3.1 GUIDING QUESTIONS AND TIPS

REFINING, SELECTING AND PRIORITIZING ECE STRATEGIES AND DEVELOPING CORRESPONDING ACTIVITIES

Guiding Questions for Refining ECE Strategies

For each of the ECE strategies that you are developing, reflect on and answer the guiding questions below to refine the strategy to ensure that it is robust.

The strategies should respond to and address the underlying challenges/root causes of the ECE subsectors, as well as provide the direction for achieving the overarching policy priorities/goals. The Annex below provides examples of strategies and their linkages with the root causes and policy goals.

1. **Is the strategy broad, yet measurable?**

    That is, can the strategy be measured by a tangible change (for example a product that will be developed, the number of people to benefit, a change in budget allocation for ECE, etc.)? For example, the strategy "advocate for increased budget to support curriculum implementation" can be measured through identifying the increase of the budget allocation to the ECE subsector.

2. **Does the strategy adequately address one or more underlying challenges of the ECE subsector (i.e., the root cause(s) of an ECE problem/issue)[1] and link to the overarching goal/policy priority?**

    This refers back to the logical framework approach to clarify the causal links between the underlying challenge and the proposed action. It is recommended to refer back to the _Build to Last_ conceptual framework (in Section 1) and the _Pre-primary Subsector Analysis Tool_ (in Section 2) as a starting point – for uncovering the underlying ECE challenges in a holistic manner (looking at the core functions of the subsector and the enabling environment)[2]. This will help ensure that the ECE strategies respond comprehensively to key issues around access to ECE, equity (including issues of gender and inclusion) and quality of ECE.

3. **Can the strategy be combined or consolidated with another strategy for maximum impact?**

    That is, if two strategies appear to address the same underlying challenge, it may be possible to combine the two. For example, perhaps a strategy to support curriculum implementation (ex. provide in-service training to teachers on curriculum implementation) may be combined with a strategy to support workforce development (ex. strengthen pre- and in-service training programmes).

4. **Is the strategy clear enough to provide direction (or pathway) for achieving policy priorities/goals?**

    Is it forward looking and does it provide sufficient detail for achieving policy priorities/goals? For example, the strategy "train teachers" is too broad and lacks the specificity for the desired outcome. Instead, the strategy "strengthen in-service training programmes with a focus on play-based pedagogy" is clear, forward-looking and provides direction on what aspect of teacher training should be improved.

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1   This refers to the underlying challenges that the strategy aims to address. To identify these underlying challenges of the ECE subsector, please refer to tool "2.2 Pre-primary Subsector Analysis Tool".

2   The core functions of the ECE subsector are: (1) planning and budgeting; (2) curriculum implementation; (3) workforce development; (4) family and community engagement; and (5) quality assurance. The enabling environment of the ECE subsector consists of 4 factors: (1) ministerial leadership; (2) policies and legislation; (3) financing; and (4) public demand.

5. **Does the strategy leverage relevant work/initiatives that are ongoing or in the pipeline?**

   For example, if there are ongoing efforts to develop and pilot-test improved teacher training materials, the strategy in response to an underperforming ECE workforce may be to build on and scale up this existing initiative. Furthermore, consider linking ECE strategies with efforts in health, nutrition and economic development to yield increased outcomes for children.

6. **Where relevant, is the strategy comprehensive enough to capture the targeted population and geographical locations of interest based on equity considerations?**

   For example, the strategy "ensure training and certification of all kindergarten teachers of the country" covers the target population (i.e., all kindergarten teachers) and the geographical areas (i.e., across the country, irrespective of where they are located. Another example is "provide different modalities for age-appropriate, over-age and out of school pre-school learners in rural and other disadvantaged areas", which reaches and differentiates the targeted populations (i.e., over-age and out of school pre-school learners) and covers the geographical locations based on equity (i.e., rural and disadvantaged areas).

7. **Is the strategy coherent and consistent with the existing sector and national development strategies?**

Annex to Guiding Questions for Refining ECE Strategies

The following are examples of strategies to address underlying challenges/root causes and achieve policy priorities/goals.

Problem Low rates of school readiness	Policy Goal Increased rates of school readiness
Root Causes: 1. 70% of teachers are untrained 2. 20% of teachers are poorly trained 3. Teaching learning materials are not aligned with the curriculum 4. Not enough training programs and limited capacity of existing trainers	**Proposed Strategies:** 1. Provide targeted training to untrained ECE teachers, focusing on practical skills 2. Review and strengthen existing pre- and in-service teacher training programs in collaboration with relevant training institutions 3. Provide developmentally appropriate teaching and learning materials that align with and support the implementation of the curriculum 4. Increase the number of teacher training programs (in higher education or technical schools) and strengthen capacity of existing training institutions

Problem Various ECE curricula being implemented by diverse service providers across the country	Policy Goal Provide equitable and relevant quality ECE that provides knowledge, skills and values to meet the different needs of young learners
Root Causes: 1. Existing ECE curriculum is not mandatory and does not follow a curriculum framework 2. Teachers have limited knowledge of lesson plan development to implement the curriculum 3. Lack of teacher resource guide for curriculum implementation	**Proposed Strategies:** 1. Develop a comprehensive ECE curriculum framework (with vision, goals, standards, principles, etc.) 2. Issue policy directives (or other relevant regulatory documents) to mandate a national curriculum framework 3. Strengthen capacity of teachers to implement the ECE curriculum, including providing teachers with the necessary teaching and learning materials (such as teacher guides, etc.) 4. Ensure regular monitoring of the compliance of implementation of the curriculum across service providers

Tips, Guiding Questions and Template for Selecting and Prioritizing ECE Strategies

Once you have reviewed and refined the ECE strategies, it is important to select and prioritize those that will be included in the ESP because it is unlikely that the ESP can address all of the problems.

Consider the tips and guiding questions in this section to support the selection and prioritization of ECE strategies to include in the ESP. A template (see below) is also available to help you document your reflections on the guiding questions and tips.

Tips for selecting and prioritizing ECE strategies

Tip 1: Start with reviewing Section 2.3 of MOOC Module 4[3] (on selecting policy priorities) for guidance and considerations for situating the ECE strategies within the context of the broader education sector's vision and challenges. This first step helps an **initial prioritization, navigating trade-offs and aligning ECE strategies with broader education sector priorities**. After this first step, you may refer to the guiding questions below for further reflection on and prioritization of ECE strategies.

Tip 2: Bear in mind that the prioritization process should take into consideration the **logic of scope, impact and capacity/availability of resources.**[4]

- Ideally, you would prioritize a strategy that produces high impact, with broad reach and scope.

- Think about **what can be realistically achieved with the available/projected capacity and resources for maximum reach and impact.** For example, does the strategy maximize the available resources to attain high impact towards the aspired target/vision?

- Sometimes, even if a strategy requires a high level of effort/capacity and resources that may not be currently available, the strategy should still be considered a priority if it critically important and has a high impact. For example, a strategy to "revision the pre-primary curriculum to ensure that it is developmentally appropriate, play-based and child-centered" will likely require high levels of capacity and resources; despite limited capacity/resources, it should be prioritized as it has an impact on the quality and effectiveness of ECE.

- Additional needs in capacity and resources to implement strategies may be further assessed to determine whether it should be addressed in the Education Sector Plan and Operational Plan (i.e., included as a distinct strategy around capacity building or resource mobilization, with the associated activities).

- Two examples of "high priority" strategies are provided in the template below, with details on the analysis of the scope, impact and capacity/availability of resources factors and rationale.

Tip 3: In the event there are multiple strategies of equal importance, consider capacity availability (i.e. human and financial resources needed and available) and the urgency of the strategy.

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3   This is the course reader for Module 4 of the massive open online course (MOOC) on *Mainstreaming early childhood education into education sector planning.* Module 4 is on policies, programs, costing and financing for pre-primary education.

4   Please see the section "Guiding questions for selecting and prioritizing ECE strategies" for key considerations of the scope, impact and capacity/availability of resources.

Tip 4: Examine your strategies within and **across the core functions of the ECE subsector**[5] (or other types of categorization that you choose to follow) as this may reveal strategies that have a broader reach/scope which may be further prioritized.

Tip 5: Determine if the strategy should be: (a) prioritized; (b) dropped; (c) given a lower priority level (for example, to be documented in a "parking lot" of strategies to be implemented only if funding is still available after higher priority level strategies are implemented).

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5   Please refer to Tool 1.2 Build to Last conceptual framework (in Section 1) for further details on the five core functions of the ECE subsector: (1) planning and budgeting; (2) curriculum implementation; (3) workforce development; (4) family and community engagement; (5) quality assurance).

Guiding questions for selecting and prioritizing ECE strategies

For each of the ECE strategies that you are developing, reflect on and answer the guiding questions below to determine whether to select and prioritize the strategy to include in the ESP.

1. Scope of the Strategy and Achieving the ESP Policy Priorities and Goals

- Does the strategy address one or more underlying challenges of the ECE subsector? Which ones?

- Does the strategy cover one or more core functions of the ECE subsector (i.e., planning, curriculum, workforce, etc.) or one or more thematic areas (ex. access, quality, equity, governance, etc.)? Which ones?

- Does the strategy respond to equity considerations, where relevant? For example, if the policy priority is around access to ECE, does the strategy reach the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and families (ex. children with disabilities, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, children living in rural areas, girls, refugees, internally displaced persons, etc.)?

- Does the strategy and/or combination of strategies lead to achieving the policy goals/priorities in the ESP?

  - Which strategies are most needed to achieve other strategies? Why?

  - Which strategies can be combined to maximize efforts and achieve the policy goals/priorities?

  - What are the risks of not achieving this strategy?

2. Impact of the Strategy

- What is the anticipated impact level of this strategy (high or low impact)? Is it national or sub-national? Or multiple levels?

  - Will the strategy likely lead to **high impact** with **limited resources**?

  - Will the strategy likely lead to **low impact** with **more resources**?

- What is the level of effort/capacity needed to achieve the strategy?

  - Does achievement of the strategy require **high effort** for **high impact**? Does this require high or low level of resources/costs?

  - Does achievement of the strategy require **low effort** for **high impact**? Does this require high or low level of resources/costs?

  - Does achievement of the strategy require **high effort** for **low impact**? Does this require high or low level of resources/costs?

  - Does the strategy maximize available resources to achieve high impact? Can the strategy achieve the best optimal results in the context of available capacity and resources?

- Does achievement of the strategy require partnerships for collective efforts for high impact? Does this strategy require wider scale implementation?

3. Capacity Availability

- Are there relevant and available resources, mechanisms and capacity across levels of the system (national, regional, local) to implement the strategy? These include:

  - human resources,

  - financial resources [Note: these are likely more detailed in the costed multi-year action plan, which should be a key element for the prioritization process, based on expected financial resources],

  - accountability mechanisms, communication and coordination to achieve the strategies.

- Is any cost-benefit information available for prioritizing the strategy?

These guiding questions around currently existing capacity and resources to implement the strategies are to **help you decide whether to select and prioritize a strategy to be included in the Education Sector Plan.**

If it is decided to prioritize a strategy that requires additional capacity and resources, this will need to be further analyzed as part of an implementation capacity assessment, which may lead to the development of additional strategies and activities in the area of capacity building and resource mobilization.

Please see tool "4.2 Checklist: ECE Implementation Feasibility and Capacity Appraisal for the ESP" for a guide to a rapid implementation capacity assessment.

Template: Prioritization of ECE Subsector Strategies

This template will help you document and articulate your reflections around the tips and guiding questions for selecting and prioritizing ECE strategies to be included in the Education Sector Plan. This template is a way for you and the ECE Technical Working Group to systematically consider each of the ECE strategies so that you may select and prioritize the most promising, realistic ones.

The first line of the table provides an example of the type of analysis and reflections that can be included in this template, to further guide your decision on the prioritization of ECE strategies. Note that the columns "capacity/resources available to achieve strategy" and "capacity/resources needed to achieve strategy" will be helpful for your reflections on the ECE subsector's and the broader education system's capacity to implement the strategies and activities of the Education Sector Plan (please refer to tool "4.2 Checklist: ECE Implementation Feasibility and Capacity Appraisal for the ESP").

1. Populate this template, reflecting back on the tips and guiding questions for selecting and prioritizing strategies. The first two lines of the table provide examples.

Core Function Area	Strategy	Underlying Challenge(s) that the Strategy Addresses	Relative Importance of the Strategy (anticipated impact, scope, connection with other strategy or existing work, urgency)	Capacity/ Resources Available to Achieve Strategy	Capacity/ Resources Needed to Achieve Strategy	Notes on whether to prioritize, drop or give low priority
Curriculum	Strengthen teacher training programmes around curriculum implementation	ECE teachers are not trained on the ECE curriculum, ECE teachers implement primary curriculum in the preschools	Addresses pre- and in-service training (i.e., aspiring and existing teachers) Connects and aligns with existing initiative to reform education sector teacher development Is high impact and critical as it improves the quality and effectiveness of ECE programmes which are necessary to achieve broader policy priorities (improved school readiness)	Existing ECE teacher training course Some regional education inspectors and mangers trained on existing ECE teacher training course NGO partners (national and regional levels) implementing in-service ECE facilitator courses Coordination with broader teacher training reform is available	High level of resources needed for high impact including but not limited to: Technical expertise is needed to revise an outdated ECE teacher training course for pre-service teachers and train pre-service training institutions on the revised course Technical expertise is needed to revise quality assurance mechanisms (I.e. inspectorate monitoring forms/ protocol) according to the revised pre-service teacher training curricula to monitor its implementation Coordination and curricula refinement efforts needed harmonize the NGO in-service teacher training approaches with the revised pre-service training according to national curricula standards Funding to re-train regional education inspectors and managers to cascade an adapted version of the revised pre-service teacher training to current public providers	Consider as high priority due to impact and importance to elevate quality and effectiveness of ECE

Core Function Area	Strategy	Underlying Challenge(s) that the Strategy Addresses	Relative Importance of the Strategy (anticipated impact, scope, connection with other strategy or existing work, urgency)	Capacity/ Resources Available to Achieve Strategy	Capacity/ Resources Needed to Achieve Strategy	Notes on whether to prioritize, drop or give low priority
Planning and Budgeting	Advocate for increased funding allocations to improve access to quality, inclusive ECD services– including ECE- for refugee, displaced and migrant children	**Refugee, displaced and migrant children have no access or limited access to government ECE and ECD services** due to barriers such as official residency requirements for enrollment, limited availability of spaces within existing ECE classrooms, lack of transportation to ECE centers, or lack of ECE services in host communities, settlements or camps where refugees, displaced populations and migrants reside. Limited understanding **from policy makers and demand from parents/caregivers regarding the importance of prioritizing investment in early life experiences**, such as responsive caregiving and playful early learning, which form the foundation for lifelong success and resilience, family and societal cohesion, and sustainable and peaceful societies **Limited coordination** between national emergency, disaster and refugee mechanisms; sectors responsible for service provision such as the education sector across systems' levels and national ECE technical working groups, and international humanitarian and refugee coordination and financing mechanisms for coordinated ECE provision and monitoring **Limited understanding – across levels of the education system - of alternative, low-cost ECE service provision models** which can be scaled to provide quality, inclusive ECE services in remote areas, including in crisis and refugee contexts	**Connects and aligns national commitments for improved ECD access to achieve ECE outcomes for vulnerable children**. **Urgency: Urgent (Action needed within 6 months)** - Increased access to quality ECE for refugee, displaced and migrant children protects young children from the worst effects of adversity and promotes physical, emotional and cognitive development. **Anticipated Impact: Potential for high impact** as there is a significant likelihood that these children will remain displaced for on average 10 years. Lack of developmental preparedness for these children will have long-term effects on national educational achievement and future economic prosperity.	**Evidence such as estimates of ECE per-pupil expenditures allocated for citizens can be used to advocate for allocations for refugee, displaced and migrant populations**. With the understanding that additional resources may be required to address effects of trauma, displacement, poverty, malnutrition, etc. **Local education government and nongovernmental partner champions** with first-hand knowledge of local ECE services available and unavailable across service provider types; demands for services and which services; and the estimated number of young displaced, refugee and migrant children requiring services in their geographic area to advocate for the needs of these groups to inform national priorities ECE service providers (faith-based, community-based) which have delivered alternative low-cost quality, inclusive ECE models in specific geographic areas – could provide evidence of practices that could inform low-cost models to take to scale	Demographic data (numbers, locations, ages, genders, disability status, languages) for refugee, displaced and migrant populations Technical and financial support to ensure cost simulations – including ECE -that account for preparedness and response strategies and activities Technical and financial support to review and advise national actors on ECE plans and budgets' development to ensure they are crisis-sensitive are required to prioritize the continuance early learning opportunities for these populations Integrated delivery platforms, existing national and sector-specific working groups, and partnerships across the relevant vulnerable children actors, supported with targeted resourcing to create an enabling environment for nurturing care	Consider as high priority to promote equity in ECE and ECD outcomes for all children

Core Function Area	Strategy	Underlying Challenge(s) that the Strategy Addresses	Relative Importance of the Strategy (anticipated impact, scope, connection with other strategy or existing work, urgency)	Capacity/ Resources Available to Achieve Strategy	Capacity/ Resources Needed to Achieve Strategy	Notes on whether to prioritize, drop or give low priority

2.   You and the ECE TWG can also come up with a contextualized color code to 'score' strategies or discuss and come to consensus – based on the information – which ones are the priority and should (a) be included in the Education Sector Plan; (b) dropped; or (c) given a lower priority level (for example, to be documented in a "parking lot" of strategies to be implemented only if funding is still available after higher priority level strategies are implemented).

Guiding Questions for Developing Activities

Once the ECE strategies are agreed to, you will need to identify activities to operationalize the ECE strategies. **Activities** are specific actions or individual tasks that are sequential and related towards achieving a strategy. They are time-bound and measurable. The activities will be detailed in the operational plan (with information on timing, roles, responsibilities, and costs).[6]

EXAMPLE

For the strategy "Expand preschool provision and improve physical conditions of preschools", the activities can include:

- Map supply and demand for ECE to determine access / expansion related construction needs

- Identify prioritized areas for construction and rehabilitation needs (based on equity considerations)

- Develop plans for construction of new preschools or rehabilitation of existing preschools in prioritized areas

- Identify alternative, flexible ECE models to reach the most marginalized, including children with disabilities and children from ethnic and linguistic minorities.

- For the strategy "Provide preschool children with an enhanced curriculum based on Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS)", the activities can include:

- Carry out a review of the existing curriculum in terms of its comprehensiveness and developmentally appropriateness, and based on the ELDS

Revise the existing curriculum to integrate and align with the ELDS

- Develop a communication strategy for disseminating the updated curriculum and for informing families and communities on the updated curriculum

- Develop a strategy for training new and existing teachers on the implementation of the updated curriculum

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In this tool, we provide guiding questions for you to consider when you are developing activities that will support the implementation of a strategy. Note that developing activities and consolidating them in the operational plan is an iterative process, which enables prioritization among activities and involves trade-offs. For example, if financing gaps are identified when costing the ESP (see the tool "3.3 Tips, Checklist, and Examples: ECE Simulation Models"), it will be necessary to decide whether to revise, postpone or cancel lower-priority activities.

Guiding questions on the content of activities

1. What are the specific activities needed to achieve the strategy? Why and how?

2. Are the activities clear and specific enough? (e.g., an activity worded as "research potential local partners" is vague; "research potential local partners and shortlist 3-5 organizations" is more specific)

3. Are there activities that build on existing work and initiatives (within the sector and subsector, as well as linking with efforts/initiatives in other sectors, such as health, nutrition, social protection, etc.)?

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6   For more information on the operational plan, please refer to the tool "4.1 Recommendations: Ensuring Strong ECE components in the Operational Plan" (in Section 4). For more information on developing indicators and setting targets for activities, please refer to the tool "3.2 Criteria for Defining ECE Indicators and Target Setting Considerations."

4. Are there proven "solutions" that are feasible and practical (e.g., who can you benchmark with and learn from)?

5. To what extent are the activities feasible?

Guiding questions on the sequencing and prioritization of activities

1. What is the anticipated duration of each activity?

2. Which activities need to be completed before others can start?

3. Which activities may be achieved after other activities are completed?

4. Which activities are the most important or key to meeting the strategy?

EXAMPLE

This is an example of possible activities to implement ECE strategies and achieving the policy objective.

Policy objective: To include children with disabilities in all kindergartens

ECE strategies that have been identified: (i) target young children with disabilities who can be accommodated in mainstream kindergartens; (ii) strengthen kindergarten teachers' capacities to implement inclusive education pedagogical practices to include and support children with disabilities; (iii) supply relevant and appropriate teaching and learning materials and assistive devices for children with disabilities.

How can you implement the strategies and achieve the policy objective?

Activities could include:

(i)   Identify the demographic of children with disabilities: Are young children screened for disabilities? If yes, by whom, where is the information consolidated/reported, and who has access to this information (i.e. number of children, where they are located)? Are children with disabilities accessing pre-primary education? Why or why not? What are the barriers? Which strategic partners are needed to implement the strategies?

(ii)   Based on results of the above analysis, establish baseline data and design an inclusive education pilot programme for kindergarten (identify pilot areas)

(iii)   Train teachers (in pilot areas) on screening young children with disabilities

(iv)   Train teachers (in pilot areas) on communicating with families and caregivers to minimize access barriers (particularly access barriers related with attitudes and beliefs) in order for children with disabilities in to regularly access pre-primary education; pedagogical practices for supporting with pre-primary aged children with disabilities through specialized pedagogical techniques and the creation of individual education plans, creation and use of teaching and learning materials' for supporting children with disabilities, and training on how to support children and their families use assistive devices in the classroom and home in partnership with health professionals' guidance and support, etc.

(v)   Develop and supply diagnostic tools, teaching and learning materials to support children with disabilities, and assistive devices to kindergartens in pilot areas based on needs

(vi)   Support exchange visits between preschools and primary schools to support young children with disabilities' transition to primary school

(vii)   Evaluate the inclusive education pilot for young children initiative

(viii) Based on the results of the evaluation, revise/harmonize of policy and regulatory documents (including directives, standards, etc.)

(ix)   Scale up inclusive education for young children (expand activities to other areas)