**Study on Effectiveness of ECDs in between Educate the Future Project Working ECDs and Non-Project Working ECDs in Rolpa District Nepal**

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Save the Children

# Executive Summary

Early years are critical in life to lay foundation for learning and development. If neglected it has lasting native effect on development. Emphasizing the importance of early childhood education in child development as well as for improving preparedness in primary school SC has been implementing EtF project in Rolpa with aim to improve children’s accessibility and quality of learning in ECD centers. The project is currently running in 15 VDCs in Rolpa with various activities in the selected 118 ECD centers. The study was conducted with an objective of comparing effectiveness of ECDs among EtF program working areas and non-program areas and also identify the factors influencing the success/failure of ECDs.

A cross-sectional mixed method study was conducted in EtF program and non-program areas with 330 samples. Standard IDELA test survey was done with children for assessing the quantitative information while KIIs, FGDs and District Consultative Meeting was done for collecting qualitative information. Pre-testing of tools and orientation to enumerators was given before data collection. Written consent was taken with respondents before study and coding was done for ensuring confidentiality of respondents. Quantitative data was entered in Excel and t-test was applied for testing hypothesis while qualitative data was analyzed manually.

Nearly equal number of boys (49.2%) and girls (50.8%) were included in the study. Majority of the children were of four years of age with mean age 4.39 years. It was found that all the five dimensions (Executive functions, motor, literacy, numeracy and Socio-Emotional) of IDELA score was found to be higher in children from program areas which was also found to be statistically significant. While comparing these dimension by sex, only the motor function of boys was found to be significantly higher than girls in overall respondents. Comparing these dimensions among program and non-program areas by sex, it was found that there is no any statistical difference between boys and girls in any dimensions in program and non-program areas while motor and literacy skills was found to be higher in boys than girls in non-program areas.

Long travel distance, low awareness of parents, lack of child friendly T/L and playing materials and irregularities of ECDs facilitators were the major reasons for children not going to ECDs. Community/parental involvements, provision/availability of adequate infrastructure, teaching/learning materials, proactive role of DEO and resource centers, training and behavior of ECDs facilitators and home ECDs distance were found to be major factors for making ECDs Model or least performing ECDs. Lack of child friendly infrastructure like safe playground, poor sitting arrangement and WASH facilities, low involvement of parents/communities, lack of resources, high enrollments of children in boarding schools and frequent changes of trained ECDs facilitators were the major challenges of ongoing ECDs program.

Empowerment of parents/communities with parental education session, conduction of mobile meeting each month, timely training to ECDs facilitators, development of "Khaja Talakia", distribution of tiffin box, regular health check-up, livelihood support, establishment of learning corners in ECDs, and systematic recording reporting system were the activities that were admired by the respondents in the study. Organization of two days orientation to parents, allocating 20% of budget to ECDs center among total budget allocated for children, formation and reactivation of ECDs management committees and development of "Khaja Talika" were some of the activities that were replicated by DEO as learning from EtF project. Moreover, the respondents in study also recommend ELM trainings to ECDs facilitators, establishment of learning corner, and distribution of tiffin box and organization of mobile meetings to be included in regular ECDs program by District Education Office.

The respondents in the study told that for making program more effective and sustainable ECDs management Committees should continuous monitors and supervise of ECDs, organization of awareness campaign for parents and involve in fund raising activities. Likewise, DEO should also take initiation for developing infrastructure, timely supply of T/L materials for ECDs, provides training, timely recruitment of ECDs facilitators, frequent supervision and monitoring of ECDs, and roll out mid-day meal program for all ECDs. DDC/VDCs can help by allocating maximum fund to ECDs. Schools should also need to consider ECDs as the part of school and the role of principle is important in making program effective and sustainable. Others community existing structure like community forestry groups, mothers groups mobilization also helps in making program sustainable and effective. It was also found that ELM helps in overall development of children.

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# Chapter-I: Introduction

## Background

Early years are critical in life to lay foundation for learning and development. If neglected it has lasting native effect on development. Save the Children supports to create range of opportunity for children to have stronger foundation. Early child hood program covers range of opportunity from parenting care giving, home base intervention, Community based and school based Pre- primary classes.

Save the Children strongly supports both Community based approaches engaging families and communities at the same time realizing the fact that government has been promoting school based programs. Accordingly, SC will focus on: Building capacity of family and community in the understanding and benefits of ECD as well as ensuring that minimum standards are met in both home based and schools based ECD Centers. As age for ECD covers 0-8 years ECD program should be closely linked with primary school to support the transition process in grade one.

Save the Children ensures that ECD program reaches the most marginalized and vulnerable groups as a priority action and link with nearest primary school. As ECD supports to children’s learning and reduce drop out and prepares for schools as a strategy to address all the indicated issues as above, schools should have one ECD centers to support children’s development as well as prepare them for schools based on the provision of School Sector Development Program.

Emphasizing the importance of early childhood education in child development as well as for improving preparedness in primary school SC has been implementing EtF project in Rolpa with aim to improve children’s accessibility and quality of learning in ECD centers. The project is currently running in 15 VDCs in Rolpa with various activities in the selected 118 ECD centers. Though the project was implemented with same objectives and activities in Rolpa, the progress and challenges have been different both on terms of community engagement, ownership at the higher level and access and quality aspect.

Educate the Future works at four levels:

1. Increasing access to ECD of children from poor and marginalized community and children with disability
2. Empowering the concerned stakeholders including parents
3. Creating safe and protective environment in ECD centers through upgrading of physical facilities
4. Advocating for favorable ECD policy and strong monitoring and accountability mechanism of government

Strategic Area 1: Increasing the access of the children from marginalized communities

* The program works for increasing the access to ECD facilities to the ECD age (3-4 year olds) children, reducing the repetition in grade one, and ensuring the retention in primary level of the children especially from girls, and socially excluded/marginalized communities and poor families. For this, educating parents and supporting for livelihood to the poorest families, establishing the new ECD classrooms in schools and communities partnering with District Education Office, and providing the uniform and tiffin box support for day meal to grade one and ECD children are some of the intervention done in the projects.

Strategic Area 2: Improving the Quality of ECD

* ECD program works to ensure that all ECD facilities in project areas meet the quality benchmark defined by the GoN and Save the Children so that all the children will receive the quality services in ECD and schools. Training to ECD facilitators, providing maintenance support and learning materials, integrating nutrition and de-worming services, organizing meeting and interaction with facilitator, parents and stakeholders are the interventions under this strategy.

Strategic Area 3: Building Capacity of stakeholders

* Strengthening the capacity of the community (formation/activation of ECD management committee and the parents and the local structure such as Resource Center/Resource Person) is the core intervention under this strategic area. The capability of Resource Person (RP) is enhanced for monitoring and supervision. Additionally, increasing participation of parents especially mothers and the community members, providing parenting education and cross learning exposure visits are the activities designed to build the capacity of stakeholders.

Strategic Area 4: Creating safe and protective environment to Children

* ECD program also support to create favorable policy environment for safe, supportive, protective and quality learning environment in ECD and basic education. This strategic area will be achieved by providing the basic Child rights and protection training/orientation to concerned stakeholders and developing code of conduct of child protection.

## Statement of Problem

In addition to the 57 million children out of school globally, there are a further 250 million children of primary school age cannot read or write whether they attend school or not. Poorest children are four times likely to be out of school than their wealthier peers. More than 30 million girls are out of school today. In the United States, more than 60% of low-income families have no children's books in their homes. Research also shows that after grade 4, special catch-up reading classes are only successful with 13% of the struggling students.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In Nepal, the total number of community-based and school-based ECD/PPCs is 35,991 (35,121 in the last school year) of which 5,543 (5,087 in the last school year) pre-primary classes are running in institutional schools and the rest 30,448 (30,034 in the last school year) are running in community schools and as community-based ECDs. The average Enrolment Rate with regard to 4 years’ population and enrolment in ECD/PPCs is 81.0% (77.7% in the last school year) with 80.9% for girls and 81.2% for boys. The proportion of students in Grade One with ECD/PPC experiences is 62.4% (59.6% in the last school year) with 62.3% for girls and 62.5% for boys. The girls’ enrolment constitutes 50.8% (50.8% in the last school year) at primary level, 50.7% (50.7% in the last school year) at lower secondary level, and 50.8% (50.8 in the last school year) at basic level. Likewise, girls comprise 50.9% (51.0% in the last school year) at secondary level, 50.7% (50.7% in the last school year) at higher secondary level and 50.8% (50.9% in the last school year) at comprehensive secondary (grades: 9-12) level. The share of Dalit enrolment is 19.7% at primary, 14.4% at lower secondary, 11.0% at secondary and 6.6% at higher secondary level, which are almost similar to the previous school year. The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at primary, lower secondary, basic, secondary, higher secondary and secondary levels are 96.6% (96.2% in the last school year), 77.7% (74.6% in the last school year), 89.4% (87.6% in the last school year), 57.9% (56.1% in the last school year), 16.6% (13.1% in the last school year) and 37.7% (34.7% in the last school year) respectively. The promotion and repetition rates in Grade One are 81.5% (78.4% in the last school year) and 13.9% (15.2% in the last school year).[[2]](#footnote-2)

## Rationale of Study:

Early years are critical in life to lay foundation for learning and development. If neglected it has lasting native effect on development. Save the Children supports to create range of opportunity for children to have stronger foundation for their development and learning. Emphasizing the importance of early childhood education in child development as well as for improving preparedness in primary school, SC has been implementing EtF project in Rolpa with aim to improve children’s accessibility to and quality of learning in ECD centers.

This study helps to explore the best practices that EtF project has been practicing that can be replicated by District Education Office by identifying the factors that are associated with best performing ECDs and factors that hinder ECD performance. This study also tries to measure the impact of EtF project in Rolpa District Nepal. The study also helps to explore the gaps of EtF project that can be improved. Moreover, the study also recommends the best possible measures/recommendations for making ECDs more effective and sustainable.

The study was lead by District Education Office (DEO) with technical and financial support from Save the Children. The study will also generate the evidence for District Education Office, Rolpa and other relevant stakeholders to replicate the activities of EtF project carried out Save the Children. Moreover, it will also serve as a reference and advocacy document for SC for replicating such activities in other parts making ECDs more effective and sustainable.

## Objective

### Overall Objective:

* To compare the effectiveness of ECDs among EtF program working areas and non-program areas

### Specific Objective:

* To identify the factors influencing the success/failure of ECDs
* To compare the IDELA score among children within EtF working areas and non-program areas
* To identify the activities of EtF project that are being practiced/replicated by Government of Nepal (District Education Office)

## Research Questions

1. What are the factors influencing the success/failure of ECDs in Rolpa District Nepal?best practices and weakness of EtF project and ongoing government project for improving ECDs quality?
2. What are the best practices and weakness of EtF project for improving ECDs quality?
3. How ECDs can will be more effective pedagogically?

## Research Hypothesis

* The total IDELA score of children from EtF working area is higher than those of children non-working area.
* The executive function of children from EtF working areas is higher than those of children from non-working areas
* The literacy skills of children from EtF working areas is higher than those of children from non-working areas
* The numeracy skills of children from EtF working areas is higher than those of children from non-working areas
* The motor functions of children from EtF working areas is higher than those of children from non-working areas
* The socio-emotional function of children from EtF working areas is higher than those of children from non-working areas

# Chapter-II: Methodology

## Study Design:

The study was a mixed method cross-sectional study. Quantitative data was collected assessing students using IDELA tools while qualitative data was collected interviewing parents, ECDs facilitators, ECDs management Committee members, Resource Persons and DEO Representatives.

## Study Area:

The study was conducted in SC EtF working VDCs and non-working VDCs of Rolpa District Nepal.

## Study Population:

The primarily study population for the study were ECDs Children from project working and non-working areas. Likewise, ECD MC or SMC, ECDs facilitators, Representative of DEO, HT/Teachers, Resource person and parents were also included in the study for assessing qualitative information.

## Sampling Technique:

Simple Random sampling was used for selecting the children for assessing the IDELA test from both project working area and non-project working area. Judgmental sampling was used for selecting best and poor performing ECDs of program working and non-working areas based on IDELA score, ECD Facilitators, Resource person and parents.

## Sample Size:

Total Study population (ECD Children) = 7929

Average IDELA Score (p) = 37.3%

q= 1-p= 62.7%

Confidence Interval= 95%

Desirable Error= 5%

Total number of sample for study was 330 i.e. 165 from each group (Interventional group and comparison group)

For collecting qualitative information, 2 best and 2 poor performing ECDs from both project working and non-working area was selected using IDELA test score. Likewise, to explore the community prospective on ECDs, its strength and weakness; 1 Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) with parents will be taken from each best performing ECDs and poor performing ECDs. Also, 2 Key Informant Interviews (KII) with Resource Person one from our program working area and other from non-working area; 4 KII with ECDs facilitators (one best performer and one poor performer of our working ECDs and also one best performer and one least performer of Government ECDs).

## Methods/Technique of Data Collection:

IDELA test survey was used for assessing the quantitative information. On the basis of IDELA test score, one best performing and one least performing ECD from each group was selected for collecting qualitative information. Focus Group Discussion, Key informant Interview (KII) were conducted for collection of qualitative information.

## Tools of Data Collection:

Standard IDELA tools was used for assessing quantitative information. For qualitative information, FGD guideline, KII guideline, was used for collecting qualitative information.

## Reliability and Validity of Tools and Technique

Standard IDELA tools was used for assessing quantitative data. National ECD minimum standard guideline for ECD, extensive literature review was taken into consideration for developing/designing qualitative guideline. Enumerators were oriented before data collection and pretesting was done before conducting study. Necessary modification was made after pretesting.

## Ethical Consideration:

Written consent was taken from each respondents before data collection. In case of children, consent were taken from school committees and accent was taken from children. The objectives of stud was shared with each respondents prior to study. Coding was done for maintaining confidentiality throughout the entire study period.

## Data Collection, Verification, Entry and Analysis

The data were collected by using trained enumerators. Data was verified daily before entry. Entry was made using MS Excel and Chi-square test and t-test will be applied for testing hypothesis in case of quantitative data.

Qualitative data: Qualitative information was divided into different themes and analysis was made as per the theme. Manual analysis was done for qualitative information.

## Limitation of study:

* The study was entirely focused on ECD age children
* Limited numbers of sample and only conducted in Rolpa so difficult to generalize to national context
* Limited time period and financial support
* Subjective bias may occur as data were collected by project social mobilizers.

# Chapter-III: Findings

## Age and Sex Distribution of Children

It was found that nearly equal numbers of boys and girls were included in the study. However, the percentage of girls were higher in program areas while percentage of boys is slight higher in non-program areas. It was also found that nearly half (49.5%) of the children in the study were of age group 4 years followed by children of age group five which constitute of 39.8%. None of the children in program areas was found age three and six years while 15.1% and 6% of the children were of age group three and six respectively in non-program areas. This reflect that majority of children were of age group three-five. The mean age of children was found to be 4.4 years where the mean age of children from program areas were found to be higher (4.47 years) compared to age of children from non-program areas (4.31 years)

**Table 1: Age and Sex Distribution of Children**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristics** | **Program Areas****N=163 (%)** | **Non-Program Areas N=166(%)** | **Total** **N (%)** |
| **Sex of Children** |  |  |  |
| Boys | 78 (47.9) | 84 (50.6%) | 162 (49.2) |
| Girls | 85 (52.1) | 82 (49.4) | 167 (50.8) |
| **Age of Children in Years** |  |  |  |
| 3 | 0 (0) | 25 (15.1%) | 25 (7.6%) |
| 4 | 87 (53.4) | 76 (45.8) | 163 (49.5) |
| 5 | 76 (46.6) | 55 (33.1) | 131 (39.8) |
| 6 | 0 (0) | 10 (6) | 1 (0.3) |
| Mean Age | 4.47 | 4.31 | 4.39 |

## Test of Hypothesis

All the five dimensions (Executive, Motor, Literacy, Numeracy and Socio-Emotional) of IDELA scores of program areas children were found to be significantly higher than the scores of children from non-program areas. This reflect that Educated the Future project really make remarkable changes in the lives of children.

**Table 2: t-test of different dimensions of IDELA score of program and non-program areas children**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Dimensions of IDELA** | **Program areas** **Mean (SD)** | **Non Program areas****Mean (SD)** | **p-value** |
| Executive Function | 0.75 (0.21) | 0.68 (0.19) | 0.008\* |
| Motor Function | 0.78 (0.22) | 0.63 (0.26) | 0.0001\* |
| Literacy Skills | 0.67 (0.19) | 0.42 (0.20) | 0.0001\* |
| Numeracy Skills | 0.77 (0.16) | 0.48 (0.18) | 0.0001\* |
| Socio-Emotional Skills | 0.78 (0.15) | 0.52 (0.19) | 0.0001\* |
| Total IDELA Score | 0.75 (0.15) | 0.51 (0.17) | 0.0001\* |

\* Significant at 95% CI assuming equal mean variance

While comparing different dimension by sex in general for both program and non-program areas, it was found that only the motor function of boys is found to be higher than girls as shown in Table 3. The non-difference between boys and girls might be due to the combined result from both program and non-program areas as there is no significant difference between boys and girls in any dimensions of IDELA in program areas.

**Table 3: t-test of different dimensions of IDELA score by sex in general (both program and non-program areas)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Dimensions of IDELA** | **Boys****Mean (SD)** | **Girls****Mean (SD)** | **p-value** |
| Executive Function | 0.72 (0.18) | 0.70 (0.21) | 0.37 |
| Motor Function | 0.74 (0.22) | 0.66 (0.20) | 0.0034\* |
| Literacy Skills | 0.56 (0.21) | 0.53 (0.25) | 0.25 |
| Numeracy Skills | 0.62 (0.21) | 0.64 (0.24) | 0.93 |
| Socio-Emotional Skills | 0.65 (0.20) | 0.63 (0.23) | 0.34 |
| Total IDELA Score | 0.65 (0.18) | 0.61 (0.22) | 0.11 |

\* Significant at 95% CI assuming equal mean variance

While comparing the scores by sex between program and non-program areas, there found no significant difference between boys and girls in any dimensions of IEDLA scores in program areas while it was found that there is significant difference in motor function, literacy skills and overall IDELA score between boys and girls in non-program district.

**Table 4: t-test of dimensions of IDELA Score by sex in Program and Non-Program Areas**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Dimensions of IDELA** | **Program Areas** | **p-value** | **Non-Program Areas** | **p-value** |
| **Boys****Mean** **(SD)** | **Girls****Mean (SD)** | **Boys****Mean (SD)** | **Girls****Mean (SD)** |
| Executive Function | 0.75 (0.21) | 0.75 (0.20) | 0.96 | 0.70 (0.15) | 0.66 (0.22) | 0.16 |
| Motor Function | 0.80 (0.20) | 0.76 (0.22) | 0.22 | 0.68 (0.23) | 0.57 (0.27) | 0.004\* |
| Literacy Skills | 0.66 (0.19) | 0.67 (0.20) | 0.58 | 0.47 (0.18) | 0.38 (0.20) | 0.004\* |
| Numeracy Skills | 0.76 (0.18) | 0.78 (0.15) | 0.37 | 0.50 (0.16) | 0.46 (0.20) | 0.14 |
| Socio-Emotional Skills | 0.78 (0.14) | 0.77 (0.16) | 0.9 | 0.54 (0.18) | 0.48 (0.19) | 0.052 |
| Total IDELA Score | 0.75 (0.15) | 0.75 (0.15) | 0.97 | 0.55 (0.14) | 0.47 (0.19) | 0.005\* |

\* Significant at 95% CI assuming equal mean variance

**Status of ECDs in District**

There are 352 ECDs in a district out of which 20 are community based ECDS. The major partner organizations excluding district governmental line agencies were Save the Children, HUREC and Seto-guras. Mostly 3-5 years children go to ECDs in Rolpa district. Of four ECDs included in study, only one was community based ECDs. Only about 50% of the children have ECD experienced as per the respondents in district consultative meeting though more than 80% of should have ECD experience as per the policy. EtF project covers 118 ECDs.

## Reasons for not going to ECDs

The respondents in study told that there is almost 100% enrollment in ECDs coverage areas however, the regularity of children was the major problem. Long travel time (on average more than hours walking distance), secondly low awareness of parents on importance of ECDs and involvement in domestic work, irregularity and behavior of ECDs facilitators, lack of child friendly T/L materials and playing materials were the major barriers for children going to ECDs. Respondents in the study told that no any specific caste/ethnic group children were left behind but it's the distance and concern of parents.

"It's not about the caste but it is all because of the distance of ECDs from home and parental awareness" Respondents in KII

## Trainings on ECDs

All the ECDs facilitators told that they got some sort of training on ECDs. However, only the facilitators from EtF program VDCs told that they training from EtF project. Basic and refresher training on ECDs, training on ELM, parental education[[3]](#footnote-3) were some of the trainings they received from EtF project. They also told that teaching was really helpful for them as they develop activities plan for facilitating ECDs, teach children using playing materials and learn that teaching/learning can be possible by singing and dancing.

"The training really changes my thought and the way of T/L. I never think that teaching/learning can be possible by playing, singing and dancing with children. It's really change my teaching practice" ECD facilitators from program Area

## Perception/Understanding on Early Childhood Development Center

Parents in the study perceived ECDs as the place that makes children ready for grade-I. It is the place where children can play and learn. They also believe that ECDs is really useful for children as they were habitual for school, learn new things, follow healthy habits like washing hand before meal and after toilet and children were also seen to be curious to learn new things. The way of teaching in ECDs really attract children and they are happy to go to ECDS. Teachers in the study told that children having ECDs experience have higher attendance than students without ECDs experience. Likewise, the facilitators in the study told that children regularly attending ECDs actively participate in reading, playing, singing and easily adopt with new things and friends compared to children who were not regular in ECDs

"My children asked me to take me to the ECD center even in holiday. They really enjoy at ECDs center and he can also read some basic things after going to ECD. ECDs is really helpful for overall development of children"- Parents in FGDs

All the parents of program areas told that they had visited the ECDs center while only three parents from non-program areas told that they visited the ECDs center. The study reflects that parents in program VDCs were found to be aware of different activities of ECDs and involve themselves in developing plans for ECDs. This might be due to parental education in program areas and continuous monitoring and supervision from social mobilizers.

## Benefits of ECDs center to Children

All the respondents from both program and non-program areas told that ECDs is really beneficial for children and believed that there is huge difference between children going to ECDs and children not going to ECDs. The major benefits of ECDs center to children were

* All of the respondents in the study believed that ECDs center really helpful for preparing the children developing the habits of going schools and develop reading habits of children
* ECDs experienced children were actively participate in curricular and co-curricular activities and were less irregular in classes as per teachers in study
* The literacy and numeracy skills of children regularly coming to ECDs is better than children not coming to ECDs as per ECD facilitators. ECDs are found really helpful in enhancing literacy and numeracy skills of children
* Children were found to be practicing good personal hygiene compared to students not coming to ECD centers.
* Respondents in the study told that ECD experience makes children to adjust with new things and friends
* ECDs helps in changing the behavior of children. Children in ECDs involve themselves in cleaning ECDs center surrounding, putting slippers outside the classrooms,
* All the respondents told that with ECD experience the children feels no hesitation to sing, dance and even talk with outsiders. "My son usually hide when he needs to talk to unknown person before going to ECDs. Nowadays, he feels happy to sing dance anywhere. He does not feel any hesitation. This all is because of ECDs experience." Parents in FGDs

## Factors Associated with Success/Failure of ECDs

The respondents in the study identifies major six factors that directly influence the success or failure of any ECDs. The study interviewed with two high performing ECDs and two least performing ECDs (one high and low performing from both program and non-program ECDs). It was found that parental /community involvement play the major role in the success of ECDs. Most of the respondents from least performing ECDs told that parents don't take any initiatives for ECDs nor they do visit ECDs. They also told that this might be because of lack of parental awareness.

"We don't have parental education session in our areas because there is no any organization supporting us for such activities that result in low involvement of parents in ECDs"- KII with ECDs management committee members of non-program ECDs

Secondary, lack of infrastructure, teaching/learning materials, playing materials, facilities of safe drinking water, toilets, poor sitting arrangement, low resources allocated for ECDs were major things that hinder the success of ECDs as per the respondents in least performing ECDs. The respondents from high performing ECDs also told that availability of child friendly building, WASH facilities, proper sitting arrangement, provision of tiffin-box (program areas), and sufficient child friendly teaching/learning materials were the major factors associated with success of ECDs.

"Construction of ECDs building, support of teaching learning materials and monthly parental education session from HUREC enhances in the regularity of children and involvement of parents"- ECD facilitators form Program area ECDs

Thirdly, the respondents in the study identifies that roles of District Education Office and resource centers also play major roles in success/failure of ECDs. DEO and Resource Center ignorance towards ECDs, lack of supervision and financial support from DEO were found to be contributing factors for any success or failure of program.

Fourth, training and behavior of ECDs facilitators also play vital roles in success or failure of ECDs. ECDs facilitators from high performing ECDs told that the training on ECDs was very useful for her for facilitating the ECDs and dealing with children. Training really changes my way of behaving with children. Parents from least performing ECDs told that the irregularity of ECDs facilitators and lack of supervision from ECD management committees hinder the success of ECDs.

"I got basic and refresher training on ECDs organized by DEO and HURAC that change my way of facilitating children. I developed activities plan, involve parents in making teaching materials and also used singing dancing and playing as the means of teaching/learning."- ECDs facilitators from Program area ECDs

It was also found that the travel time from home to ECDs and location of ECDs play major role in influencing the success or failure of ECDs. The respondents in the study told that children from long travel distance were the ones who were not either enroll in ECDs or not regularly attend ECDs rather any specific caste/ethnicity.

## Challenges on ongoing ECDs Program

The respondents in the study told that the major challenges for ongoing ECDs program were lack of child friendly infrastructure like safe playground, WASH facilities at ECDs centers, lack of playing materials, continuous activation and follow up for community members, lack of resources allocated for ECDs centers, high enrollment in boarding schools and frequent changes in trained ECDs facilitators and lack of availability of trained facilitators.

## Best Activities of Educate the Future Project

Respondents from the program areas, Resource persons and other district stakeholders including DEO, DDC told that formation and activation of ECDs management committee and empower parents and committees via parental education and involve them in developing teaching/learning materials was the best activities of EtF project. Secondly, they also told that organization of mobile meetings[[4]](#footnote-4) where ECDs facilitators from different ECDs can meet and share their knowledge which provide an opportunity of cross learning was another good activities of EtF project. Different training to Facilitators and support in construction of ECDs building, teaching/learning materials, and playing materials were also the activities that were admire by different stakeholders in study. Moreover, the respondent also appreciate the activities like development of Khaja Talaka and distribution of tiffin box in ECDs centers which promote home based tiffin and discourage the trend of using junk foods as tiffin; regular health check-up and systematic recording reporting system and livelihood support to most economically disadvantage family.

## Activities that DEO is replicating as learning from Educate the Future Project

It was also found from the study that parents and community can play influential roles in success or failure of ECDs. Moreover, availability of resources and trained facilitators can play major role in making ECDs program more effective. In this regard, as the part of learning the District Education Office found implementing some activities as a part of learning from EtF project. District consultative meeting and KII with DEO representative listed following activities that are being replicated from EtF project

* Organization of two days orientation program for parents as a part of parental education
* District Development Committees made a decision and circulate to all VDCs for allocating 20% of budget to ECDs centers among total budget allocated for children in VDC. This helps to increase the resources in the ECDs
* Formation and Reactivation of ECDS management committees for making community ownership for ECDs centers
* Encouraged ECDs facilitators for developing "Khaja Talika" and encourage for home-based tiffin discouraging junk food tiffin.

Moreover, Incorporation of Early Literacy and Math (ELM) in ECDs with adequate training to facilitators, establishment of learning corners in ECDs, focus on development of teaching learning materials using locally available resources, distribution of tiffin boxes and the organization of mobile meeting for cross learning were some other activities that should be replicated by District Education Office as per respondents (Facilitators, Teachers, Resource Person, and ECD management Committees) in study.

## Recommendation for Educate the Future Project

Following were the major recommendations made by different stakeholders for Educate the Future Project

* During District Consultative Meeting, District Development Committee representative recommends the EtF project members to inform the needs and requirement of ECDs in different areas via DEO. DDC also recommends for assisting them in current guidelines and policies on ECDs so that they can support for further improvement of ECDs program in district
* Resource Person in the study recommends to focus on early literacy and math (ELM) during mobile meetings of ECDs facilitators
* RP also requested to develop teaching learning materials focusing on Curriculum
* RP and teachers also requested to involve child clubs members in developing teaching leaning materials for ECDs rather than only focusing child clubs against child marriage and child labor
* Teachers in study also requested economic support for poor students
* Almost all respondents from program areas recommends to support basic requirements like T/L materials, commodities for sitting arrangements, tiffin box to all the ECDs in the district.
* Resource person also suggest to incorporate children from birth rather than only 3-5 years children for holistic development of children

## Ways for Making Program Achievement Effective and Sustainable

The respondents in the study have identified the roles of different stakeholders for making program achievement more effective and sustainable. The respondents believed that community, parents and ECDs management committees followed by District Education Office, Schools, DDC/VDC and others existing VDCs level structures respectively were the major actors for sustaining the program outcomes. The respondents also highlight the actions for each actors as

**Community/Parents and ECD Management Committee**

* ECD management committees should regularly supervise and monitor ECDs, organize parental awareness program regarding importance of ECDs, Should coordinate with other stakeholders working in the field of ECDs
* Parents should involve themselves in developing teaching/learning materials for ECDs centers, engaged in funds raising activities like organization of "Deusi Program" for supporting ECDs and also providing support for building safe playground and WASH facilities
* Community should strongly advocate for budget for ECDs in their annual VDCs plan

**District Education Office**

* DEO should take initiation of developing infrastructure (ECDs Buildings) in coordination with DDC
* DEO should play proactive role in timely supply of teaching learning materials in ECDs and schools
* DEO should provide basic and refresher training to ECDs facilitators and ECD management committees
* DEO should timely recruit facilitators in temporary contract basis in ECDs without facilitators
* DEO should make frequent/regular monitoring and supervision of ECDs centers
* DEO should roll out Mid-day meal program for all ECDs and schools
* DEO should also utilize the local expertise available in district for providing trainings and developing T/L materials

**District Development Committee/Village Development Committee**

* DDC should help in building ECDs building in coordination with DEO
* DDC should encourage VDCs to allocate maximum funds for ECDs
* VDCs should allocate maximum budget to support ECDs in each VDC.

**Schools**

I had been for monitoring in one of the renowned school of district. The principle in the school took every class of school. I was interested to monitor ECDs and requested principle for visiting ECDs classroom. The principle was not so interested to take me to ECDs classroom. But we went to ECDs classroom and found that children were sitting on dark room and there was no any sitting materials like p-form, kuson, carpets etc. then I requested him to manage the sitting arrangement of children as early as possible. After 10-15 days he managed the sitting arrangement. This reflect that principle can play a major role in making ECDs more effective and functional. **Respondents in District Consultative Meetings**

* Schools should also needs to consider ECDs as the part of schools
* The principle in the schools should take initiatives for development of ECDs in schools collaborating with different stakeholders and DEO.

**Others community Based Structures**

* Other community based structures like community forestry committees can support for ECDs like providing timbers for fencing the playgrounds
* Child clubs should trained on developing the teaching/learning materials using locally available resources
* Conducting awareness session among different mother groups about importance of ECDs in children development

# Chapter-IV: Conclusion and Recommendations

## Conclusion

There are 352 ECDs in Rolpa district of which 20 are community based. The major partner organizations excluding district governmental line agencies were Save the Children, HUREC and Seto-guras. HURAC Rolpa has been implementing educate the future project in 118 ECDs of Rolpa district in support of Save the Children. Mostly 3-5 years of children go the ECDs in Rolpa district and only about 50% of the children have ECDs experienced. The major reasons for not going to ECDs were long travel distance, low awareness of parents, lack of child friendly T/L and playing materials and irregularity of ECDs facilitators in some cases.

IDELA test have been conducted with 163 children each from program areas ECDs and non-program areas ECDs. It was found that all the motor, literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional score of children from program area were found to have higher scores compared with children from non-program area which is statistically significant.

All the facilitators told that they got some sort of training on ECDs. Facilitators from program areas told that they got basic and refresher training on ECDs, training on ELM and parental education which was really helpful for them in carrying out ECDs effectively. All the respondents told that ECDs are really beneficial and helpful for children in developing their learning habits and changing their behaviors. Parents in the community perceived that ECDs centers is the place where children can play and learn and prepares themselves for grade-I. All the respondents in the study agreed that there is a huge difference among children going to ECDs and children not going to ECDs. It was found that children with ECDs experienced were regular in schools, participate actively in curricular and co-curricular activities, have better learning achievement, easily adopting with new friends in schools, and does not hesitate to talk dance and sing with outsiders compared to children not going to ECDs.

Community/parental involvements, provision/availability of adequate infrastructure, teaching/learning materials, proactive role of DEO and resource centers, training and behavior of ECDs facilitators and home ECDs distance were found to be major factors for making ECDs Model or least performing ECDs. Lack of child friendly infrastructure like safe playground, poor sitting arrangement and WASH facilities, low involvement of parents/communities, lack of resources, high enrollments of children in boarding schools and frequent changes of trained ECDs facilitators were the major challenges of ongoing ECDs program.

Empowerment of parents/communities with parental education session, conduction of mobile meeting each month, timely training to ECDs facilitators, development of "Khaja Talakia", distribution of tiffin box, regular health check-up, livelihood support, establishment of learning corners in ECDs, and systematic recording reporting system were the activities that were admired by the respondents in the study. Organization of two days orientation to parents, allocating 20% of budget to ECDs center among total budget allocated for children, formation and reactivation of ECDs management committees and development of "Khaja Talika" were some of the activities that were replicated by DEO as learning from EtF project. Moreover, the respondents in study also recommend ELM trainings to ECDs facilitators, establishment of learning corner, distribution of tiffin box and organization of mobile meetings to be included in regular ECDs program by District Education Office.

The respondents in the study told that for making program more effective and sustainable ECDs management Committees should continuous monitors and supervise of ECDs, organization of awareness campaign for parents and involve in fund raising activities. Likewise, DEO should also take initiation for developing infrastructure, timely supply of T/L materials for ECDs, provides training, timely recruitment of ECDs facilitators, frequent supervision and monitoring of ECDs, and roll out mid-day meal program for all ECDs. DDC/VDCs can help by allocating maximum fund to ECDs. Schools should also need to consider ECDs as the part of school and the role of principle is important in making program effective and sustainable. Others community existing structure like community forestry groups, mothers groups mobilization also helps in making program sustainable and effective.

## Recommendations

* The overall IDELA score, motor, literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional scores of children from program areas found to be significantly higher than children from non-program. This reflect that the ELM is found to be useful for improvement in literacy and numeracy skills of children. The study recommends to adopt ELM as the part of ECDs program and organize capacity building programs for ECDs facilitators on ELM that helps in improving children overall development.
* Community and parents involvement found to be influential in success of any ECDs so community sensitization program on importance of ECDs should be promoted. Focus should be made on formation/reactivation of ECDs management committees and empowering them for making ECDs program more effective.
* Coordinate and timely communicate DDC/VDCs about the needs and requirement of ECDs in different areas of district and also orient them on existing ECDs policies and guidelines for maximum support from DDC/VDCs
* Build a linkage between child clubs and ECDs and involve child clubs members in developing T/L materials for children in ECDs and other ECDs activities.
* Provision of mobile meeting for ECDs facilitators should be promoted where they can learn and update from each other.
* There should be regular monitoring and supervision of ECDs by DEO and resource centers
* Child clubs should be linked with others existing community structures for successful implementation of ECDs
* Adoption and utilization of local expertise for organization of training and development of T/L materials on ECDs.
* The prime reasons for children not going to ECDs was due to long travel distance so the ECDs should be constructed in a place where most of the children do have access to ECDs.
* Focus should be also given for making ECDs protective for children like ECDs should have safe playground, child friendly WASH facilities, etc.
1. Save the Children; Beyond School Walls; A Boost for Readers [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Government of Nepal; Department of Education; Flash Report, 2015-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Parental Education is the structured session designed for parents and care givers to empower them and provide them skills to improve child care and child rearing practices. It is comprehensive packages which includes sessions on child development stages, health, nutrition, early stimulations and child development, value of ECDs and roles of parents. SC have revised the module and included Early Literacy and Math skills at home. These sessions are conducted at least once in a month by trained facilitators. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It is a learning sharing forum for ECDs facilitators where learning materials will be developed. It occurs once a month at each ECDs on round basis where they observe the ECDs activities of that ECDs. This helps them to learn from each other and replicate good practices in each ECDs. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)