

Nurture

Issue No. XI April, 2011

Pakistan's Pioneer Publication on Early Childhood Development



Early Childhood Development



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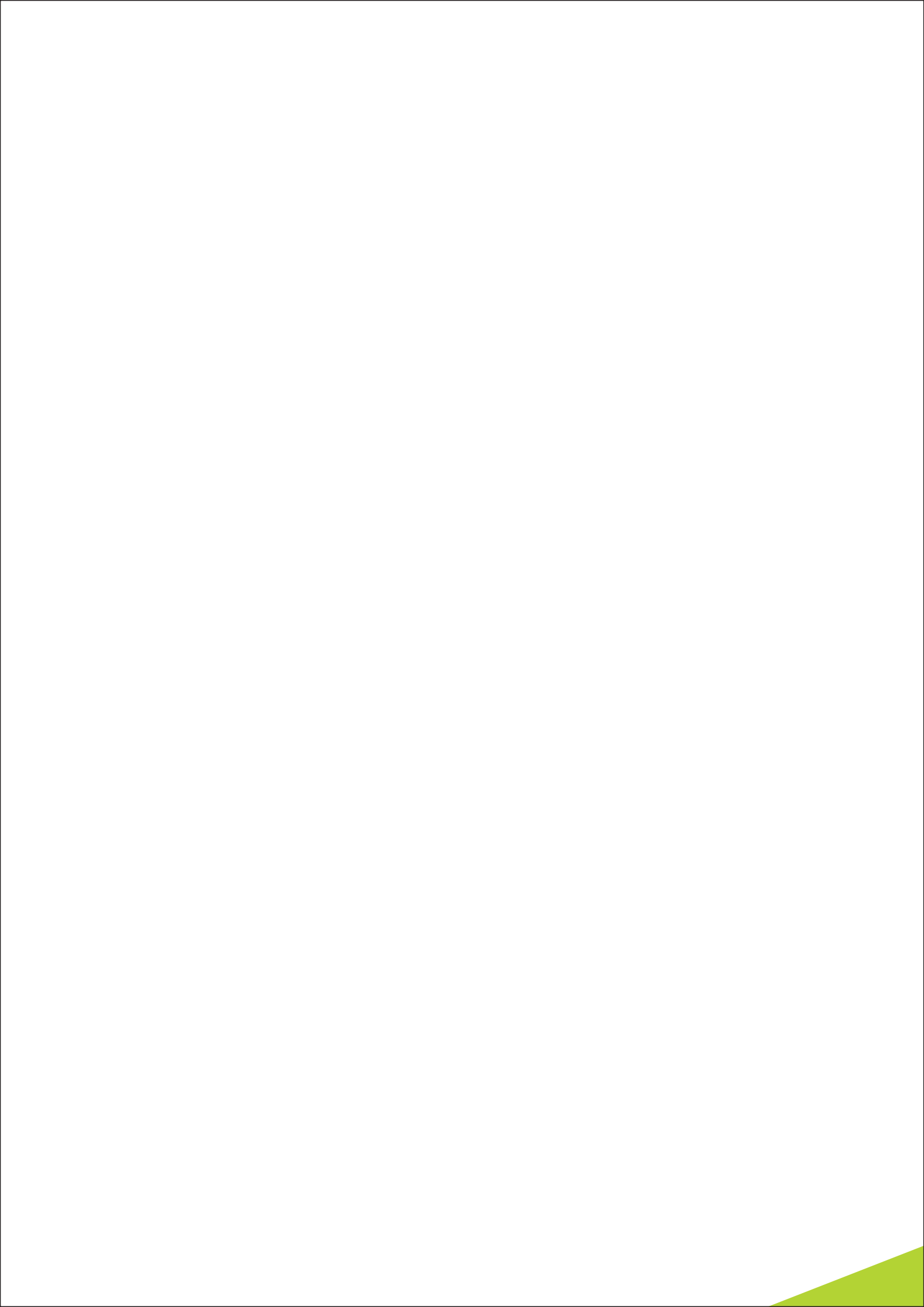
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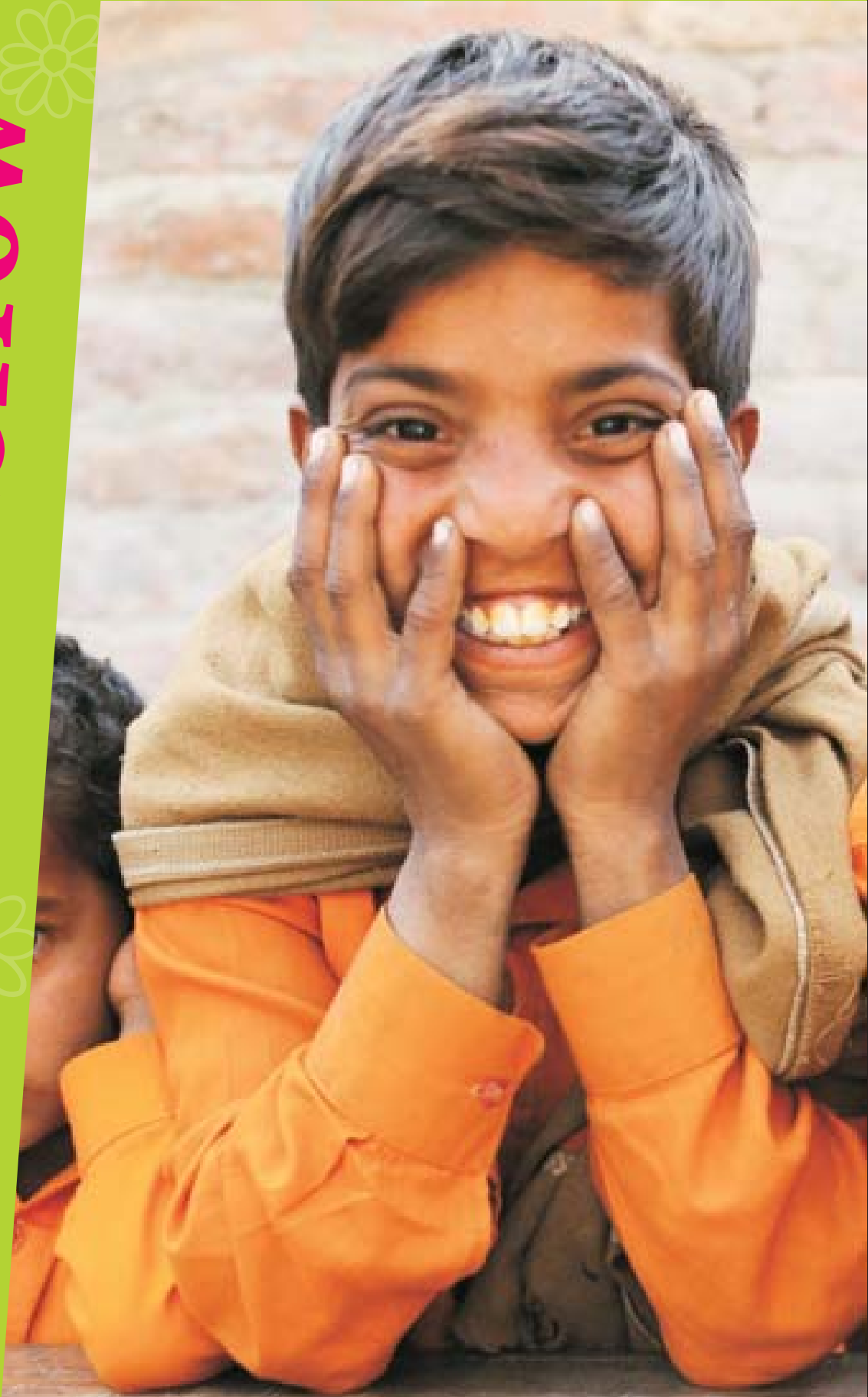
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Nurturing the World of Tomorrow





ECD: Early Childhood Development

“Upon our children - how they are taught - rests the fate - or fortune - of tomorrow's world.” (B.C. Forbes)

What determines the future of a nation?

Is it technology? Its tangible resources? Its current economic superiority or military domination?

Incorrect.

It is the children who are the nation's greatest resource, its most valued asset. The children of today are the decision makers of tomorrow and the future of this country. It is them through whom the nation's legacy lives on and them who determine if Pakistan rises and prospers and reaches heights previously thought unattainable.

Then how does this country ensure its success? It does so by cultivating and nurturing its young. Only by fulfilling its children's basic needs, ensuring their safety and providing guidance to its greatest natural resource can this nation hope to secure its tumultuous future.

The answer lies in Early Child Development.

In lieu of its importance, this issue of 'Nurture' magazine aims to take a holistic view on Early Child Development and provides an interactive resource for the parents and teachers of young children to aid in their development. It will be discussing the significance of ECD on a broader basis and highlight critical aspects of children's development as well as elaborating in detail on its specific facets i.e. Cognitive, Social, Emotional and Physical Development.

It also includes a collection of interviews with experts in the field of ECD. The experts will talk about their related field and give invaluable advice to caregivers, based on their extensive experience, on what is best for their children when it comes to Early Child Development.

Furthermore, other useful interactive elements such as Flashcards and activities are included to provide caregivers the resources they can use with children for a fun based learning experience.

This magazine is but a small step in the overall effort in the field of Early Child Development, but one we hope will help enlighten some to the importance of ECD in the fate of the nation.

What is ECD?

Early childhood is the most crucial time of development in a human life.

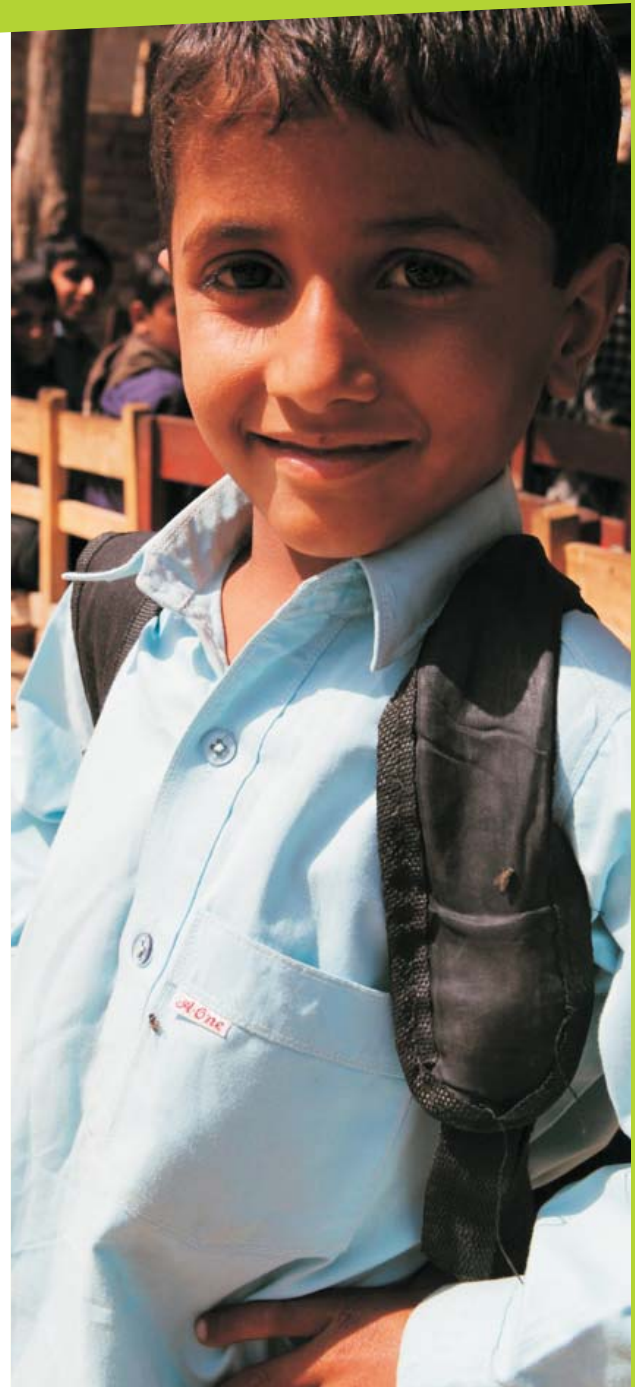
The change is not just physical in nature i.e. growing in size. During early childhood, children undergo extraordinary physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Children evolve and mature, gaining complex understanding of their environment in regards to people, objects and the challenges they face.

Infants are born into this world with little in the means of skills and abilities, but as they grow older they develop new motor, cognitive, language and social skills, much to the amazement of parents and caregivers. There is a common pattern or sequence for development that holds true for most children but the rate, character, and quality of development differs from child to child.

The Early Child Development (ECD) approach believes that young children are nurtured best when caregivers use precise methods formulated to support and stimulate progress to the next level of development. ECD is a combination of extensive education, nutrition and health interventions, as well as emotional and social stimulation for children between zero and eight years of age. Early childhood development is critical for the future well-being of young children as it prepares them socially, emotionally and intellectually for later education.

“Young children learn through play and exploration ... Early childhood development (ECD) programmes can take place at home with the family, in community groups where carers support one another in providing educational play opportunities, or in pre-schools where children are left in the care of others. ECD efforts should support the carers’ ability to care - by giving practical advice and training or supporting schemes for sharing childcare. Elements beyond education, such as nutrition and health, should also form a major part of ECD projects” (Nicolai, 2003: 45).

The definitive objective of Early Child Development (ECD) programs is to enhance young children's ability to develop and learn. Children who are nurtured with care are socially and emotionally healthy, confident, and friendly. They have good peer relationships and can tackle challenging tasks. They are in possession of good language skills, can communicate well, listen



to instructions and are attentive. The positive effects that ECD programs have can have a critical impact on the development path of children by the time they enter school.

ECD interventions include educating and supporting parents, delivering services to children, developing capacities of caregivers and teachers, and using mass communications to enhance parents and caregiver's knowledge and practices. Programs for children can be center or home-based, formal or non-formal, and can include parent education.

Why invest in ECD?

Major differences in children's level of knowledge and abilities are evident well before they start school, and these differences are indicators of ensuing academic performance and achievements in life. Children from underprivileged families begin primary school less keen to learn, with learning ability and vocabulary far below the learning levels of children from families with higher incomes. These children are seen to learn less in school, repeat and eventually drop out. As working adults, they earn lower wages and have higher rates of criminal behaviour. As a result, the region's economy and growth, reliant on a strong, educated, and productive labour force, is weakened.

The effect of good health, superior nourishment, and suitable interaction with others reflects directly on a child's ability to think, create relations, and develop his or her full potential as a useful member of society. Research has proven the significance of an early development for the brain and the need for a good fitness and nutrition.

Globally, societies that invest in children and families in the formative years, regardless of the family's income levels have the most educated populations. These societies also have the lowest levels of inequality. The benefits of ECD are numerous, in that it encourages social equity, while increasing the value of other investments, and at the same time addressing the needs of mothers while helping their children.

Investing in young children is pertinent to the development of a nation's economy. Avenues for early learning combined with better nutrition amplifies the likelihood that



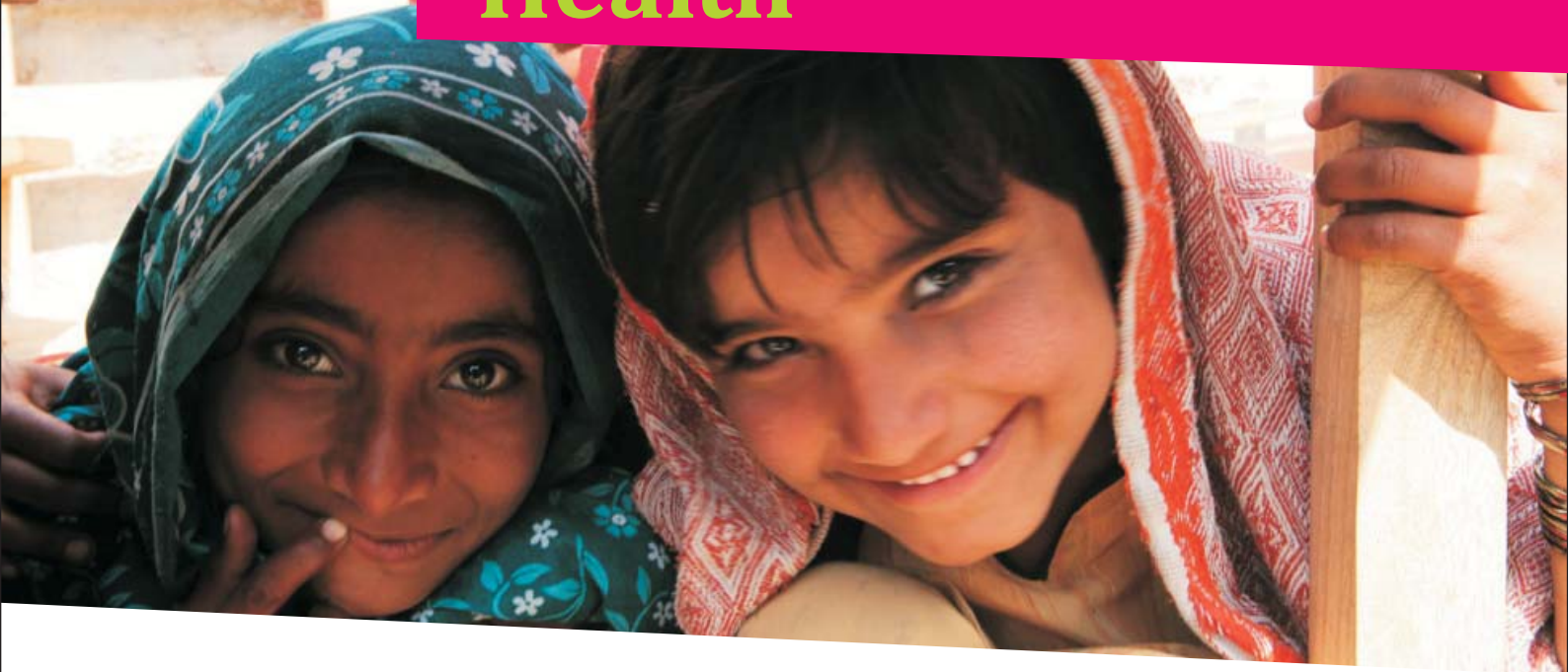
a child will attend school and go on to becoming an adult with higher earnings, better health, reduced crime rates, and lower levels of welfare dependence vis-a-vis than those who do not receive early development support. Integrated programs for young children can alter the effects of socio-economic and gender-related inequalities, some of the most deep-rooted causes of poverty. These programs are great tools in that that they help break the cycle of poverty, and have significant economic benefits. Endowing funds to quality ECD programs yields high return, with unrelenting gains.

The Need for ECD Initiatives



Early Child Development interventions focus on the fields of education, health and nutrition which are essential aspects for the betterment of our children's and in turn our country's future. They however have to operate in tandem on a national scale to be effective in achieving overall progress and development. A child cannot be expected to perform educationally if his health and nutrition is in question. Children that suffer from ill-health, hunger and under-nutrition will in all probability have poor school attendance and have serious deterrence in their ability to learn. ECD is based on an integrative approach where all facets complement each other in bringing about holistic development.

ECD Interventions: Health



CHILD HEALTH: A CORE ASPECT OF ECD

Globally, the majority of the burden of disease commences in early childhood. A healthy beginning in life provides each child with an equal opportunity to flourish and develop into an adult who makes a helpful contribution to the society, both economically and socially. Health-promoting procedures such as good nutrition, immunization, nurturance, participation, care, stimulation, and protection are incorporated in Early Child Development Interventions. ECD reduces the immediate and future burden of disease, especially for those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged while offering the prospect of sustained improvements in physical, social, emotional, language, and cognitive development.

Health care systems have a crucial part to play during the early years of children. They also serve as a gateway to other early childhood services since they serve as both first and primary contact for child-bearing mothers. Health care professionals can be highly effective in promoting ECD to a majority of parents and children in a community since in most cases, health care providers are the only professional contact families have in the early years of a child's life.

PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE

Disease prevention is a major component of reducing child mortality, and immunization is a proven tool for controlling and even eradicating disease. Vaccinating children interrupts transmission of disease to the rest of the population, such as Pneumococcus, the bacteria responsible for lethal diseases like pneumonia and meningitis, and otitis, which causes deafness. Immunization is considered among the most cost-

effective health investments as there is a well-defined target group, contact with the health system is only needed at the time of delivery, and vaccination does not require any major change of lifestyle. Immunization visits are also viewed as an opportunity to distribute information about ECD and infant health to parents. The importance of universal immunization programs, both in terms of reducing childhood disease and providing opportunities for additional early childhood interventions, should not be underestimated.

CONSEQUENCES OF ILL HEALTH

More than 200 million children worldwide under age 5 do not get basic health care, leading to nearly 10 million deaths annually from treatable ailments like diarrhea and pneumonia. Nearly all of the deaths occur in the developing world, with poor children facing twice the risk of dying compared to richer children, according to Save the Children's global report.

Development of children can also be strongly impacted by Family health conditions. Any persistent issue, either physical or mental (especially in the case of mother or primary caregiver), and chronic illness, can have detrimental results on child development. To be effective, services at all levels need to work with families and the local community for proper identification and treatment of childhood illnesses within a variety of settings, including homes and health facilities. It is also important to provide counselling for parents and caregivers, and referral services for severely ill children.

ECD Interventions: Nutrition

REDUCING POVERTY AND BOOSTING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH GOOD NUTRITION

Good nutrition during the preliminary years of life has proven to be an economic investment that creates long-term economic growth. One of the most important factors in the loss of development potential for children is malnutrition, resulting in economic and social costs to individuals and society alike. nutrition is the basis for sustenance, health and development. Well-nourished women are exposed to fewer risks during pregnancy and childbirth and well-nourished children perform better at school, becoming healthier adults. They can then offer a better start in life to their own children and become more dynamic members of society.

Children in deprived rural communes experience the worst rates of stunting (low height for age, an indicator of chronic malnutrition). Research has shown that the main cause of malnutrition is not lack of food, but an amalgamation of factors such as poor maternal health, unsuitable child care and feeding practices and inaccessibility to safe water and sanitation. It is important for the economic future of Pakistan to reduce malnutrition, particularly between the ages of 0 and 5 years. Orderly action at the national, program and community levels is needed to ensure that combating malnutrition is a national priority, supplemented by appropriate multi-sectoral agenda and efficient nutrition programs in at-risk communities.

NATURAL NOURISHMENT: BREASTFEEDING

Children's best possible growth and development begins in the womb with adequately nourished mothers, later requiring ample nutrition once being born. Breastfeeding during the opening months of life plays a vital role in providing children with the necessary nutrients for development and is believed to diminish the chances of early post-natal stunting. With attachment as part of the breastfeeding process, breastfeeding insures adequate nutrition and healthy infant development.



DANGERS OF MALNUTRITION

Three indicators of chronic malnutrition are stunting, being underweight and wasting. The underlying cause for around half of all child deaths worldwide is malnutrition. In addition to its overwhelming impact on child mortality, nutritional deficiencies, especially for children under five years old, have long-term damaging effects on cognitive development. It is necessary to condense malnutrition, especially in children between 0 and 5 years of age to ensure proper brain development. If malnutrition sets in during this stage, the consequences are irreparable.

Pitiable physical and cognitive development, reduced performance at school, poor immune system response are all consequences of malnutrition; and the affected are more likely to die from common childhood ailments like diarrhoea and respiratory infection, all of which can contribute to chronic illness. Frequent illness depletes the nutritional status of those who recover, binding them into a cycle of recurring sickness and stumbling growth, resulting in them never being able to attain their full potential.

ECD Interventions: Education

ENHANCING LEVEL OF EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Children who suffer poorer standard of development prior to entering school show inferior school performance and in later life as adults earn lower incomes. Encouragement of early childhood initiatives not only promotes higher income growth but also leads to cost savings through reduced inefficiencies in school systems by lowering repetition and dropout rates. Furthermore, they reduce health care costs through preventive measures introduced in good care instruction and education. Children that are well taken care of are healthier and therefore reduce work losses as parents have less need to take time off from work.

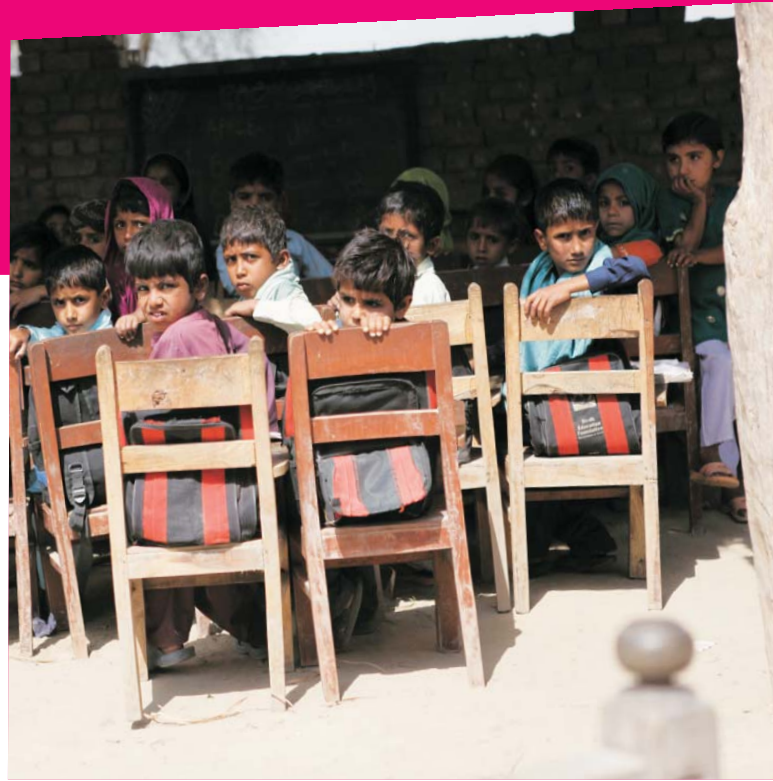
Early childhood education programs often also double as child care programs, allowing enhanced participation by women in the work force and freeing older siblings (usually girls) to learn and earn at a higher level. By contrast, women without access to child care are often unable to consider more economically productive employment outside the home because of their child care responsibilities.

SETTING FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: EARLY EDUCATION

Research confirms that the brain's development is heavily influenced by a child's early environment. A baby is born with billions of brain cells that represent lifelong potential, but, to develop, these brain cells need to connect with each other. More positive connections are formed in the brain if the early upbringing is well cared for and as a result the child does better in all facets of his or her life.

Children who get quality primary education are better prepared to advance to secondary and higher education which in turn aids economic development. Children's cognitive skills and learning abilities are further enhanced when they attend preschool and they are less inclined to be left back or repeat grades when doing their primary schooling. Preschool education should be mandatory and accessible in all of Pakistan but, to date, access to the service is very limited and usually to the wealthy.

Not only does education reduce poverty and further enhance economic growth, it also creates prospect for a better life which reduces inequalities in society. Economic and social inequalities are sustained or even amplified by the inequalities faced in early development



and learning that due to poverty. These social and economic inequalities can be alleviated by Early Child Development programs which provide a fair start to children. ECD initiatives provide opportunities for poverty stricken families who have little hope of educating their children. They bring education to areas that do not possess properly equipped schools with trained teachers. And give hope to working children who toil to make ends meet for their families.

THE ROLE OF FAMILY IN EDUCATION

Integration of parents and family into ECD is essential as they play a crucial role in a child's development and influence a child's ability to learn. A child's well being is heavily dependent on his or hers parents' well being. A big difference in the development of a child can be achieved if parents take an active part in their children's early education by providing stimulation of learning through games, interaction, play, and healthy environments. The average cognitive level of children from families that take an active part in their learning is significantly higher than that of children whose families do not.

THE COST OF LACK OF EDUCATION

If children are not comprehensively taken care of from their early childhood, especially if they have a cognitive delay, the remedy is much more costly. Ability deficiencies of children in early age not only prevail but are exacerbated over time. Teenagers who have not received proper stimulation during their early childhood reveal larger rates of school desertion and episodes during which they are suspended or expelled from school.



Early Childhood development Stages

Age Range	What they do	Age Range
Birth to 3 months	At this age, children begin to smile, track people and objects with eyes, prefer faces and bright colours, reach, discover hands and feet, lift head and turn toward sound, and cry, but are often soothed when held.	Protection from physical danger, adequate nutrition, adequate health care, (immunization, oral rehydration therapy, hygiene), motor and sensory stimulation, appropriate language stimulation, responsive, sensitive parenting.
4 to 6 months	At this age, children smile often, prefer parents and older siblings, repeat actions with interesting results, listen intently, respond when spoken to, laugh, gurgle, imitate sounds, explore hands and feet, put objects in mouth, sit when propped, roll over, scoot, bounce, grasp objects without using thumb.	Protection from physical danger, adequate nutrition, adequate health care, (immunization, oral rehydration therapy, hygiene), motor and sensory stimulation, appropriate language stimulation, responsive, sensitive parenting.
7 to 12 months	At this age, children remember simple events, identify themselves, body parts, familiar voices, understand own name, other common words, say first meaningful words, explore, bang, shake objects, find hidden objects, put objects in containers, sit alone, creep, pull themselves up to stand, walk, may seem shy or upset with strangers.	Protection from physical danger, adequate nutrition, adequate health care, (immunization, oral rehydration therapy, hygiene), motor and sensory stimulation, appropriate language stimulation, responsive, sensitive parenting.
1 to 2 years	At this age, children imitate adult actions, speak and understand words and ideas, enjoy stories and experimenting with objects, walk steadily, climb stairs, run, assert independence, but prefer familiar people, recognize ownership of objects, develop friendships, solve problems, show pride in accomplishments, like to help with tasks, begin pretend play.	In addition to needs from previous years, children at this age require support in the following: acquiring motor, language, and thinking skills, developing independence, learning self-control, opportunities for play and exploration, play with other children. Health care must also include deworming.



Age Range	What they do	Age Range
2 to 3 1/2 years	At this age, children enjoy learning new skills, learn language rapidly, are always on the go, gain control of hands and fingers, are easily frustrated, act more independent, but still dependent, act out familiar scenes.	In addition to needs from previous years, children at this age require opportunities to do the following: make choices, engage in dramatic play, read increasingly complex books, sing favorite songs, work simple puzzles.
3 1/2 to 5 years	At this age, children have a longer attention span, act silly & boisterous, may use shocking language, talk a lot, ask many questions, want real adult things, keep art projects, test physical skills and courage with caution, reveal feeling in dramatic play, like to play with friends, do not like to lose, share and take turns sometimes.	In addition to needs from previous years, children at this age require opportunities to do the following: develop fine motor skills, continue expanding language skills by talking, reading, and singing, learn cooperation by helping and sharing, experiment with pre-writing and pre-reading skills.
5 to 8 years	At this age, children grow curious about people and how the world works, show an increasing interest in numbers, letters, reading and writing, become more and more interested in final products, gain more confidence in physical skills, use words to express feeling and to cope, like grown-up activities, become more outgoing, play cooperatively.	In addition to needs from previous years, children at this age require opportunities to do the following: develop numeracy and reading skills, engage in problem-solving, practice teamwork, develop sense of personal competency, practice questioning and observing, acquire basic life skills, attend basic education.



Benefits of ECD Programmes

Evaluations of ECD programs operating in developing countries show considerable positive outcomes for participating children. Several studies demonstrate the substantial long-term impact. The following benefits have been firmly linked to integrated interventions in early childhood:

Improved nutrition and health

By providing psychosocial stimulation, ECD programs can enhance the efficacy of health care and nutrition initiatives. They can also help ensure that children receive health care. Programs can also monitor growth and provide food supplements and micronutrients and can help with such existing public health efforts as mass immunizations. Other programs specifically aim at changing parent behavior by educating parents about the health and nutrition needs of their children.

Improved cognitive development and school achievement

Children who participated in early child interventions scored higher on average on intellectual aptitude tests than did non-participants. Early education activities aren't the only thing that improve cognitive development; better health and nutrition can have a similar impact, too. For instance,

a longitudinal analysis of child nutrition shows how better nourished children perform significantly better in school

Less Repetition

Children who participated in an early childhood program repeated fewer grades and made better progress through school than did non-participants in similar circumstances.

Fewer dropouts

Dropout rates were lower for program children in three of four studies. In India's Dalmau program, the only study in which attendance was measured, the later school attendance was 16 percent higher for children ages six to eight.

Help for the disadvantaged and reduced social inequality

There is mounting evidence that interventions in early childhood particularly benefit the poor and disadvantaged. In India's Haryana project, for instance, dropout rates did not change significantly for children from the higher caste but fell a dramatic 46 percent for the lower caste and an astonishing 80 percent for the middle caste (Chaturvedi et al 1987).



Looking at Children Holistically – Factors Affecting Child Development

Looking at children from a holistic approach, requires the early years professional to take into account a wide variety of different factors, which all have an impact upon their growth and development. Key factors affecting child development, include the following:

- income
- family – nuclear, extended, lone-parent
- parental education
- access to health care, education, health promotion
- social interaction – other relationships
- immunization status
- housing
- child-rearing style, emotional tone

ECD in Pakistan: An Overview

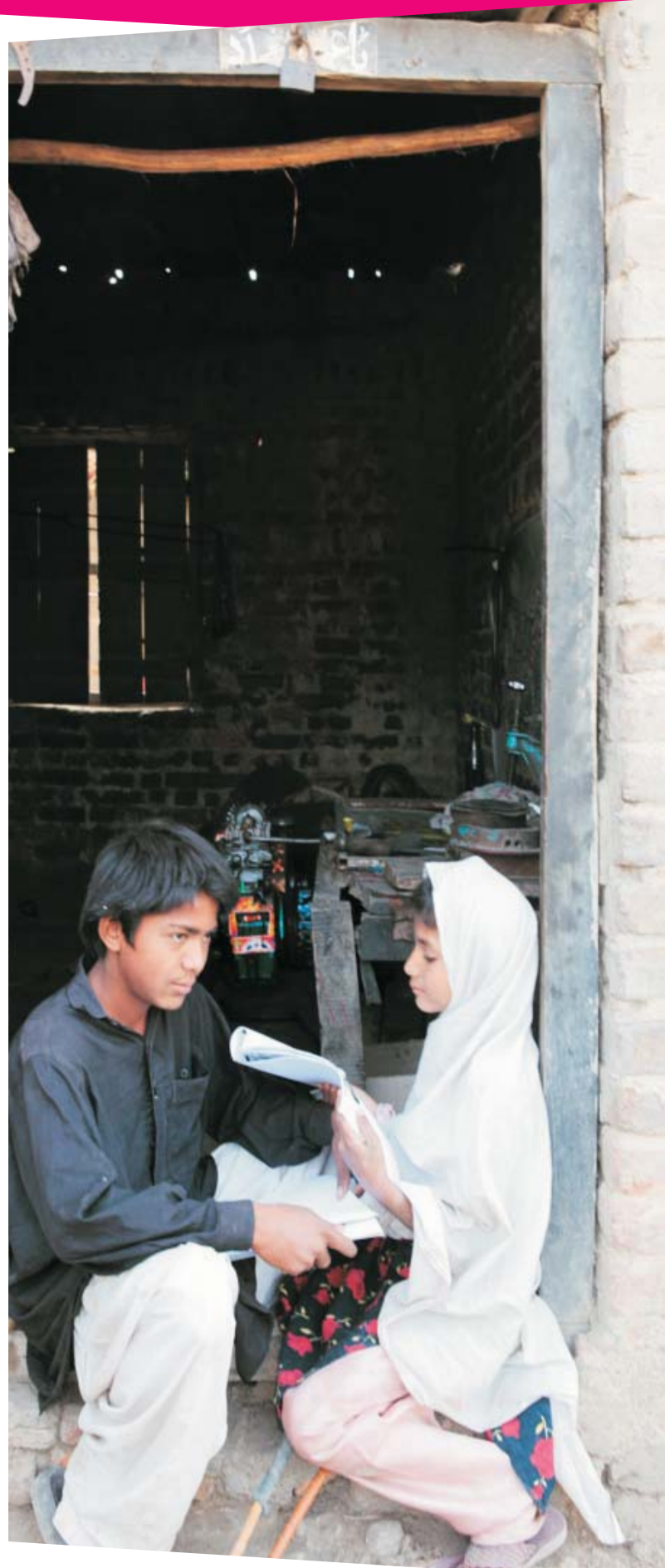
Early Child Development (ECD) in Pakistan, unfortunately, is still a long ways off from optimum levels. This situation is alleviated by the NGO sector which has played an important role in increasing awareness for the need of early childhood education and healthcare in the country, however, the majority of the initiative that should come from the State is still found to be lacking. In all fields of ECD, be it education, health or nutrition a lot of work needs to be done to bring it to a reasonable stage.

EDUCATION

Education in Pakistan is a sad state of affair with over 11 million children out of school. Out of those of who do attend school, only 50% successfully complete primary education while the rest drop out in the first two years. Quality of Early Child Education is high in the private sector but that is for those who can afford it, and most cannot. A lot of children do not have access to schools, and if they do, their schools lack facilities and have out dated curriculum. As stated before, NGO interventions have made ECD a possibility for a significant number of schools, which would otherwise not be able to afford access or capacity building, through joint government and community based interventions. The quality of early child education, however, still remains an issue in Pakistan. Limitations in terms of finances, human resources and general apathy towards pre-primary are all concerns that limit the growth of ECD in Pakistan.

Health Care and Nutrition

Pakistan is a country where 400,000 children die in their first year of life and the under five mortality rate is a high 70 per 1000 live births. Studies also indicate that malnutrition is a widely prevalent problem in the country which contributes significantly to the high rates of mortality in infants, children and mothers. This is in spite of the adequate per capital level of food availability. The Unicef report, 2003-2009 states that the stunting and wasting rates of children under five are at a high of 42 and 14 percent respectively. There is no national level program aimed at rectifying the root causes and effects of malnutrition in the country. Incorporating child health and nutrition is an important component of holistic development of children. The philosophy behind ECD interventions is that they should reach out to the most vulnerable segments of the society, through an integrated approach, in order to bring about holistic development. The government, however, lacks implementation of any integrative efforts amongst health and education ministries, and continues to work on health, nutrition and education as separate agendas.



Releasing Confidence and Creativity: Making a World of a Difference

By Shezleen Vellani, AFK Geneva

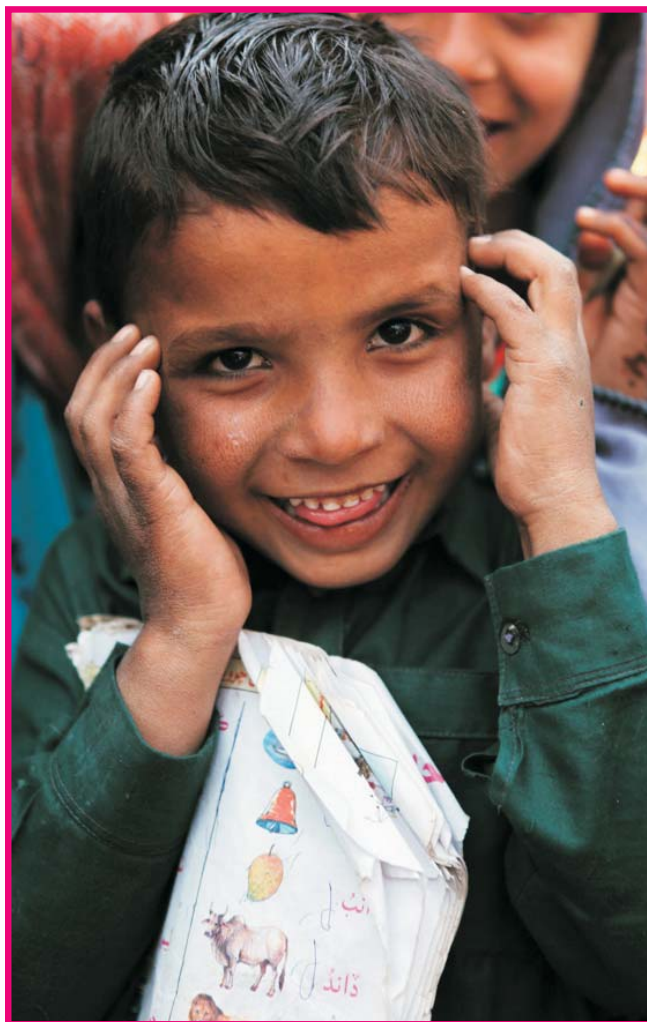
Pakistan is committed to achieving universal access to a quality education. However, only 66 per cent of primary school aged children are enrolled in the schooling system. Of those children, less than half complete primary school. Access to early childhood development (ECD) programmes is also a concern, with only 43 percent of children enrolled in schools at this stage (UNESCO, 2009).

The negative impact of limited access to quality education is disproportionately borne by poor and marginalized children through various regions of the country. In a life of grinding poverty, it is not surprising that the most disadvantaged families feel powerless to promote their children's educational and developmental interests and focus more on survival. Research on ECD has shown that the early years of a child's life lay the crucial foundations for healthy growth and development. The overall quality of the care and nurturing that a child receives in the early years is therefore crucial and even those whom are disadvantaged can play a tremendous role in their children's lives.

Based on the need to provide quality educational opportunities and healthy development for children at the ECD and early primary levels, AKF, Pakistan along with, AKESP, HANDS and SCSPED, have implemented the Releasing Confidence and Creativity Programme (RCC) through various regions in the country.

The overall objectives of this programme are to; expand access and improve the quality of teaching and learning in katchi (preparatory year in primary school before class 1) and classes 1 and 2 (ECD 1 and 2), with an emphasis on reaching girls and poor communities; develop a range of approaches to assist families and communities in increasing their knowledge, skills and confidence to support their children's development; build capacity and commitment of key stakeholders, particularly within the education system; influence ECD policy and practice and strengthen ECD learning networks.

The RCC programme was implemented in 2002 and has been a successful on-going project up until today. The programme has improved the lives of many children and parents in Pakistan, whom otherwise may not have had the opportunity to participate in a programme that focuses on their education and healthy development. This programme has had a positive impact outside of school, as people's changes on ECE have been seen throughout the community.



Attendance rates have increased, with 78% of boys and 73% of girls regularly attending school in the programme areas, compared to 49% of children who are not enrolled in the programme. It can be seen that while there is a slight difference between the number of boys and girls attending schools, this gap is narrowing. The promotion rates from class 1 to class 2 have also increased overall, with more children meeting the requirements of class 1. The learning achievements of children in the RCC programme have improved, with children attaining higher grades in; English (65%), Urdu (68%) and Math (80%).

Parents, teachers, principals and other stake holders are all amazed with the shift in perception of the importance of education and healthy development, particularly in the early years. Parents can see that their children are learning



more grade level appropriate concepts, enjoying themselves and developing their confidence. Children's hygiene practices have improved and they are asking their parents to provide them with healthier food options at home. Mothers are proud to be learning from their children, rather than the other way around. In addition to improving children's education and health practices, parents attend awareness workshops that focus on different aspects of child development. They are more active by attending school functions, participating in activities both in and out of the classroom and holding the school accountable for children's development.

School staff can see tremendous changes in children's growth and development and are impressed with their abilities to work independently at such a young age, while also being able to participate in activities with other children with an open mind. Individuals in the community are proud to be involved in such a project, often being told by parents whose children are not enrolled in the programme, that they are blessed to be a part of such an enriching experience.

But what is most important, is how the children are feeling about their own learning and successes. If you visit an RCC based classroom, you will come across excited and involved children. You may witness a vibrant teacher working with the children to introduce or reinforce concepts, or you may get to see children choosing their own activities at the different colourful and rich activity based centres that are located around the classroom. You will witness children involved in their own learning, through an inquiry based approach, where the teacher is more of a guide, Hands on activities learning along with the children. Many children are so happy with their

daily successes at school, that going home at the end of the day, is often a sad event, especially for those who have to face the harsh realities of the world in which they live in.

While the programme caters to both parents, mothers in particular have been targeted, as often, they are more responsible for the development of their children, especially at the younger ages. The programme has opened the doors to many women in order to develop their personal growth. Women are more participatory in the workshops and meetings and because of the missed educational opportunities that they experienced, educating their girls is a focus for them. An entrepreneurship programme facilitated by HANDS also provides women with the opportunity to work from home. The traditional handicrafts that they make are sold to other communities and the women are involved in marketing their own products. The profits from the sales go back to them through the CBO account. This provides women with the opportunity to generate an income, while attending to their other duties at home.

The RCC programme has benefited hundreds of parents, children and community members. A team of many talented and dedicated people have worked together to implement, facilitate and support the programme, and have put in countless number of hours to see that it is a success. The benefits have spanned entire communities. While government education officers are proud to show off this programme to others, the country still requires a strong ECD policy and efforts in engaging with the government to introduce such a policy are on-going. Making a difference in a child's life is the responsibility of the entire country.



