and answer format, describes common policy dilemmas and strategies to handle them.

The contents of this report are, in principle, extracted from the individual countries' review reports. Developments that occurred after the reviews were completed are noted, as much as possible, in the footnotes.

More detailed information about each country's early childhood situation, and the review project results, can be found in the published background reports and review reports at <http://www.unesco.org/education/earlychildhood>. To receive hard copies of these publications or for general enquiries on UNESCO activities in the field of early childhood, please contact us at

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I would first like to convey my gratitude to the governments of the four participating countries for their firm commitment to the policy reviews and for their sincere concerns and hopes for the future of early childhood. Mr Ace Suryadi, Director-General of Out of School Education, and Mr Fasli Jalal, former Director-General of Out of School Education and Youth, of the Ministry of National Education of Indonesia, Mrs Mary Njorge, Director of Basic Education of the Ministry of Education of Kenya, Ms Kulyash N. Shamshidinova, former Vice Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Mr Francisco das Chagas Fernandes, Secretary of Basic Education of the Ministry of Education of Brazil, provided a warm welcome and guidance, which were the driving force behind the reviews.

The preparation of this Report would not have been possible without the efforts of the reviewers in the four countries: Ms Maria Malta Campos, Mr Roy Carl-Hill, Mr Gabriel Carron, Ms Khoo Kim Choo, Ms Judith Harwin, Mr Abrar Hasan, Ms Sheila Kamerman, Mr Raynald Lortie, Mr Henry Manani, Ms Susan Nkinyangi, Mr José Pessoa, Mr Jan van Ravens, Ms Gaukhar A. Saimassaeva and Ms. Nina L. Tataurova. Their observations and insights on early childhood policy issues, and their contributions and critical comments, were indispensable in shaping this Report.

My deep appreciation also goes to the UNESCO Offices in Jakarta, Nairobi, Almaty and Brasilia. In particular, I would like to thank Ms Cecilia Barbieri, Ms Alvana Bof, Ms Mira Fajar, Ms Aigul Khalafova, Ms Inna Melnikova, Ms Michelle Morais, Ms Chiku Nahoko, Ms Susan Nkinyangi, Mr Bakhtiyar Ospanbaev, Ms Celine Sage, Ms Alessandra Schneider and Mr Alisher Umarov, who provided assistance in all aspects and at all stages leading to the drafting of this Report.

Finally, I wish to extend my thanks to Ms Yoshie Kaga and Ms Hye-Jin Park of UNESCO Paris, who assisted throughout the reviews and contributed to the preparation of this Report. Ms Bonny Ling and Ms Rebecca Brite also deserve special mention for their help with the editing of the final text. Finally, my special thanks are reserved for Ms Soo-Hyang Choi, Chief of the Section for Early Childhood and Inclusive Education, who, as the responsible officer in charge of the project, served as a reviewer in all four countries and prepared all the review reports as well as this Summary Report.

I hope that the invaluable lessons gained from these four policy reviews will benefit early childhood policy development the world over.



Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta  
Director Division for the Promotion of Basic Education

# Part I

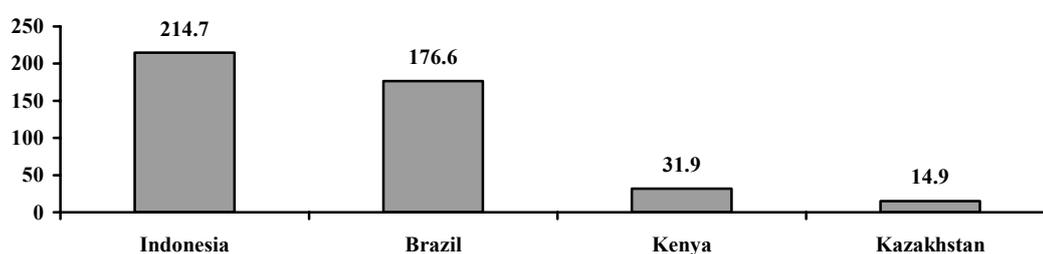
## BRAZIL, INDONESIA, KAZAKHSTAN AND KENYA

### Section 1. Country profiles

#### Size of population

Indonesia tops the group in terms of population size, followed closely by Brazil. Both are among the E-9 countries.<sup>1</sup> Kenya and Kazakhstan have relatively small populations in comparison (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Total population (millions), 2003

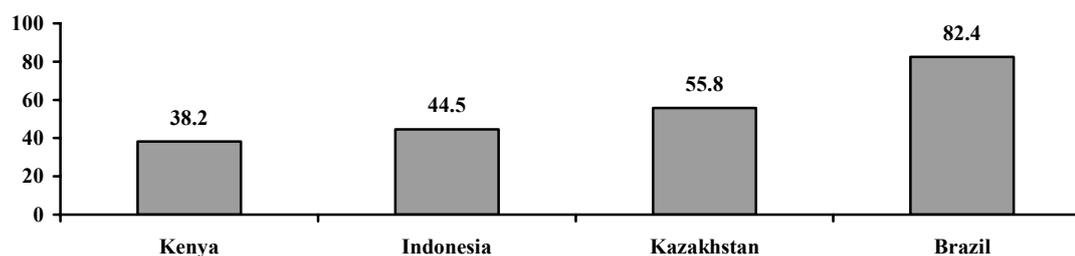


Source: World Bank (2005).

#### Urban population

Urbanization is most extensive in Brazil, where about 82% of the total population live in urban areas. In Kazakhstan, which has the smallest population among the four countries, more than half the population is concentrated in urban areas. In Indonesia and Kenya, the percentage of urban population is relatively small (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Urban population (% of total), 2002



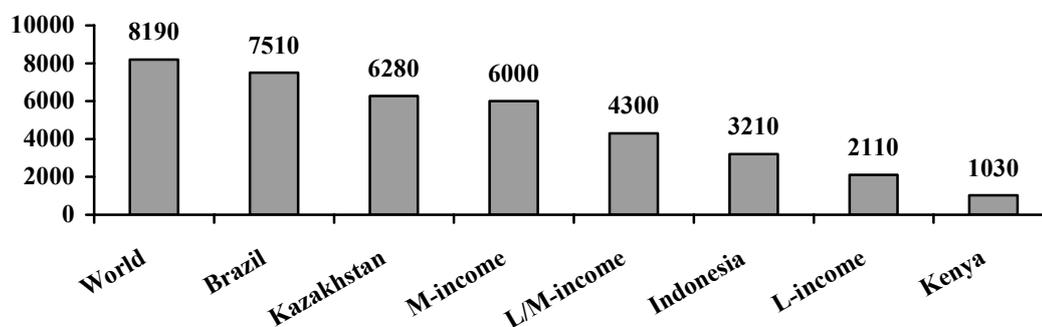
Source: World Bank (2005).

<sup>1</sup> 'E-9' refers to UNESCO's education initiative for the world's nine most populous countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan.

## National income

Of the four countries, Brazil has the highest gross national income per capita in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) at US\$7,510, followed by Kazakhstan (US\$6,280). Both have national incomes higher than the average of other middle-income countries. Indonesia's income is behind these two countries. Kenya's is lower still, beneath the average for low-income countries (Figure 3).

Figure 3: PPP gross national income per capita (US\$), 2003



Note: M-income = average for middle-income countries; L/M-income = average for lower middle-income countries; L-income = average for low-income countries.

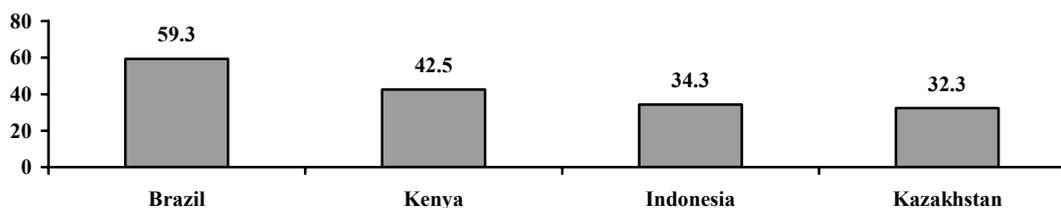
Source: World Bank (2005).

## Inequity

Although Brazil tops the group in terms of national income, it also shows the biggest equity gap, with a Gini index of nearly 60. It is notable that Kenya, with relatively meagre resources, also shows a relatively high Gini index (43), indicating extreme poverty. Indonesia and Kazakhstan show more moderate Gini indexes in comparison (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Gini index

Survey year: Brazil (2001), Indonesia (2002), Kazakhstan (2003), Kenya (1997)

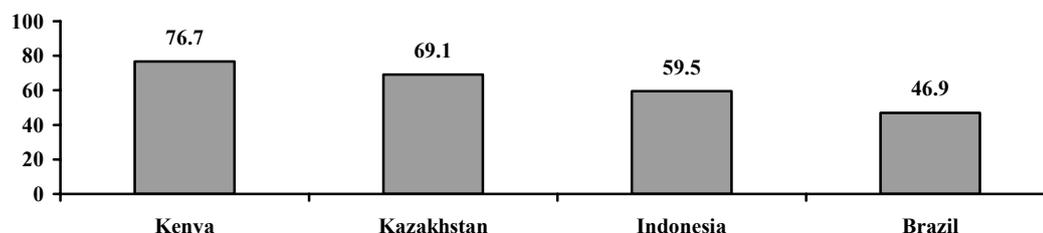


Source: World Bank (2005).

## Female workers

The rate of female participation in the labour market is the highest in Kenya (Figure 5). The World Bank's 2005 *World Development Indicators* show that the majority of female workers in Kenya are in the service sector. The child care needs among working mothers in Kenya are potentially huge. The rate is also relatively high in Kazakhstan. Brazil, with the most resources among the four countries, has a relatively low rate, lower than that of Indonesia.

Figure 5: Female labour force participation rate (%), 2003

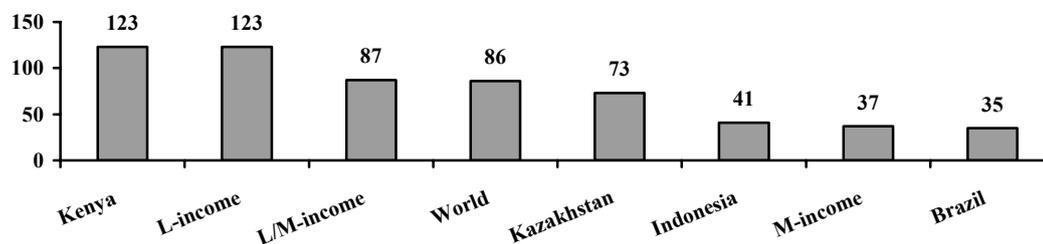


Source: World Bank (2005).

## Child survival

Kenya faces the most acute survival issues for children, with its under-5 mortality rate reaching 123 per thousand population. The rate is relatively high in Kazakhstan, above the average of 37 for middle-income countries. Survival issues are less acute in Indonesia and Brazil (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births), 2003



Note: M-income = average for middle-income countries; L/M-income = average for lower middle-income countries; L-income = average for low-income countries.

Source: World Bank (2005).

## Section 2. Early childhood profiles

### Nomenclature and age group

The field of early childhood goes by various names, and the age group concerned also varies among countries. Table 1 shows how the field of early childhood is referred to in each of the four reviewed countries, and the age group concerned.

**Table 1. Name of the discipline and age group concerned**

COUNTRY	NAME	AGE GROUP
Brazil	Early childhood education	0-6 <sup>2</sup>
Indonesia	Early childhood education	0-6
Kazakhstan	Pre-school education	0-6
Kenya	Early childhood development	0-5

Except in Kenya, where the official name of the field is subject to debate, the names the countries use stress the 'education' aspect of the discipline, although it should be noted that the 'care' aspect is still implied: Brazil,

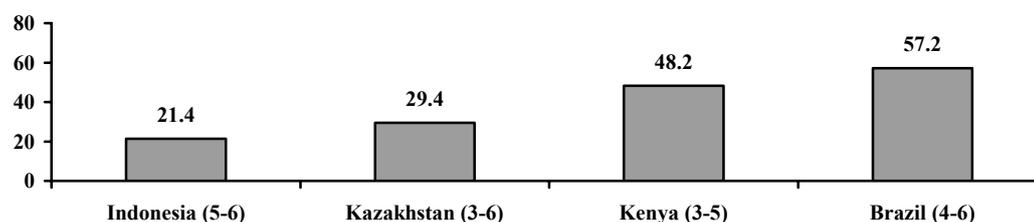
Indonesia and Kazakhstan all understand 'early childhood education' or 'pre-school education' to be comprehensive, encompassing both care and education.<sup>3</sup>

The entry age for primary education is 7 in Indonesia and Kazakhstan, and 6 in Kenya. In Brazil, a bill has been submitted to the Congress to lower the primary school entry age to 6, since 6-year-olds are already admitted to primary school in some Brazilian states. Similarly, 6-year-olds can start primary school in Kazakhstan.

### Participation

Indonesia shows a gross enrolment ratio (GER) lower than those of the other countries (Figure 7). The relatively high rate in Kenya may not be unrelated to the implementation of a World Bank project from 1997 to 2004, during which period the education sector's expenditure on early childhood as a percentage of the total education budget reached its highest point at 0.8% (2001/2). Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that the rate in Kazakhstan (about 30%), though relatively low compared to Kenya and Brazil, is supported primarily by public provision.

**Figure 7: Gross enrolment rates in pre-primary education (with age group concerned), 2002/03**



Source: UNESCO (2005).

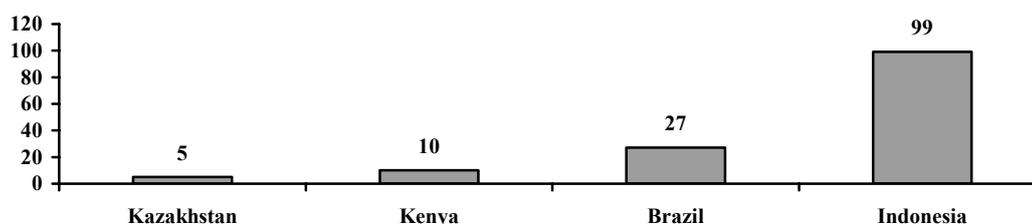
<sup>2</sup> The review team visited Brazil in May 2005. Since then, a law has been passed to lower the primary school entry age from 7 to 6 years. Therefore, early childhood education in Brazil now concerns children in the 0-5 age range, a point to be borne in mind in reading the following paragraph as well.

<sup>3</sup> In Brazil, 'early childhood education' refers to the services delivered in pre-schools and day care centres. In Indonesia, the concept of early childhood education concerns formal kindergarten and non-formal community-based care. In Kazakhstan, the term 'pre-school organizations' encompasses both pre-schools as such and nurseries for younger children.

## Private provision

In Indonesia, where public expenditure on pre-primary education is practically nonexistent, the rate of private enrolment in pre-primary education is nearly 100%. In Kazakhstan, pre-school education has long been part of the public education system, and the rate is only 5%. In Kenya and Brazil, private enrolment is relatively low (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Private enrolment in pre-primary education (% of total), 2002/03**



Source: UNESCO (2005).

## Provision structure and government auspices

Brazil and Kazakhstan each have a streamlined provision structure with mutually exclusive service types designated to cater for specific age groups. In both countries, government auspices are centred in the education sector. In Indonesia, six main services (Table 2) are included systematically in government planning for early childhood but have yet to be streamlined in terms of the age groups served.

**Table 2. Structure of service provision, government auspices**

COUNTRY	CHILD AGE (YEARS) / SERVICE	GOVERNMENT AUSPICES
Brazil	0-3 Day care centre 4-6 Pre-school	Ministry of Education
Indonesia <sup>4</sup>	0-5 Mothers' programme 0-6 Posyandu* 3 m <sup>5</sup> -6 Child care centre 2-6 Play group 4-6 Kindergarten/Islamic KG <i>*Village health centres</i>	National Family Planning Board Ministry of Health Ministries of Social Welfare / National Education Ministries of Social Welfare / National Education Ministries of National Education / Religious Affairs
Kazakhstan	1-3 Nursery* 3-5(6) Kindergarten* 5(6) Pre-primary education* <i>*All called 'pre-school organizations'</i>	Ministry of Education and Science
Kenya	Provision structure is not yet clearly delineated; services of various names cover different age groups in the 0-5 range.	Ministry of Education is responsible for many of the services while the Ministry of Health oversees various community-based programmes.

In Kenya, the provision structure of early childhood services has yet to be developed.<sup>6</sup> Such services there are known by various names, such as nursery school, pre-unit class, kindergarten, day nursery, playgroup, madrassa and home-based care centre. The Kenyan Government is attempting to develop a multisectoral policy framework to coordinate these services.

<sup>4</sup>The Ministry of National Education is considering a revision of the provision structure whereby children ages 0-2 would be catered for in informal settings, 3-4 in non-formal settings managed by the Early Childhood Education Directorate and 5-6 primarily in formal settings managed by the Kindergarten Directorate.

<sup>5</sup> Months.

<sup>6</sup> The Kenyan Government is making an effort to place the provision structure under an umbrella framework for early childhood policy, which would coordinate and harmonize the various services and service providers.

## Educational requirements for the staff

**Table 3. Staff qualifications required**

COUNTRY	SERVICES — EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS
Brazil	Teachers in pre-schools and day care centres – secondary education
Indonesia	Kindergarten – 2 years of college education Other services – upper secondary education
Kazakhstan	Teachers in pre-school organizations – 5 years of pedagogical university or 3 years of pedagogical college
Kenya	Teachers in educational early childhood services – (primary or) secondary education

Regarding the workforce for early childhood services, the four countries have different educational requirements for staff. Table 3 lists these by country.

It should be noted that since Kenya does not yet have an early childhood policy or a specified provision structure, its requirement for staff working in various early childhood service settings is mainly normative; no

mechanisms are as yet in place to ensure that the requirements are met.

## Status of early childhood within education

The status of early childhood education within the education system varies by county (Table 4). For example, among the four countries reviewed, Kazakhstan is the only one in which a year of pre-primary education is compulsory for 5- or 6-year-olds. In Indonesia, although early childhood education is not formally recognized as part of the basic education system, it is nonetheless understood conceptually as a component of basic education: the Education Law recognizes early childhood as a stage preceding formal education. In Kenya, the idea of introducing a free year of pre-school education for 5-year-olds is still under debate.

**Table 4. Status of early childhood within education system**

COUNTRY	STATUS
Brazil	Early childhood education for 0-6 is part of the education system Early childhood education for 0-6 is part of basic education
Indonesia <sup>7</sup>	Early childhood education for 0-6 is not part of the education system Early childhood education for 0-6 is not part of basic education
Kazakhstan	Pre-school education for 1-5(6) is part of the education system Pre-primary education for 5- to 6-year-olds is free and compulsory
Kenya	Early childhood development is part of the education system Early childhood development for 4- to 5-year-olds is considered part of basic education

<sup>7</sup> Article 14 of the Education Law of 2003 states that 'levels of education consist of basic, secondary and higher education', and Article 28(1) that 'early childhood education is organised prior to basic education.' However, Article 28(2) states that early childhood education can be 'provided through formal, non-formal and/or informal education', indicating an inconsistency in the law regarding the status of early childhood within the formal education system.

## Section 3. Key policy developments in the four countries

Access, quality, resources and governance were among the issues examined systematically in all the reviews. The individual countries' review reports describe in detail the situation regarding these issues. This section summarizes for each country the key developments in the early childhood field that have driven major changes in the domestic course of policy.

### **Brazil: Facing the challenge of integrating 0- to 6-year-olds**

Brazil's 1996 National Education Guidelines and Framework Law defined early childhood education as the first stage of education, serving 0- to 6-year-olds. Previously, only pre-school education for 4- to 6-year-olds was recognized within the education system. The law also stipulated that 0- to 3-year-olds should be served in day care centres and 4- to 6-year-olds in pre-schools. This eliminated an overlap: previously, some day care centres had catered for 4- to 6-year-olds as well. Prior to 1996, day care centres were under the responsibility of the social sector of government. With the passing of the 1996 law, the education sector became responsible for both day care centres and pre-schools. Thus, both were recognized as educational institutions.

The three main reasons for designating day care centres as educational institutions under the 1996 law were:

- It was thought that this would be a first step towards upgrading the quality of day care centres.
- The social and education sectors had long supported early childhood services independently of each other. It was believed that integrating day care centres into the education sector would allow for more efficient and integrated service delivery.
- Children from advantaged backgrounds tended to attend pre-schools, and disadvantaged children day care centres; integrating the two types of service was intended to lessen the equity gap between socio-economic groups as regards access to both types of early childhood service.

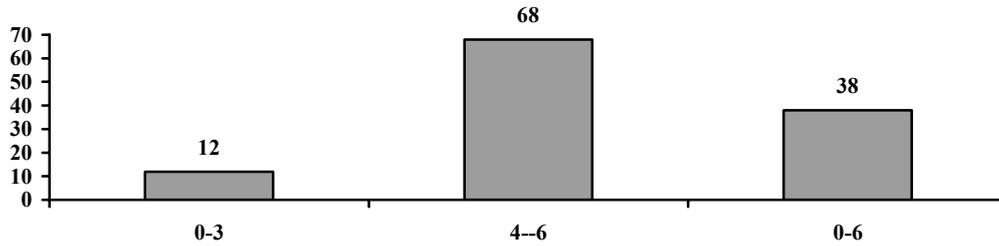
### **Challenges**

The process of actually integrating day care centres into the education system has been slow. Many remain outside the system. As Figure 9 shows, the enrolment rate for ages 0-3 was still a relatively low 12% by 2003, whereas for ages 4-6 it had reached 68%. Further, day care centres face a serious funding problem. The social sector has withdrawn its financing for such centres, but the education sector's latest proposal of mandatory funding for basic education, including early childhood education, covers only pre-schools, not day care centres.<sup>8</sup> With day care unable to find a stable source of government funding, the integration process remains incomplete.

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<sup>8</sup> The proposal was later revised to include day care centres, and now awaits the approval of the Congress.

**Figure 9: Schooling rate of young Brazilian children, by age, 2003**



*Source: IBGE (2004).*

### **Recommendations**

UNESCO recommended the following responses to the challenges described above:

Urgent attention should be paid to reaching 0- to 3-year-olds and improving the status of day care centres, since poor families mostly use such centres to meet their child care needs. If left unresolved, this problem will contribute to the widening disparities and deepening poverty in the country.

Day care centres should be regulated on core quality standards rather than being required to adapt to a single, standard form of operation and management as an educational institution.

Regarding the disposition of the social sector funds formerly channelled to day care centres, the funds should either be used by the education sector to upgrade day care centres or remain in the social sector for family support activities. The latter could include measures such as child allowances, vouchers for services, parental leave and tax benefits, all of which are equally legitimate and efficient ways to support the care and education of young children.

Concerning the government proposal of mandatory funding for basic education, including early childhood education, if available resources cannot cover all age groups, then at least there should be a phased plan for 0- to 3-year-olds so that this age group is not omitted from the government discourse on funding for early childhood education.

### **Indonesia: Expanding access through non-formal services**

With Indonesia's large population (more than 200 million) and a GER in formal early childhood education services estimated by the review team at less than 8%, it was not deemed feasible for the government to expand access to early childhood care and education through formal services. Moreover, public expenditure on early childhood is very low. With the creation of the Early Childhood Education (PADU) Directorate in 2003 in its non-formal subsector, the Ministry of National Education launched efforts to reinforce existing non-formal health and parenting education programmes with an early childhood education component. The strategy was to expand access with minimal government investment.

The PADU Directorate recognized the importance of early stimulation for young children. Stimulation is not costly and is very effective in laying the basic foundation for children's subsequent development. For example, in the community health services called Posyandu, the ministry added parenting education so that when mothers visited these services for immunization and nutrition supplements they could also learn about child rearing. The Posyandu later added psychosocial stimulation sessions for children accompanying their mothers. The strategy is to build on existing services, thus making them more integrated. Government statistics indicate about 37% of 0- to 6-year-olds benefit from these non-formal services, access to which is more equitable than for formal education services.

## Visiting a public day care centre in Rio de Janeiro

By Ms Hye-Jin Park  
UNESCO Paris  
Assistant to the Review Team for Brazil

A dusty and bumpy car ride along a sewage canal takes us to a slum on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, where we are scheduled to visit a public day care centre. The high-rise buildings of the city centre slowly disappear from our view as we approach a neighbourhood filled with shacks and makeshift shelters.

The centre is located in a poor, dilapidated building with narrow corridors and crowded classrooms, in which teachers are greatly outnumbered by the children. But after a brief tour, we are surprised at how well it is organized and managed. A group of enthusiastic children is engaged in colouring, sitting around small desks scattered around a classroom. Although the outdoor space is nothing but bare concrete and dirt, another group is cheerfully playing outside with a recreation monitor. Upstairs, babies sleep peacefully in rows of cribs under the attentive eyes of carers.



Babies napping in a day care centre in Brazil. © HJ Park of UNESCO Paris

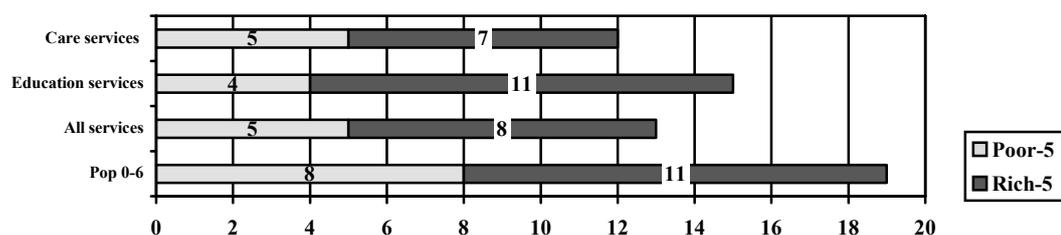
The director is a lively woman, actively involved in promoting her centre to families in the community. Unfortunately, there is a long waiting list of children for whom there is no space, since this is one of only two public day care centres operating in the community. We learn that, in response to poor working parents' desperate need for child care, a number of small for-profit centres have sprung up, whose quality cannot be warranted.

Brazil's policy of integrating day care centres into the education system has been slow to implement, and services have not been expanding fast enough to meet the growing demand. Special attention should be paid to improving the status and quality of day care centres and to reaching 0- to 3-year-olds, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Resolving this issue will help narrow the disparities and poverty gap in the country, and promote social cohesion.

## Challenges

The proliferation of early childhood activities in Indonesia has resulted in duplication of provision structures among the services that the PADU Directorate provides and manages. Services could remain independent but be streamlined into one type, thus avoiding such duplication. Moreover, while the expansion of care services has been relatively equitable, an equity gap in early childhood education persists, as Figure 10 shows. Disadvantaged children's access to these services, especially among 4- to 6-year-olds, remains very limited. Furthermore, the expansion of non-formal services by the PADU Directorate has inadvertently accentuated the bifurcation between formal and non-formal administration for early childhood within the education sector, with the result that little cooperation or collaboration is evident.

**Figure 10: Distribution of population aged 0-6 years, and care and education services in Indonesia's five poorest and five richest provinces, 2001\***



\* Calculated from data presented in source document.

Source: PLS (2003).

## Recommendations

In regard to the remaining challenges, UNESCO made the following key recommendations:

- Efforts to streamline existing health and parenting services and programmes deserve further attention and support.
- Government investment in early childhood should nonetheless be increased, given the persisting disparity in access to education services, especially among older children.
- The formal and non-formal subsectors of early childhood services within the Ministry of National Education should be merged so that the ministry can improve its coordination role. This would result in a more coherent policy development process.<sup>9</sup>

## Kazakhstan: Providing universal pre-primary education

In 1999, the Government of Kazakhstan passed a resolution to universalize one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education for 5- or 6-year-olds, the aim being to mitigate the impact on primary education of the collapse of pre-school education. This compulsory pre-primary education would be delivered either through pre-primary classes set up in schools or through pre-primary groups in kindergartens. Under this policy, the participation rate of 5- and 6-year-olds in pre-primary education rose from 10% in 1999 to 21% in 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Work is under way within the ministry to examine the coordination issue for the two directorates. Members of Parliament have taken notice of the extremely low level of public investment in early childhood, which has also received wide media attention.

## **Mosques and early childhood care and education in Indonesia**

By Mr Gabriel Carron  
Education Consultant  
Member of the Review Team for Indonesia

We have arrived in South Sulawesi province, ready to visit a playgroup in the old, densely populated working-class part of the capital, Makassar. Our driver has stopped the car and invited us to walk. The streets are narrow and dusty, with many little shops. A smell of fish hangs over the area. Soon we are at the side entrance of a mosque. We take our shoes off and enter a small room, perfectly clean and joyfully decorated. A dozen small children are playing on colourful carpets spread over the floor. Boxes of toys and learning tools line the walls. Two young girls take care of the children. They have had little or no specialized training but are highly dedicated. Their salaries are covered by contributions made by the parents, and the mosque provides the playroom free of charge.

We are received by the imam, who explains to us that interest in early child care is increasing among parents in Indonesia. The demand is high and not all children can be admitted. Parents are willing to pay, but the poorest cannot.

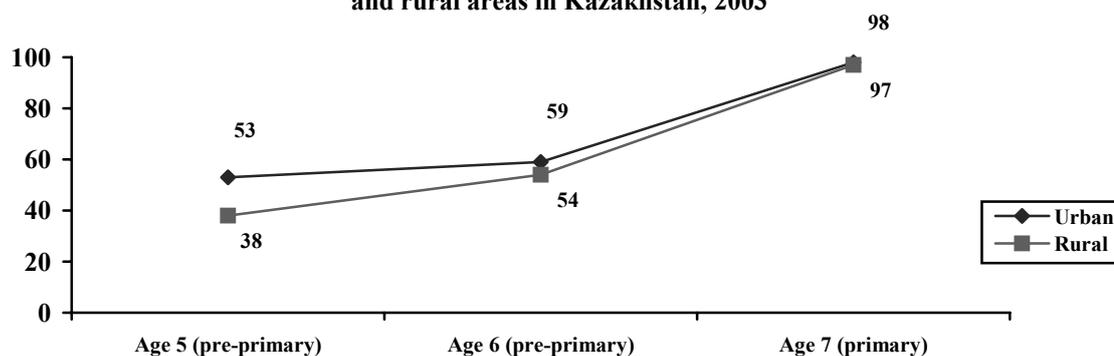
The mobilization of all local resources available, including mosques, is one of the main strategies used by Indonesia to satisfy the growing demand for pre-school services. Though these Islamic kindergartens and playgroups can be found in many areas, access is still limited to the privileged few. To increase access to early childhood care and education, especially for disadvantaged children, the government should support, and assure minimum quality of, such grassroots efforts to expand access.



Learning at an Islamic kindergarten  
in Indonesia © Khoo Kim Choo

The measure reflected government concern at the widening equity gap between disadvantaged and advantaged children. It was a clear commitment by the government to restore pre-school education, which before transition had been provided universally. The new universal policy helped consolidate the view of access to pre-school education as a right that the government has the responsibility to assure for every child. The policy also helped bridge the equity gap at the pre-primary level. For example, the difference in enrolment rates between urban and rural children narrows significantly with age (Figure 11).

**Figure 11:**  
**Enrolment rate for ages 5-7 in pre-primary and primary education in urban and rural areas in Kazakhstan, 2003**

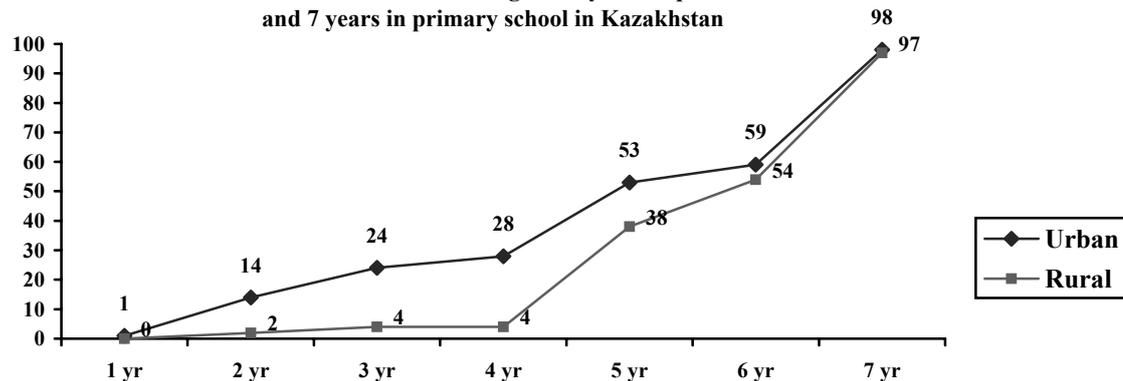


Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2003.

### Challenges

While access to pre-primary education among 5- and 6-year-olds has increased and the enrolment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged has narrowed, significant quality gaps remain. Urban children are far more likely to receive their pre-primary education through all-day pre-primary groups in kindergartens, as part of continuing pre-school education, whereas rural children are more likely to attend crash pre-primary classes in formal schools. The advantaged and disadvantaged continue to show different patterns of progression through the stages of early childhood, as well: the former are more likely to have a smooth transition than the latter, whose learning process starts abruptly at age 5 (Figure 12).

**Figure 12:**  
**Enrolment rate for children aged 1-6 years in pre-school and 7 years in primary school in Kazakhstan**



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2003.

## Visiting an NGO-funded early childhood centre in Kazakhstan

By Ms Judith Harwin  
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Member of the Review Team for Kazakhstan

One of my most memorable experiences as a reviewer was a visit to a rundown centre funded by a non-governmental organization (NGO). The centre had sprung up to meet the needs of a town that had lost its heart when its industrial base collapsed. Substance misuse, prostitution and child neglect had become widespread. The centre had been set up to provide care and support to very vulnerable pre-school children and their families.

The building was crumbling and in need of decoration, and the heating could not be relied upon. But this was not the abiding memory. It was the sheer vitality, sensitivity and dedication of the staff, who saw their role as helping to compensate the children for their adverse situations through drawing, music and close, caring relationships. The centre had become a focus for the community, with children's older siblings, former pupils and some mothers attending regularly.



Playing in a group in an early  
childhood centre in Kazakhstan  
© UNESCO Almaty

The centre highlighted two key policy issues. First, a question that features particularly in transition societies is how to ensure that NGOs providing pioneering programmes can feed into the policy process. There were some examples of this happening in Kazakhstan. An international organization, Step by Step, had worked closely with the government to help modernize the curricula. But small pioneering organizations may find it harder to be noticed and to establish mechanisms to ensure that innovation becomes incorporated into mainstream statutory services. Another significant point was that the staff members at this early childhood centre in Kazakhstan were not trained as pre-school educators but had social work backgrounds. With a combination of both disciplines, this centre could provide a powerful model to address care and education needs for the most disadvantaged children. Planning across disciplines is vital to address children's holistic development needs.

## Recommendations

Regarding these challenges, UNESCO recommended the following:

- Even with universal pre-primary education, the participation rate is higher among advantaged children. A pro-poor approach is needed, therefore, in implementation of the universalization policy, favouring poor children's universal access to pre-primary education.<sup>10</sup>
- As pre-primary classes mainly serve disadvantaged children, while more advantaged children go to longer-term pre-primary groups, emphasis should be put on making the latter services more available to the less privileged. This is especially important since pre-primary groups appear to give children more opportunities for holistic development and, thus, better preparation for formal schooling.
- The government's policy is to increase access through mainstream formal kindergartens, which meet good quality standards but are expensive to expand. The following alternatives should be considered: i) promote mainstream service for those who can afford it, while assisting the disadvantaged with alternative services; ii) aim to promote mainstream service for all by charging means-tested fees, so that, in effect, the advantaged assume costs for the disadvantaged; iii) make mainstream services less expensive by eliminating non-essential components.

## Kenya: Moving from pre-school education to early childhood development

A presidential circular in 1980 mandated that the education sector of government be responsible for the pre-school education of 3- to 5-year-olds. After the 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA), the education sector embraced the care and education of children under 3 within its mandate. A World Bank project on early childhood development (ECD) from 1997 to 2004 further provided an opportunity for the government to expand its vision on early childhood. ECD, emphasizing the principle of holistic development, came to replace the concept of pre-school education, and the government ultimately changed the name of the discipline from 'pre-school education' to 'early childhood development'. Children's survival issues are also pressing in Kenya and need to be addressed within early childhood policy.

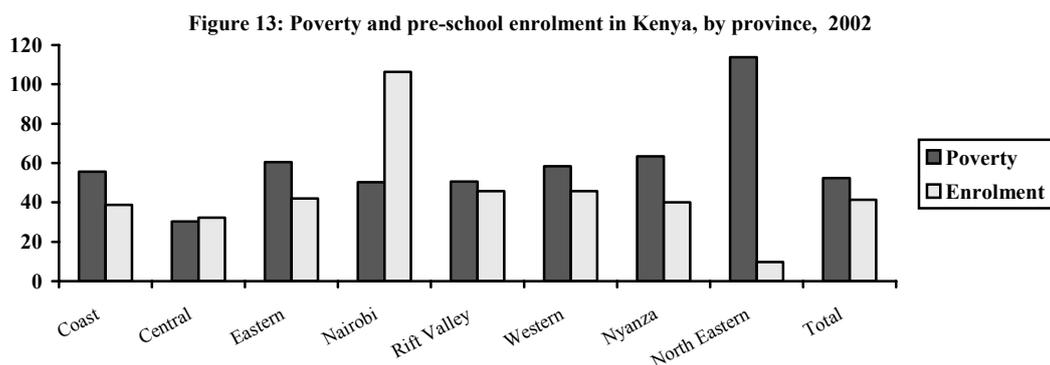
### Challenges

Although the education sector's mandate was expanded to include the earliest years of a child's life, and the term 'early childhood development' replaced 'pre-school education', the actual emphasis remains on the education of children aged 4 and up. Even for this age group, services focus primarily on early learning rather than on children's holistic development. Care services for younger children are not widely available. This lack indicates that the ECD concept has not yet truly taken root in practice.

More importantly, the recent introduction of a policy of free primary education has discouraged poor families from sending their children to fee-charging ECD centres, and many such centres operating in poor areas have closed. As a strategy to mitigate the negative impact of the free primary education policy on early childhood services, especially in view of the large regional gap in access to such services (Figure 13), the government is considering making one year of pre-primary education free for 5-year-olds. Concerned that this latest proposal could have a similar chain effect on ECD centres for younger children, stakeholders stress that an overall policy framework concerning all early childhood age groups urgently needs to be developed.

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<sup>10</sup> The review results were presented to the local education authorities, who made their own recommendations to the government based on these results and strongly emphasized inequity issues.



*Source: MOEST (2005).*

### Recommendations

In regard to the challenges facing the country, UNESCO noted the following:

How can the education sector reconcile its mandate for ECD with its intrinsic interest in the educational aspects of child development? It can continue to be responsible for delivering pre-primary services to the age group over 3, while services for 0- to 3-year-olds can be provided in partnership with other sectors.

Should the education sector prioritize one year of free pre-primary education at the risk of impeding the development of a system for all age groups? The sector can prioritize a certain age group on the condition that it also devise a phased or partnership plan to support other age groups, in collaboration with other sectors and providers.

Efforts are being made to streamline the diverse and fragmented early childhood services so that steps can be taken to develop a common policy framework for early childhood. This is necessary to give a clear picture of how various age groups would be served and by what types of services or programmes. Only with a rationalized provision structure can subsystems for training, pedagogy, evaluation and monitoring, financing and administration be established.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A multisectoral taskforce has been set up to work on an umbrella policy framework; each of the various government sectors would be able to develop its early childhood policy within this integrated framework.

## **Conversations with early childhood development teachers in Kenya**

By Ms Yoshie Kaga  
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What was striking in our conversations with ECD teachers in Kenya was the importance they attach to the role of ECD. ‘When children have gone to ECD centres,’ the teachers said, ‘they simply learn better in primary school.’ Primary school teachers can see that children who come from ECD centres have more developed language skills, are more social and familiar with a school environment, and show less resistance against collective activities in school.



Children at an ECD centre in Kenya.  
© UNESCO Nairobi

One teacher complained in frustration about a general lack of understanding of the significance of ECD: ‘When the media talks about education, it only refers to primary, secondary or higher education, but never ECD. People do not know that ECD is a critical period for creating the foundation for learning.’ Another teacher echoed her sentiments: ‘There are sponsorships for children from slum communities to go to higher education, but there is none for young children to participate in ECD centres. Why? Without ECD, children don’t perform well and may drop out of school. What sort of future will they have if they don’t even complete primary school?’

While participation in ECD is widespread, enrolments rates can differ greatly between rich and poor children. The teachers sincerely wish all children could attend ECD centres, but many poor parents cannot afford to send their children; they want ECD to be free, like primary education. As fees are mostly used to remunerate teaching staff, the teachers suggest that the government should pay their salaries – at least for those working with children in the last year of ECD – so that children of both poor and rich parents can enrol.

## PART 2

### Q&A: IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES

#### **Should pre-primary education be prioritized?**

In Brazil, both pre-schools and day care centres are now recognized as educational institutions. However, policy and investment attention is still skewed toward pre-school. In Kenya, one year of free pre-primary education has been considered as a way to mitigate the impact of free primary education on ECD centres. In Kazakhstan, free and compulsory pre-primary education was introduced as a way to restore the pre-school system. *Are these policies that prioritize pre-primary education justifiable?*

A. Pre-primary education is the natural starting point for government involvement in the early childhood area. It is there that the education sector's policy and investment attention can be mustered most easily. Hence, the importance of pre-primary education for the sector is indisputable. A policy of prioritizing pre-primary education, however, must meet two conditions. First, pre-primary education should promote the **holistic development** of children rather than overemphasizing schooling as such, although pre-primary education can be offered in a school setting if the pedagogy is appropriate and the government has no other option. Second, there must be a **phased or partnership plan** for younger children so that the earlier years are not omitted in government planning.

#### **Should pre-primary education be provided in schools?**

In all four countries under review, some pre-primary education takes place on school premises. *Is this a desirable policy direction?*

A. Increasingly, in countries where government resources are limited, the last year of pre-primary education is part of formal schooling. In some cases, efforts are being directed to lowering the entry age for primary school. Such trends dilute holistic development by placing too much emphasis on preparing children for formal schooling. Nevertheless, these are the most financially viable options for many developing countries, allowing them to provide children, especially disadvantaged ones, with some form of pre-primary education. In such contexts, where it is not affordable to offer pre-primary education as part of early childhood services, strategies should consider ways of improving pedagogy for pre-primary education in the school setting, rather than dismissing this option as an attempt by primary education to encroach upon the early childhood years.

#### **How can the education sector support early childhood?**

In all four review countries, the roles and responsibilities of the education sector for early childhood are increasing, although in varying degrees. Yet, the sector's responsibility as regards care services, which traditionally were not under its jurisdiction, remains unclear and often limited. *How can the education sector accept increasing responsibility for early childhood yet remain impartial in its treatment of the care and education aspects of the discipline?*

A. It is useful to distinguish between responsibility for governance and policy development, and that for provision. As the lead sector for EFA, the education sector should assume overall responsibility for developing and implementing a comprehensive early childhood policy. When it comes to provision of services, however, the education sector should build partnerships with other sectors to share the responsibility. As for governance, in some areas the education sector can assume a more pronounced responsibility; training and the development of pedagogical guidelines and standards are examples.

### **Should the auspices for early childhood be concentrated in one ministry?**

Brazil decided to make both care and education services the responsibility of one ministry, the Ministry of Education. In Kazakhstan, the ministry in charge of education has long been the sole agency responsible for early childhood. *Is this streamlining of administration useful?*

A. An integrated administration for early childhood services facilitates the development and implementation of a coherent early childhood policy. In many developed countries, efforts are being made in this direction. But it requires major political and legislative action, which is not easy to take in many countries. Administrative responsibilities must be coordinated where integration is not possible. In such cases, a lead sector needs to be designated if the partnership is to work efficiently and effectively. This ministry or sector, however, must respect the multisectoral nature of early childhood, catering for care and education needs alike.

### **Does a policy of universalization help eliminate inequity?**

In Kazakhstan, as a strategy to ensure that all children have access to pre-school education, the government introduced a policy of universal, compulsory pre-primary education. In Brazil, a component of the proposed mandatory funding for basic education is early childhood education that has among its aims universal access by young children to pre-schools of good quality. *Is universalization helpful in reducing inequity?*

A. Yes, in the long term, but when provision is universalized for a particular age group while overall enrolment in other age groups is low, such a policy can create inequity. Advantaged children of the target age group can benefit from state investment while poor children of non-target ages receive no government attention. Such inequity between age groups can be minimized by combining a policy of universalization with one of prioritizing the poorer members of the target age groups. For example, universalization may be applied first to the poor and gradually to the rich as well. Phasing would be a way to minimize inadvertent inequity between age groups.

### **What are appropriate pro-poor policies?**

In Kazakhstan, one strategy adopted to ensure that poor children had access to early childhood services was to promote inexpensive alternative services. In Indonesia, community-based services integrating health and education have contributed greatly to increasing the care and education status of many young children, especially those in disadvantaged areas. *Are policies of promoting alternative services, many of which demand contributions from families and communities, the best pro-poor policies?*

A. Countries often promote alternative services for poor children with limited or no access to mainstream services. These alternative services can be cost-effective and pedagogically innovative. In most cases, however, they raise concerns of sustainability and quality, and their provision is often precarious. Moreover, if precarious services are promoted to the poor while public resources are spent on services more accessible to children from favourable backgrounds, an issue of justice arises. When a government has limited resources and cannot cater for everyone's needs, a pro-poor policy must entail redistribution of resources, which inevitably means reducing state support for the more advantaged. A serious pro-poor policy eventually requires affirmative 'discrimination' vis-à-vis the rich.

### **Does a decentralization policy improve equity of access?**

In all four countries, provision of early childhood services is the responsibility of local authorities, and the central government's financial responsibility for such services is being steadily reduced. *How does this affect equity?*

A. Decentralization can make service delivery more specific to families' individual needs, which may vary geographically. Serious gaps among regions can result, however, if access is expanded

without proper attention to the issue of equity. For equitable development to occur at local level, the central government needs to maintain the authority to intervene by financially assisting localities that are not yet capable of taking up the devolved responsibility, thus assuring equitable distribution of resources among different populations.

### **Is there any neglected dimension of quality?**

In all four countries, efforts to improve the quality of early childhood services concentrate on curriculum revision, training of personnel, improvement of physical infrastructure and materials, or a combination of these. Improved links with the home is also often considered a dimension of quality. *Is there any aspect that is neglected but is crucial to addressing the issue of quality in early childhood?*

A. The concern with improved pedagogy and the personnel and physical infrastructure is important to the quality of the provision environment. What is often neglected is the quality of the child's experience of the early childhood period itself. It is of utmost importance that the child's experience of early childhood services should remain continuous and evolve gradually. In particular, the transitions from home to early childhood service and from early childhood service to school should be smooth, subjecting the child to no abrupt change of environment or developmental tasks without proper psychosocial preparation. If an integrated system and policy is important, it is not only because it increases the systemic and resource efficiency, but also because it ensures that the child's transition from one stage of development to another remains continuous. This dimension of quality, however, is often neglected by countries, as was certainly the case in the four review countries.

### **Is there a limit to the pursuit of quality?**

In Kazakhstan, the government places great emphasis on high standards of quality. The state kindergartens, no matter where they are located, are often equipped with saunas, swimming pools, etc. The expense of these state services makes a wide and rapid expansion of access difficult to achieve, yet this remains the central form of early childhood service on which the government concentrates its investment, on the grounds that it represents good quality. *Can a country's effort to improve quality be limitless?*

A. Improving quality requires resources. The high cost of certain services can hinder expansion, especially when it comes to providing services for the poor. Attention to quality comes with a caveat: there must not be too great a trade-off between access and equity. Poor children benefit far more from early childhood services than do their advantaged peers. Hence, a policy of expanding services of an **optimal level** of quality to all, including the poor, is strategically superior to insistence on very high quality standards that only the wealthy can afford. A strategy focusing on quality must seek simultaneously to reach an optimal level of quality and access to all, especially in countries where pronounced inequity exists.

### **Can parenting education be an option for expanding 'access'?**

In Indonesia, parenting education, which has been integrated into various services for children and adults, has been a strategy intended to assure, through parents, children's access to quality care and education at home. *Can parenting education be an access option?*

A. At all age groups, parents are the most important socializing agents for their children. Their impact on child development is neither to be denied nor belittled. In countries where government and families alike cannot afford early childhood services outside the home, parenting education has indeed been promoted. However, it is a strategy to be exercised with caution in countries where the rate of female participation in the labour market is high, so that mothers, who are often the major targets of parenting education programmes, are not available to take care of children at home. Likewise, in countries with a large urban population, where working parents have acute child care needs, parenting education is not a feasible option, no matter how much it is worth promoting pedagogically.

### **Where should a government start to build an early childhood system?**

As a step towards building an early childhood policy and system, Kenya is trying to streamline different services, removing duplication in service forms and types. *Is this a good starting point?*

A. A provision structure, delineating the kinds of services and programmes that need to be in place for different age groups, enables the establishment of other subsystems for administration, financing, training, monitoring and evaluation. Thus, building a provision structure should indeed come first. When services are scarce and participation rates are low, the need for a major proliferation of activities is obvious. However, when early childhood activities are allowed to expand without first being streamlined into a proper provision structure, issues of quality and equity are bound to arise. Therefore, provision activities and government efforts to build an early childhood system must take place in tandem with establishment of a provision structure. The government needs to be clear about which age group to prioritize and the range of services to provide for different age groups.

### **What overall strategies should be adopted?**

The four countries' strategies for tackling their problems are as diverse as the challenges and issues they face. *Are there any generic policy strategies to promote early childhood?*

A. While a 'one-size-fits-all' strategy is inherently difficult to formulate, three options that can be applied to all contexts as useful generic strategies are i) prioritization and phasing, ii) optimizing and iii) partnerships. When resource constraints make it impossible to meet several goals at once, **prioritization and phasing** calls for some to take priority while others are phased in. An **optimizing** strategy recognizes that it is easier and more efficient to build upon existing structures, resources and practices than to opt for something completely new. Building **partnerships** is a way to meet targets that one group of stakeholders alone cannot reach but that are attainable by multiple actors. In partnerships, a focal point is crucial for coordination purposes. Leadership-based partnerships are more useful than free-floating partnerships with no central coordinator.

### **What are key steps in developing an early childhood policy?**

Brazil and Kazakhstan have a relatively streamlined early childhood system, with relatively well-defined ministerial responsibility and service structure. In Indonesia, more needs to be done for policy and systemic development, and Kenya faces considerable remaining tasks as well. *What key decisions can countries like Indonesia and Kenya make to lay a solid policy and systemic foundation for early childhood?*

A. Although no hard and fast rule governs what a country's early childhood policy framework should be, the following points are fundamental:

- The name of the field and the concerned age groups must be specified.
- The provision structure must be clear. It should include the type of services and programmes catering for the care and education needs of each age group involved, and the workforce should be delineated by service type.
- The policy framework should describe the responsibilities of government authorities for the various services and age groups. It also should outline how the subsystems of training, administration, financing, evaluation and monitoring are to be managed and operated.

With regards to the policy profile, the goals, objectives, targets, actions and strategies must be logically developed. In essence, a strategy of prioritizing, phasing, optimizing and forging partnerships is essential to the development and implementation of a feasible and realistic plan.

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