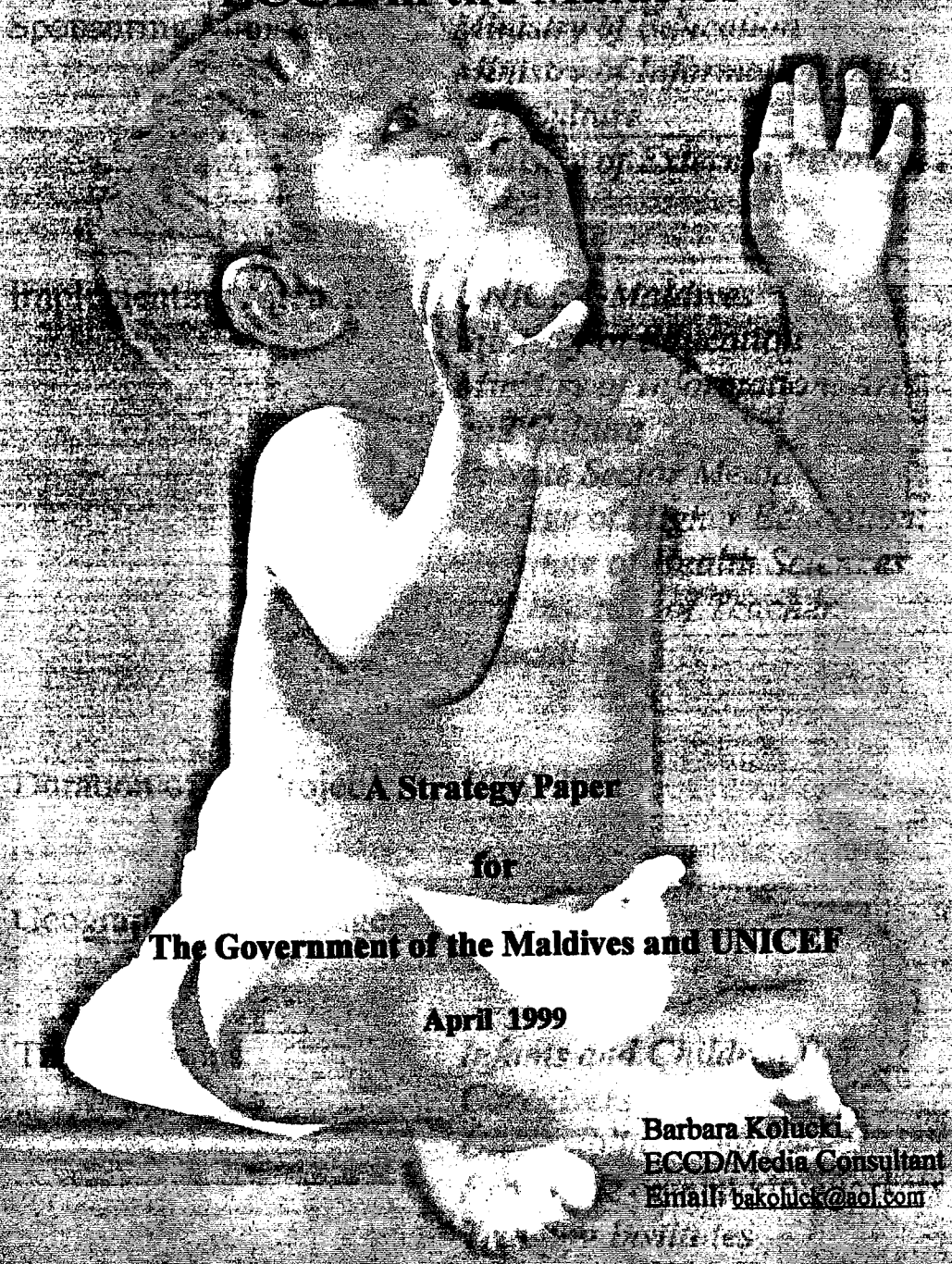


DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION
ECCD in the Maldives



OLA Strategy Paper

for

The Government of the Maldives and UNICEF

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Infants and Children

Barbara Kolucki
ECCD/Media Consultant
Email: bakoluck@aol.com

Project Summary

- Name of the Project: *ECCD in the Maldives*
- Sponsoring Ministries: *Ministry of Education*
Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture
Ministry of External Resources
- Implementing Agencies: *UNICEF-Maldives*
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture
Private Sector Media
College of Higher Education: (Institute of Health Sciences and Institute of Teacher Education)
- Duration of the Project: *1999-2001*
- Geographical Coverage: *National*
- Target Groups: *Infants and Children 0-5*
Caregivers
Older siblings and adolescents
Front-line community workers
Training Institutes
General Public

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Part I: Introduction

1.1 Background

How do we raise healthy, confident, happy and creative children? These are rights of every child. They are requirements in order for them to develop her or his full potential. It is also the key to the development of any nation. This question is one that the Government of the Maldives is addressing today in its fifth National Development Plan and UNICEF-Maldives as it begins its New Country Programme of Cooperation. Both see it as one of their highest priorities.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is part of the answer to the question of raising children who are not only physically alive and well but who know that their life is valued regardless of who they are. It is providing children with holistic and varied experiences and interventions. In addition to physical development, it includes cognitive, psychosocial, emotional, moral and spiritual nurturing.

A rights-based approach to ECCD means that in addition to nutritious food, clothing, shelter and health care, each infant has the right to participate – to engage, communicate and explore. She has a right to be listened to (and there is no doubt that she is speaking to us from day one of her life – with her body language, cries, eyes, giggles, babbles and silence). She has the right to learning opportunities that slowly expand her vision of the world and the role she has to play in it.

In addition to basing what we do on a child's rights and needs, we now have a wealth of scientific data to confirm what many parents, caregivers and child development colleagues have known for a long time: that simple, multi-sensory experiences with loving caregivers can have a tremendous impact on every aspect of a baby's development. The first years are the most critical. And infants and young children themselves can show us the way. We need to fine-tune our receptors to listen to them...

1.2 Global Trends in ECCD

In the last ten years there has been remarkable documentation to confirm that the first five years of a child's life either positively or negatively affects their growth and development for a lifetime. This information has been shared through the mass media and now laypersons have access to not only research on brain development but also to the results of some of the first longitudinal studies on early intervention with infants. There are numerous websites on ECCD, consultative groups to the United Nations Agencies and International NGOs, and Foundations that devote time and money to research and dissemination of the most up-to-date knowledge. Much of the information has been hypothesised for many years and pioneers in several countries have been programming based on these hypotheses. The wheel, one hopes, is not being reinvented. Rather, this research is so impressive and so accessible that it is

now a moral and ethical obligation for all of us to pay attention. A summary of these findings includes:

- The years 0-5, but especially the first three years, are critical in the formation of intelligence, personality, and social behaviour, and the effects of early neglect are cumulative.
- Brain development before the age of one is more rapid and extensive than previously realised.
- Brain development is much more vulnerable to environmental influences than suspected. This includes not only nutrition but also the quality of interaction, care and stimulation during the first 18 months of life. Children from poor "environments" can suffer irreversible deficits.
- Environment affects not only the number of brain cells and the number of connections, but the ways in which they are "wired".
- There is evidence of the negative impact of stress during the early years on brain function. Children who experience extreme stress during the early years are at greater risk of developing a variety of cognitive, behavioural and emotional difficulties.
- Children are born with physical, social and psychological capacities allowing them to communicate, learn and develop. If these capacities are not recognized and supported they will wither rather than improve.
- There are proven "windows of opportunity" for learning during the first years of a child's life (Annex 1). If these windows are not opened, that is, the foundations for learning do not take place in the given area of development within this critical time period, it will be difficult if not impossible for a particular type of learning to occur at a later date.
- The foundations for morals/ethics are laid in infancy. And, these foundations are based on a secure attachment between parent and child. Children without this early bond are more likely to be aggressive, have trouble with peers and other socialisation problems.
- The quality of parent-child interaction between 0-5 has a direct relationship on the child's later success at school.
- Children who have fathers that are involved in nurturing and caregiving often learn better and have fewer social and behavioural problems later in life.
- Pressure to achieve academic tasks too early can damage the child's ability to, and natural love of, learning. Pressure does not help the child to learn faster – or better.

1.3 UNICEF's Current Policy on ECCD

UNICEF has defined three priority areas for its work beyond the year 2000. These are:

1. Early Childhood Care and Development
2. Quality Education
3. Adolescence

All three have direct implication and potential impact for the proposed ECCD Strategy. The first is obvious – it is the project itself. The second, quality education, is a continuation of the holistic 0-5 interventions given to a child that prepare her for life. It is education that is developmentally appropriate, child-centred and activity-based. It is one where academic achievement is only one of the indicators of learning and education. And the third, adolescence, is the period of time when sadly, in many countries, childhood ends and parenting is in the inevitable future. Potential ECCD **Child-to-Child** activities would have benefit to both the adolescent and the child 0-3 through activities that are enjoyable for both while providing the adolescents with knowledge, skills and attitudes about parenting.

With regard to ECCD, UNICEF's mandate is guided by the 1990 World Summit for Children and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Specifically, the work is guided by the pursuit of *“infants and young children nurtured in a caring environment, physically healthy, mentally alert, socially stimulated and able to learn”*.

Several international ECCD Strategy Workshops have already been held. At an October 1998 Workshop in Turkey, the three pillars of an integrated rights-based approach were defined as health, nutrition and psychosocial development, with particular attention being given to strengthening the psychosocial component. UNICEF globally will give priority attention to the prenatal to age 3 group of children and advocacy that is aimed at making young child development the cornerstone of national human development.

In the current Master Plan of Operations between the Government of the Maldives and UNICEF for the years 1999-2002, Early Childhood and Development is included for the first time in a substantive manner. The specific objectives outlined are:

- To provide community-based ECCD facilities which holistically address the needs of the child from 0-3 years, with specific focus on the child's psychosocial development.
- To introduce an Early Childhood stream into the education sector.
- To identify and initiate alternative means of providing education and life-skills for school dropouts, especially adolescent girls.

This strategy paper is the first direct action toward achieving the stated objectives.

1.4 Situation of ECCD in the Maldives

Judith Evans, Director of the Consultative Group on ECCD asks “What is happening in terms of changes in the social fabric and what are some of the possible consequences of those changes for young children and their families”? Much is happening in the Maldives today that must be considered while developing a strategy for ECCD. Some of what has been learned is age-old information about child-rearing practices, attitudes and behaviours. Some are new trends based on development, changes in family structure, economics and influence from “the west”. Parents here, as in all countries, love their children tremendously. One sees them carrying them

around as infants and even walking them to and from school up until the age of twelve. They massage babies (primarily to strengthen their muscles) and magical interactions can be seen wherever one walks in Male or the Islands. But information gleaned from every meeting with partners and parents confirms, for the most part, that they do not know just how important the first years of a child's life are, or even more crucial, what they can do to give their child a leading edge in terms of development.

The following is a list of new policy commitments and primarily anecdotal feedback from a variety of Maldivian sources. Some have been further documented in Government or UNICEF publications:

- The Fifth National Development Plan of the Government of the Maldives contains, for the first time, a section on **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**. Its objective is *"To promote, expand, strengthen and further develop provision of early childhood care and education"*. ECCE training and development activities will primarily be home and community based and will emphasize training and the distribution of teaching and learning materials including children's stories and songs. The Atolls would receive particular attention, much under the supervision of the Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC).
- While ECCD is in the National Development plan and preschool education has become a priority for most parents, **the concept and importance of the first three year of life, is absent**. The focus today is more "pre-primary".
- There are **several misconceptions, especially about the first year of life**. For example, numerous caregivers stated that many babies couldn't see before three or four months of age. They also stated that since children didn't seem to respond (appropriately), their brains weren't working until they were several months old. (N.B. These comments, though repeated frequently, need to be verified with a proper **Baseline Survey** of knowledge, attitudes and practices. This is part of the proposed Strategy. To date there is no study that has been conducted on **child-rearing practices**).
- Several sources indicate that there is very little awareness and conscious effort made by families or teachers to build the self-confidence of children. As is the case in many other countries, most children are often raised to be *"seen and not heard"* (especially girls), they are not encouraged to ask questions. There continues to be gender disparity, particularly with regard to the extent girls are encouraged or allowed to be physically active, even in the preschool years or to pursue education higher than secondary level.
- The importance of school and education has increased over the past years. Greater numbers of children are also in preschools (where available) and 78 percent of students are now staying in school up to Class 7 (UNICEF-MPO, 1999-2002).
- There is a high basic literacy level. However, there does not seem to be a culture of reading either in Dhivehi or English for most of the population. Many persons,

including the Minister of Information, stated that often when books are written locally, they are written by "educated people for educated people" and either have too much, too difficult, or too "academic" information in them for the general public.

- There seems to be a **dangerous trend regarding academic achievement**, in particular, **pressure to read and write at a very early age (3-5 years)**. Preschool teachers say the pressure comes from parents and also from Class One teachers who expect the child to read or write when she enters primary school. Whatever the reasons, most people today equate reading and writing with school readiness.
- Anecdotal information (substantiated in part by a Speech Therapist) indicates that today there are more young children coming in for therapy for stuttering, stammering, not speaking despite the fact that they used to speak earlier and their hearing is unimpaired, wetting the bed after being toilet trained, etc. The hypothesis given was that much of this was stress related, either from pressure at school or home.
- One sees very few children or adults with disabilities. Even with the small population, children with disabilities are conspicuous by their absence. Anecdotal comments from a variety of sources say that parents are ashamed if their children are disabled, there are virtually no trained persons to assist families with children under 5 who are disabled or those in schools and, children or adults with disabilities are almost never positively portrayed in any media. There are a few exceptions however: there is one trained speech therapist in Male, there is a multi-level class for children who are hearing impaired in Male and on Children's Day (10 May) children who are disabled are invited to participate in activities.
- More mothers are working, particularly in the capital, Male.
- More fathers are away for greater periods of time, particularly those from the Atolls. Some are fishing long hours every day, others are away working on resort islands or in the capital.
- Added to a heavy workload, many parents, especially in Male, have a lack of space for children to safely play and explore.
- The Maldives has the highest divorce rate in the world. Children frequently grow up without one, if not both, of their parents. They are, however, nearly always cared for by someone in the extended family, particularly grandparents.
- Even at a preschool level, much of the teaching and learning is rote, there are few breaks for children to exercise and very little activity-based learning. Most preschools visited were very quiet with no visible group work, interaction or talking among children. The focus was on copying from the chalkboard (even in art class), reading and writing exercises.
- The preschools teachers in Male are paid by the Ministry of Education and premises are attached to primary schools. In the islands, the community must pay teachers and premises should be separate from primary schools.

- There are neither a sufficient number of trained preschool teachers, nor sufficient inservice training or supervision.
- There are numerous geographic peculiarities of the Maldives. The country includes 1200 islands (scattered over 90,000 sq. kms. of ocean) – only 200 of which are inhabited. Almost 40 per cent of the islands have a population of less than 500 people. Providing education, health and other services to such small numbers can prove a formidable challenge. Transportation costs to and from islands are prohibitively expensive. Nearly everything must be imported to the country. This includes all educational materials, media hardware, toys and reading materials, etc.
- The small size of population on most of the islands does not recommend centre-based ECCD facilities as economically viable or sustainable.
- **Isolation in the Maldives is an underlying condition that inhibits change and learning opportunities.** Though mass media, especially television is slowly reaching more and more people, those living in far away islands are at a disadvantage today. Radio is available to all.
- Various sectors within the Government, U.N. agencies and NGOs have all developed media and materials on several critical topics related to survival, development and protection. As is the case in many other countries, it has been reported and observed here that there are several obstacles to their use and internalisation. These include:
 - (a) Much of the material is not developed with participation from the target audience or even tested with them.
 - (b) People developing the material do not have training or skills in both media and content.
 - (c) The literacy level of the materials and is often too high.
 - (d) There are too many messages given at the same time and; there are obstacles to distribution, particularly the high cost of transportation to islands.
- There is a lack of a **culture of media for children.** Much of the media is imported from the west or perhaps from India or Sri Lanka. Children, especially those who have darker skins or are disabled or poor, rarely, if ever, see themselves. There are a few local children's television and radio programmes, but none specifically for children 0-5 years of age.
- Many of the **traditional stories that are told are based on fear and have to do with controlling behaviour** (go to sleep or else the witch/djinn will come).
- There is a growing interest in identifying, cataloging and disseminating traditional stories, lullabies, songs and other "oral media". Many of these include media targeted at children. The Centre for Historic and Linguistic Research has recently produced a book of traditional rhymes for children and has plans to compose music to accompany these rhymes for audio distribution.

- There are artists, both traditional and modern, in Male and the islands. Very few, however, have done work for or about children. None have a background in child development or appropriate, quality media production for, with or about children, especially those under 5 years of age.

1.5 Rationale for choosing 0-3 as the primary target for caregivers

The expanded commitment of the Government to preschool education is one that should be commended and supported. It would be impossible and detrimental to try and turn back the clock and try to magically change parents' or teachers' current beliefs and practices. Preschools are an important step in a child's and country's development. UNICEF will continue to provide inputs with regard to capacity building of preschool teachers and the development of materials for teachers and students that are both child-development and culturally-based, educational as well as entertaining. **Learning through play and building children's self-esteem and their desire to learn** will be the recurrent themes. There are of course, additional interventions that are and can be made at a later time. It is proposed that the preschool age 3-5 years be considered in an overall strategy on **quality education** that bridges the gap between preschool and primary grades. Likewise, quality preschool education interventions will be addressed in the strategy of **developing media for and about children ages 0-5**.

For the ECCD project, however, a strategic decision has been made to **concentrate on the crucial years 0-3 and the simple and practical interventions that can be provided today by caregivers in the extended family**. This is where the lacuna lies, and where both the Ministry of Education and UNICEF feel that there is a **comparative advantage**. One hopes that the outcome will be that a new generation of infants and toddlers will benefit from this strategy that is simple, doable and supportive of the growth and development of both children, 0-3, and their families. However, since the overarching principle of this strategy will be that **children learn best through play**, there is also a hope that this attitude will "spill over" to the preschool years. Parents and teachers will see that school readiness is comprised of emotional, psychosocial, moral and physical components as well as cognitive.

The choice of caregivers of children 0-3 has been made for other reasons as well. One, there is no doubt that it is **in the home** that the child's first learning takes place. It is there that the actions or inactions of caregivers either support or hinder growth and development. Second, there are several **entry points** in the health and community development sectors where **direct and regular contact with caregivers can be guaranteed**. Third, the home is the place where one can involve **men as well as women** as active partners in ECCD. As one can see from the principles and objectives, men will see that their children benefit in numerous ways when they take a more active and nurturing role in childrearing. And fourth, there has been both a **need and interest** expressed by groups who work with adolescents and young women and men who, as per current societal norms, will be new parents soon. These groups felt that in training this generation as both messengers of ECCD as well as agents of community ECCD activity, there would be the added benefit of preparing them for their new role as parents.

1.6 Rationale for choosing children 0-5 as a primary target of media FOR them.

Children learn many things from media at a very early age, even if the media is not directed at them. If there is no media for them, this in itself is a message. They learn who and what is deemed valuable in a given culture. There are powerful research studies that support the fact that **if children do not see themselves reflected in what the media portrays as a community or society, the message they are receiving is that they don't exist or don't count.** Likewise, are girls and women portrayed as active participants? Are people with darker skin shown as often as those with lighter skin and is there an attempt to show that "being fair-skinned" is equated with beauty? Are people with disabilities visible at all and if they are, are they portrayed as objects of pity or charity? Are western values presented as the ones to emulate? These visions and stories shape a child's reality and then children, in turn, mirror this reality in the way they act and think about themselves. This is all part of the psychosocial backdrop of ECCD in a given country. Quality educational and entertaining media that is **inclusive** of all children can address the "poverty of imagination" that is often present in mainstream programming or lacking if there is no programming.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 13 states that "The child shall have the right to freedom of expression, this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice". Today there is a plethora of knowledge and research regarding the qualities of effective educational media for children, ages 0-5. The range of media includes: brightly coloured, highly contrasted or tactile books; stories that are based on the real life experiences and range of emotions of young children; songs that are both interactive and encourage self-confidence; television programming that can teach health and hygiene as well as topics like gender equity, equality and prejudice reduction; and the wide range of live media that includes puppetry, drama and concerts for children. The children of the Maldives have as much a right to these as children anywhere in the world. This is a critical part of a holistic and comprehensive ECCD strategy.

Children from 0-5 are included because, in the Maldives, this entire age range has almost no high quality indigenous media aimed at them. Even in preschools one sees mostly western books and stories. Most sound media materials for children based on child development principles are multi-level in nature, thereby providing a different learning opportunity to a younger infant as well as older child. The design of the media materials used in this strategy will often do the same.

1.7 Principles of the ECCD Strategy

There are several values and attitudes which form the **principles** that will guide and direct the ECCD strategy. These are based on the fundamental rights of children and

their families. The objectives and actions of the ECCD strategy flow directly from this set of principles:

- **Address the child as a whole:** The CRC speaks about the many rights of children which have an impact on their survival, protection and care, preparation for life and a healthy social and physical environment. These rights, therefore, do not look upon a child from an uni-dimensional perspective. "Information to ensure the physical survival of a child can be integrated with information to help caregivers promote their children's ability to use their intelligence to the fullest, achieve emotional well-being and security, and gain interpersonal skills that will help them contribute meaningfully to their community as adults". (Foster and Landers, 1998) The psychosocial, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and physical needs will be addressed through an **intersectoral approach** to all ECCD activities.
- **Begin with and go into the home:** The CRC states that action to create a better world for children must take place first in the home and with family and other caregivers. This includes the children themselves, parents, grandparents, older siblings and extended family members. Activities and materials will be practical, simple, family oriented actions that support and are based on existing routines, materials and surroundings. New **family rituals** will be encouraged.
- **Build the self-confidence of caregivers who in turn build the self-esteem and confidence of children.** Experience and research tells us that when caregivers are active learners, children are more likely to become active learners. Families are already doing many things right, and this will serve as the springboard for new information and interventions. Media will present the **families, rather than experts, as the messengers to other families.**
- **Encourage a learning and reading culture:** Communication and reading are two examples of predictors of intelligence, success and social ability. And though communication and language will be given priority, a **culture of reading** will also be encouraged. This reading can be **didactic**, where the exact words are not as important as the overall exploration of the book by child and caregiver. In the USA for example, the typical "middle class" child enters Grade 1 with 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading whereas a child from a "low income" family averages just 25 hours. The difference is startling and contributes to an already large imbalance for the child. The goal will be to help balance the inequities between homes where reading is fundamental and integral to life and those where it is seen solely as a means for academic achievement.
- **Involve men as well as women as positive role models for ECCD care and nurturing:** "The level of support the mother receives from others in the family and from society plays an important role in the kinds of care she is able to provide. Thus, the cultural patterns surrounding the role of the father, other family members and the community are important for the child's survival and development". (Evans and Myers, 1998) Research also documents that children of nurturing fathers have a distinct cognitive, emotional and social advantage. The nurturing and interactions of men and women with young children are

different in many ways. Neither one is better than the other and children benefit from both.

- **Early Intervention:** Every child, girl or boy, disabled or not, has the right to learn. In addition to prevention, the early detection of disabilities has a direct impact on the severity or permanence of the disability as well as economic and emotional impact on the child and family. Infants with disability usually need as much if not more stimulation in their early years. Caregivers will be provided with role models and information about the fact that, even if professional help is not currently available, home and community-based exercise, stimulation, play and education are as important for a child with a disability as any other.
- **Respect and utilize indigenous culture and traditions:** There are numerous childcare practices, like massage, that are a perfect vehicle for a multitude of beneficial ECCD inputs. There are local stories and songs that can be adapted to include core messages for both caregivers and children. And there is the rich and beautiful physical environment of water, sand, fish and birds that can serve as the basis of an infinite number of activities and media. Modern media will both utilize and complement the old, traditional culture and media.

Part II: Proposed Project

When one looks at the Global Trends regarding ECCD and then at the various childrearing scenarios in the Maldives versus countries, particularly in the west, there are many obvious disparities on which to base a project with clearly defined goals, objectives and strategies. The differences are more than cultural. They also include **access, inclusion and a broad definition of *learning for life***. It is not true, obviously, that any child in the west is brighter or more talented than a child, for example, in the Maldives. However, what is more likely true is that, for a variety of reasons, infants and children are told more often "*You can do anything*", "*You are good enough just as you are*", "*I am proud of you*", "*Of course you can play*" or "*It is OK to ask questions*".... A conscious effort is made to build their self-esteem whether they are a girl or boy, disabled or not. They are told the world is open for them to explore and change. And their parents and caregivers have a wealth of childcare information about ideas for stimulating and nurturing their child. Hundreds of quality books are available to choose from even for the smallest infants. Music and educational videos and CD-ROMS are listened to, watched and used by children even under the age of three. Both children and their caregivers have access to information and media that encourages them to be active learners. There is a monthly publication "*Growing Parent*" that accompanies a monthly newsletter "*Growing Child*" – the implication being that both are continually learning.

Granted, there are critical survival and economic issues that are at play in many countries. But what is perhaps as potentially life-altering are the messages that children receive from the early days of their life, implicit or explicit: "*You can do anything*" and "*I am proud of you*" versus "*This is all you can become*" or "*You are not as good as*".... There is little doubt that a self-fulfilling prophecy takes place and this has an impact on how the child grows and learns – and how her parent acts as a caregiver.

The ECCD Strategy for the Maldives addresses the above differences. Children and caregivers first and foremost will be told in a multitude of ways "*I am good enough*" and, they will have access to the critical information that addresses the holistic needs of young infants and children.

2.1 Goals of the Project:

The proposed project will have two overarching goals:

1. To help meet the survival, protection and development needs of children 0-3 in an environment that is *positive, respectful, stimulating and fun* for children and their families.
2. To create a *culture of media* in which children are told that they are valued, see themselves reflected in a variety of media, are encouraged to express themselves and have these expressions valued from infancy onwards.

2.2 Objectives of the ECCD Project:

- To create a culture of media for, about and with children 0-5 years in a manner that is inclusive, sensitive to diversity, entertaining and educational.
- To ensure that all members of the household are aware of the critical importance of the first three years of life in the formation of intelligence, personality, social and moral behaviour.
- To ensure that parents and grandparents are aware that it is critically important for both fathers and mothers to be actively involved in nurturing and stimulating their children and to provide them with the information and skills required to do so.
- To provide older siblings with ideas on how they can help their younger sisters and brothers to grow and develop while playing with them. In doing this, to let them realise that children need more than just watching over.
- To provide community level workers and groups, with practical information on ECCD which they can communicate to the household during their routine contacts.
- To raise the status of ECCD at the island and atoll levels so that it becomes one of the key indicators for assessing progress and development.
- To raise the status of ECCD at the national level so that each of the social sector ministries actively participates in the planning and implementation of a comprehensive ECCD programme.

2.3 Strategies:

The following strategies are based on a review with partners and an assessment of what is most critical and yet doable in a three-year period given the human and financial resources of UNICEF and the realities of the Maldives. These strategies all revolve around helping to develop the self-esteem of caregivers and children that lays the foundation for all life skills. They include the development of materials and methods to reach children themselves, household members and front-line workers. Other strategies were considered and discussed, for example, a large training component. Today there are no individuals or small cadres of people who have all the necessary skills in child development (especially for 0-3 years) or in developing quality media for, about or with children. There are many entry points, however, where a core set of practical ECCD messages that are adapted to the Maldives can be used in existing training.

It should be noted that front-line workers do not have the time to add on new work or take part in intensive training on ECCD at this point in time. They have agreed,

however, to be introduced to our core package of ECCD messages and materials during their regular training and to distribute materials to caregivers and children. Every attempt will be made to ensure that the core ECCD package is not dependent on outside training and intervention but rather is as self-directed as possible – this has been a repeated request by nearly all partners.

It is also important that a cadre of ECCD trainers be nurtured and this will be addressed in year two and three of the project. At present, the three focal persons from the MOE and NFEC can be used as resource persons when necessary but it is also recommended that these same and additional focal persons be given external training. Although at present all focal persons are women and they all have tremendous potential, it is recommended that in the future some male **hands-on** (as opposed to managerial) child caregivers for the 0-5 age group be identified and trained.

The **only** way today to **directly** reach the child and caregivers in the Maldives is through the agreed limited partnership with existing training institutions and their front-line workers but more importantly, **through the media**. Radio is accessible on every island, television will reach all islands soon and the Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture has a plan to develop a multi-media centre at least at the atoll level. This would include small media (audio and videocassettes and books) and a media lending library, as well as training of local artists and media people.

There has been a conscious effort to steer away from an over-dependence on using front-line workers (FLW) for three reasons:

1. FLWs are already fully occupied with their routine work. Most teachers teach at least two shifts plus provide private tuition to students. Health workers are also over-burdened and when one falls sick or dies, it often takes months or longer for a replacement to be trained or assigned.
2. The filtering of information and messages sometimes leads to dilutions and distortions.
3. Effective use of FLWs is often dependent on intensive training which is both prohibitively expensive and time consuming.

The following strategies will be pursued:

- Act as a catalyst for – and facilitate – the establishment and functioning of an **intersectoral task force on ECCD**.
- **Build the capacity** of government and private sector media professionals in developing and producing high quality and developmentally appropriate **media for and about children**.
- Use the mass media and only selected community level workers to provide information directly to the **household** as well as to receive feedback and suggestions from them.
- **Integrate ECCD into the pre-service and in-service training** of health workers, teachers and social workers.

- Advocate for, and integrate, ECCD into the training of leaders of youth groups and clubs (such as Girl Guides and Boy Scouts).
- Advocate with Atoll and island chiefs to include a core set of ECCD indicators in the assessment of the work of the Island Development Committees.

2.4 Partners:

Following the inter-sectoral briefing on ECCD, the Department of External Resources identified ECCD focal points in the Ministry of Education. At this meeting, however, all present felt that it was vital that the Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture be on board as a key partner as well. A meeting was held with the Minister and he requested a special workshop on ECCD to orient his staff. This is outlined in Part III of this paper.

There are three major partners, two based in Ministries of the Government of the Maldives and one from the private sector. From discussions with the Ministries thus far, it seems that there would be two parallel and complementary streams for this project. One would utilise the mass media through the Ministry of Information and the other would address caregivers and children themselves on an interpersonal level through the development of a core ECCD package for use by front-line workers, trainers and volunteers through the Ministry of Education. Given the need regarding ECCD, there is certainly room for both streams, in addition to which ensuring an intersectoral, integrated project will maximise the potential effectiveness of the project.

In addition, there are many individuals and groups in the private sector that can and should be nurtured as partners. These could include media professionals who, if interested and given the skills of quality production for and about children, would complement and supplement what the Government provides. Caregivers and children would have their right to access to appropriate indigenous media greatly enhanced.

Given the existing resources at the present time, it is imperative to also identify and collaborate with pivotal institutions and persons who in turn reach the family. The new ECCD inputs provide value addition and a more holistic approach to what they already do and the ECCD movement is able to capitalise on using the limited resources for maximum advantage.

In addition to the major partners, a number of partners have already agreed to utilise the proposed ECCD Multi-media package in their existing training and materials, as well as to serve on an ECCD Task Force. If this is done, front-line workers from a number of sectors will have been reached with basic and important information about ECCD.

The major partners for the project are:

- Department of External Resources (support for coordination).

- **Ministry of Education including Non-Formal Education (NFEC) and the Education Development Centre (EDC):**

The Ministry of Education will serve as the key focal point for the ECCD project. They have deputed one staff person to work on the project as necessary and have guided the development of the strategy and project formation. They will continue in this capacity and also be part of both the ECCD Task Force and Media Working Group.

NFEC is currently training all preschool teachers in Male and the Atolls, with assistance from the Ministry of Education. As one of the key focal points for ECCD, they will be part of both the Task Force and Media Working Group, as well as a source for utilisation and distribution of all materials.

EDC currently develops curricula and supplementary materials for formal education. This includes audio and video materials. They expressed interest in:

- (a) Being part of the ECCD Task Force.
- (b) Developing media materials as requested.
- (c) Having staff take part in any ECCD training.

- **Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture including TV Maldives and Radio Maldives:**

A meeting was held with the Minister of Information, Arts and Culture to introduce the subject of ECCD and report on progress to date (the Minister was not available for the inter-sectoral briefing organised by DER). The Minister expressed support for and interest in being a major partner. Although some participants under this Ministry (TV Maldives) had attended the ECCD Media Workshop, the Minister asked for another separate workshop for Voice of Maldives (radio) where he himself would attend. This workshop took place on 2 May 1999. Since the Workshop, the Minister has expressed interest in follow-up and indicated that his staff is anxious to begin implementing some of the new ideas and programmes suggested at the workshop.

A meeting between the Minister of Information and UNICEF-Maldives will be held to discuss a possible Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is tied to the Strategies and Activities of this ECCD project.

Meetings were also held with TV Maldives and their staff was represented at the ECCD Media Workshop held in April 1999. They have expressed interest in a potential Memorandum of Understanding between UNICEF and TVM that would include developing a joint three to five year plan.

- **Media professionals in the private sector including those working in the newspapers, video, audio, graphic and performing arts. Several artists, including a photographer, composer, musician, singer, illustrators and dramatists have already**

been identified and many took part in the ECCD Media Workshop. Though many were interested in children, most have neither produced anything nor received training in any aspect of appropriate production for or about children. Since the ECCD media workshop held in April 1999, several persons have independently pursued activities and the development of materials for and about children. A Long Term Agreement (LTA) is being discussed as a means to organise and coordinate these efforts as part of the ECCD Project.

Additional Partners include:

- **Ministry of Atoll Administration:** It is imperative to have this Ministry on board if we are to reach the Atoll and island chiefs with our advocacy efforts. Advocacy will begin with this group in the first and second year and together, a plan of specific actions and activities will take place.
- **Ministry of Women's Affairs/Island Women's Committees:** As with the Ministry of Atoll Administration, advocacy will begin with this Ministry and the IWCs during the first and second year. As the core ECCD package is developed and focal points for ECCD receive further training, it is anticipated that the IWCs would be recipients of this training. A specific plan of action will be developed in the second year of the project.
- **College of Higher Education including the Institute of Health Sciences (IHS) and Institute of Teacher Education (ITE):**

IHS is the primary trainer of all health-care workers in the Maldives. They train Family Health Workers, Community Health Workers and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs or Foolhumas). They also provide training for nurses, nurses' aides, midwives and primary health care workers. After discussions with IHS, elements of the partnership include:

- (a) Incorporating the ECCD Multi-media package that will be developed as a resource in the training of most of the above mentioned courses, but particularly those for the front-line workers reaching homes, especially in the Atolls. According to IHS sources, if TBAs and Family/Community Health Care Workers are reached with this basic information, it is possible to reach every family in the Atolls.
- (b) Distributing family education materials on ECCD to front-line workers who in turn would distribute materials to homes.
- (c) Including IHS staff as recipients of any special ECCD training when available.
- (d) Facilitating the arrangement and use of videos, posters and print materials for caregivers and children in Health Care Centres and other focal points where families gather.
- (e) Serving as a member of the ECCD Task Force.

ITE is responsible for training all primary and secondary teachers in the Maldives. It has also instituted **Mobile Teams** for Teacher Education in the Atolls. They have expressed interest in being a partner in the following ways:

- (a) Incorporating the ECCD multi-media package as part of their training of Teacher Educators.
 - (b) Facilitating special ECCD training, especially for the Mobile Teams.
 - (c) Distributing materials, especially in the Atolls and to Primary Teachers.
 - (d) Serving as a member of the ECCD Task Force.
- **Unit on the Rights of the Child (URC):** The URC has a media focal point who attended the ECCD Media Workshop. They have also expressed interest in:
 - (a) Incorporating ECCD messages into their media.
 - (b) Being a recipient of any ECCD Training.
 - (c) Serving on the ECCD Task Force.
 - **Girl Guides and Boy Scouts:** Meetings were held with leaders of the Guide and Scout movements in the Maldives, both of which are very active. They were keenly interested in becoming a partner in the ECCD Project in several ways. This includes:
 - (a) Incorporating the ECCD Multi-media package into the existing training of Guide and Scout leaders.
 - (b) Having their leaders be recipients of specific ECCD training.
 - (c) Participating in ECCD projects and/or competitions for Guides and Scouts during the holiday period.
 - (d) Considering new "*badges*" for ECCD work.
 - (e) Serving as a member of the ECCD Task Force.

2.5 Activities:

- **Conduct a BASELINE SURVEY of existing knowledge, attitudes and practices related to ECCD in the Maldives and a review of Maldivian and imported media for and about children 0-5 years.** A qualitative baseline survey is necessary in order to measure the effectiveness of ECCD interventions and in the evaluation of the project. It will also be used as the foundation strategic planning and for the development of new interventions, activities and media. Currently there are local individuals who could design and conduct quantitative surveys but external assistance will be required both for qualitative components as well as to help build capacity in surveys, monitoring and evaluation. The survey will include:
 1. A review of existing child-care practices (0-3 years);
 2. Attitudes about these practices and the potential capacity of infants and toddlers;
 3. The attitudes of parents, preschool and primary one teachers with regard to academic expectations of the children and the reasons for these expectations.
 4. A review of Maldivian and imported media for and about children 0-5 years.
- **In collaboration with the Department of External Resources, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Information/Arts/Culture, organise an inter-sectoral**

orientation session with a view to enrolling all other partners identified as key stakeholders and agreeing on specific areas of responsibility.

- **Establish an ECCD Task Force** to guide and monitor the ECCD project and an ECCD Working Group to plan and implement project strategies and activities.
- **Provide training in content development, technical production and formative research** for media for, about and with children.
- **Co-produce prototypes of media** for and about children with media professionals in the government and private sector.
- **Develop a core package of ECCD materials** for training front-line workers and leaders of guides and scouts as well as additional core materials directly for members of the household (including grandparents and older siblings), including those based on traditional practices, songs, stories, rhymes, etc.

This core package will contain a number of media that can be used separately or as a package. All material will be professional in terms of content and quality but it will be based on Maldivian culture and will be practical, simple and low literacy in nature. Prototypes will be pretested with the target audience for assessing interest and comprehension. Part One of this package will be developed in 1999 and produced in 2000. Additional materials will be developed as national capacity of the media is built and a review is done on the utilisation of the basic package.

A strategic decision has been made to concentrate on a limited number of critical ECCD messages for caregivers as well as those for children 0-5 years. Quality ECCD materials developed by UNICEF-New York will be used, repackaged and/or referenced as it includes a more comprehensive list of critical messages – those about pregnancy, health and nutrition, immunisation, etc. Many of these are also being communicated and reinforced through the regular health system. The adaptations that would be made to existing materials would be those which make them more appropriate to the Maldives and include areas that might be missing, for example, the early detection of disability and importance and type of infant/early stimulation.

In this ECCD project, the media materials produced locally will focus on the following areas:

- (a) exclusive breastfeeding and the introduction of nutritious foods**
- (b) early stimulation in the first three years of life**
- (c) the role of fathers/men,**
- (d) the importance of building self-esteem**
- (e) the importance and role of play in learning.**

These messages will be reinforced through multi-media and multi-level communication channels as well as through the front-line workers who reach the household with these materials. It will include the mass as well as small media. This approach increases the likelihood of reaching caregivers in a variety of ways, times and formats. It utilises well-documented principles with regard to effective communication, particularly regarding a subject like ECCD where in many cases

we are starting from ground zero. The choice has been made after careful deliberation and discussion not to overload the target audience with a large number of messages. The strategy is to choose fewer messages that have the potential of immediately changing the care and development of infants and young children.

There are some existing materials developed by NFEC on ECCD, play and parent interventions. They have been reviewed and portions will be used and adapted for the new ECCD package. Likewise, the Centre for Historic and Linguistic Research has compiled local stories and rhymes for children and these too will be utilised as resources.

An ECCD Media Workshop was recently held in Male. Participants included the Ministry of Education, Non-Formal Education Centre, the Unit on the Rights of the Child, TV Maldives, the Education Development Centre, several preschool teachers, parents and some of the best media talent from the Maldives. As a result of this workshop, a number of local resource persons have been identified. Participants also developed several prototype media. Some of these will be further adapted and developed, as part of the ECCD Core Package and due credit will be given to all team members and contributors.

It is suggested that the individual components, in addition to being distributed through numerous partners, can be sold at cost in the open market. This issue has been discussed and support regarding contract logistics has been offered at the Country Office and Regional level.

It is anticipated that the core ECCD Package will include the following:

- Two videos for caregiver audiences, use in training and mass broadcast.
 1. One would be based on a slide series depicting Maldivian parents and other caregivers engaged in nurturing and stimulating activities with children 0-3 years. The script will be based on the importance of the first three years of life and how and why specific interventions or activities benefit the child.
 2. The second video will be a repackaging of the UNICEF animated series entitled "*Child Development*" together with live action sequences of Maldivian children and families.
- Practical booklets for caregivers: A series of around four booklets will be produced, some including photos with simple text and others that are illustrated. Some will be aimed at adult caregivers and others at older children in a **Child-to-Child** format.
- A series of posters for caregivers based on specific objectives of the project. For example, one might address the importance of male nurturing and present case studies of various Maldivian men in caregiving situations with their babies. Another might address, e.g. "Ten things you can do to help your baby grow and learn in the first year of her life" and then be distributed to all new parents. Other posters would be developed for older siblings and perhaps for children 0-5 themselves.

- An audiocassette of interactive songs, rhymes and games that caregivers can use with children 0-5. It is also proposed that a video of a live concert for and with children 0-5 be produced. The concert will include the songs and activities on the audiocassette as well as new ones, as many as possible based on Maldivian culture and tradition.
- A set of **Books for children, 0-5 years**. Several books with photos of Maldivian infants and children and their families will be developed and produced. Additional books will be developed after training of illustrators and storywriters for young children. The content will include: self-esteem, curiosity, life from the point of view of a child, learning is fun, a healthy body and mind, and a selection of local stories adapted when necessary to be appropriate in terms of child development.
- A series of audiocassettes on Interactive Child Development. These will be based on the experiences of Distance Education and Interactive radio Instruction (IRI) where one audiocassette gives educational and entertaining messages to caregivers and children at the same time.
- Support the establishment of a **children's media unit** in the Ministry of Information, Culture and Arts. This has already been discussed with the Minister and a plan of action and potential MOU will be developed between the Ministry and UNICEF.
- Develop and launch an ECCD "*Message of the week*" campaign for TV, radio and newspapers. As ECCD for children 0-3 is a new area for the Maldives, it will require a sustained advocacy and social mobilisation component. It is proposed that a weekly mass media campaign be instituted in Year Two (2000). By this time, external training inputs will have taken place with regard to quality programming about and for ECCD. Though the title for this campaign will be decided by the ECCD Task Force, it is anticipated that it will be something like "*The Early Years are Learning Years*" campaign of the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the USA. The objective would be to provide one simple, practical tip on how to enhance the development of children 0-3, each week, simultaneously through TV, Radio and Newspapers. The messages would be intersectoral and holistic. But the main principle would be that they are **doable** by caregivers in their homes and community. A sample of messages for this campaign and for the ECCD Multi-media Package is attached to the Strategy Paper.
- Build a **reference library** of high quality international video, audio and print media for and about children. It is the exposure to the diversity of programming and print that gives people both skills in critical analysis and new ideas or those for adaptation. In the April and May 1999 ECCD Media Workshops, participants were shown a variety of media for and about children from various countries that contained qualities based on research regarding effective media. It was from this base of exposure that several delightful and educationally sound prototypes were produced. There have already been several requests for copies of these materials.

- Provide access to professional hardware for production, i.e. supplies and equipment for video, audio and print media. In most countries, producers of media for and about children have to “fight for” use of hardware as priority is routinely given to cover news events and other adult programming. There are examples from other UNICEF Country Offices (e.g. Nepal CO) where hardware was purchased for the exclusive use of programming for and about children.
- Establish an annual award for creative educational and entertaining media for children 0-5 years and about children 0-3 years. Maldivians enjoy competitions and this incentive could encourage others to see media for and about children as a viable, creative career path.
- Conduct advocacy/orientation workshops for leaders of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts.
- Facilitate the establishment of an ECCD Badge and annual competition for Guides and Scouts. One suggestion discussed with the Guide and Scout Leaders was that a yearly project and competition could take place during the school holiday time. The focus and award would be given for creativity and uniqueness with regard to children 0-3 as well as how the activity supports activity-based learning of the Guides and Scouts themselves. Suggestions for the first three years include:
 1. Assist communities in the Islands to build a safe play area/park for children.
 2. A competition to make interesting, safe home-made toys for children 0-3 that also uses skills learnt as part of the older child's curriculum, e.g. music, maths, science, etc.
 3. Creative Child-to-Child projects that combine live media like music, puppetry, dance, etc. while developing skills in young children, 0-3 years.
- Support the development of media with and by children, especially those 0-5 years. There are examples of several UNICEF offices producing media by children, usually based on the CRC. This has usually been done with older children and often based on the child's wishes for a better future, problems in their life, a particular right being abrogated, etc. Research does indeed confirm the therapeutic and indeed critical value of these types of activity, particularly for children experiencing trauma. However, one thing that is often missing from projects that encourage media development by and with children is how to encourage them to identify and find solutions. There are particular methods for doing this and it can be done even with children below the age of five. This, as well as encouraging children to tell us their stories on video or audio tape or in dance, paintings, song or drama, will be part of Phase II and III of the project.

Part III: Time Line

This project will take place over a period of three years. Although formative research will be part of the development of the media produced, a summative KAP evaluation will take place at the end of the three years.

What follows is a detailed Plan of Action for Year One (March 1999 – March 2000) along with a broad outline of activities for Year Two and Three. This time-line also is a documentation of the **process** that was followed in developing this strategy and ECCD project, as well as the unique inputs with regard to the development of media and the capacity building with local counterparts.

Phase I: 13 March 1999 – 13 May 1999

- Pre-preparation advocacy for ECCD as cross-sectoral strategy (DER and MOE).
- UNICEF advertises for people interested in working on ECCD – response disappointing.
- DER coordinates inter-sectoral meeting with UNICEF consultant – presentation to senior-most programme directors.
- Meeting with MOE and NFEC to plan joint field trips to individual families, preschools and meetings with IWC members in Male and islands.
- Consultant meets with counterpart agencies that already have field level presence at Atoll and island levels: IHS, ITE, EDC, TVM, Guides and Scouts. Identification of potential participants for ECCD Media workshop addressed at each meeting, along with counterparts realistic suggestions for partnership in project.
- Field trip: quick and dirty situation analysis (KAP) of ECCD.
- DER appoints MOE as temporary focal point for ECCD.
- MOE appoints DG Supervision & co-curricular activities as its ECCD focal point.
- Consultant prepares rough skeletal framework of ECCD strategy and presents to MOR focal point. Agreement in principle.
- MOE focal point appoints four “local apprentices” to work with consultant: one supervisor of preschools, one trainer from NFEC, two preschool teachers from Male. UNICEF appoints new JPO as “apprentice”.
- Issue addressed regarding payment to apprentices and core groups members. Decisions pending.
- Consultant conducts two-day ECCD Media Workshop. Participants include MOE, NFEC, EDC, URC, TVM, private sector/independent media (photographers, illustrators, composers, musicians, dramatists), preschool teachers and parents (see box on workshop methodology).
- During workshop, identification of people with skills and time to become part of CORE media working group on ECCD plus individuals who could be accessed for production of specific materials.
- Three MOE/NFEC focal points (apprentices) plus JPO begin to transcribe select ECCD videos with annotations re: adaptability for Maldives situation. The objective here is to utilise and adapt quality existing ECCD materials *about* children.
- Core group starts discussions re: content and visuals of prototype materials *for and about* children: the goal is to produce two prototypes each.
- Strategy paper drafted and reviewed with MOE.
- Several prototypes produced and others under-production:

Prototypes *about* children:

- (a) Poster for fathers: examples of *what* they can do for their children 0-3 years and *how* it benefits the child.

- (b) Poster for parents: essential things to do to help their baby grow and develop in the first year of life.
- (c) Photo-book on the benefits of massage and specific additional inputs a caregiver can do while massaging the baby.
- (d) Pamphlet for older siblings: ten things they can do to help their baby sisters and brothers.
- (e) Two posters: one on involvement of fathers in playing with his infant and one on the importance of contact and early stimulation.
- (f) Photo-book/illustrations on caring for a child 0-3 years from the point of view of the baby.

Prototypes for children:

- (a) Photo-book "*Everybody Loves me*" on building self-esteem, the importance of play and humour.
 - (b) Photo-book "*I am proud of me*" for 0-3 year olds.
 - (c) Photo-book "*I am proud of me*" for 3-5 year olds.
- Discussion with local private sector media group re: capacity and estimated costs of production (print, audio, video, photography, etc.): possibility of long-term contract (LTA) for production.
 - Meeting with Minister of Information, Arts and Culture regarding feedback from ECCD Media Workshop in April and enrolment of MOI as key partner. Discussion on specific action (long, medium, short term) for producing media for and about children. Minister requests workshop on ECCD for radio staff.
 - Outline of Strategy finalised and presented to UNICEF Regional Director – feedback elicited, regional funding discussed.
 - One-day ECCD Workshop held for staff of Voice of Maldives (radio). Prototype media produced.
 - LTA with local media company discussed with Regional Advisor on Administration (some portions acceptable but some problems related to high cost and local expertise).
 - Contact made with other potential resource persons for production of materials and capacity building: illustrators, graphic designers, print production, video producers with experience working with children, photographers, and production agencies.
 - Send prototype package plus outline of strategy to Regional Director/ROSA.
 - Meeting with all key partners to review outline of strategy, prototype media and discuss project implementation.
 - Distribute strategy paper.

Phase II: June – September 1999:

- Identify key KAP objectives for ECCD project which will evolve into key indicators for baseline and project evaluation. Include input, output, process, outcome and impact indicators for project evaluation.
- Conduct baseline survey on KAP related to ECCD as well as media for and about children.
- Establish ECCD Task Force and Working Group: DER, MOE, MOI, private sector media, front-line trainers and partners.
- Memorandum of Understanding with MOI.
- New photo-shoots for completion of prototypes.
- Draft and finalise TOR for all contracts.
- Funding acquired and contracts signed for:
 - (a) ECCD Consultant (fees and DSA for 10 weeks from 10 October – 19 December 1999)
 - (b) photographer: local and offshore (up to 30 days from May – December 1999)
 - (c) video producer (fees and DSA for 6 weeks from 20 October – 1 December 1999)
 - (d) video equipment hire or purchase
 - (e) social marketing company (June – December 1999)
- Establish campaign identity: logo, slogan, jingle, colours.
- Develop script for slide/live action series on ECCD 0-3 years (slide/video presentation).

Phase III: 10 October – 19 December 1999

- Build capacity of local mass media and private sector media professionals to produce ECCD media: radio, TV, video, audio, newspapers. Use existing prototypes and develop new materials.
- Develop and produce a core ECCD package for use by ITE, IHS, leaders of Guides and Scouts for training of front-line workers.
- Develop and package core ECCD materials for parents and caregivers.
- Develop new material for children. Goal: audiocassette with locally adapted rhymes, songs, games, four books on curiosity, learning through play and love of learning.
- Orientation sessions on ECCD for Guides and Scout leaders, ITE, IHS, URC.
- Start production on *"ECCD Message of the Week Campaign"*.
- Identify ECCD reference materials (video, audio, print) for and about children and hold orientation session on how to use and adapt.

Phase IV: 2000

- Mass production and distribution of ECCD packages for front-line workers, caregivers and children. Require technical specifications for printing and mass production.
- Follow-up and monitoring of distribution and utilisation.
- Repackaging existing ECCD video materials.
- Launch ECCD *"Message of the Week"* Campaign.
- Establish Children's Media Unit in TVM and Voice of Maldives. Includes equipment and supplies, reference materials for library, training regarding content and technical production.
- Funding and contracts for ECCD consultant, training for radio production for/about children, TV production for/about children, puppetry for television, training of illustrators.
- Live concert for children and video production of concert.
- Initiate media with and by children.
- Establish awards for media about and for children.
- Establish ECCD badges and competition for guides and scouts.
- Orient Ministry of Atoll Administration re: monitoring of ECCD activities and enroll Atoll chiefs for follow-up and monitoring of ECCD project.

Phase V: 2001

- Capacity building for formative and summative evaluation.
- Project evaluation.
- Additional project assistance as required by MOE or MOI for sustainability.

Acknowledgements:

The consultant wishes to thank the Government of the Maldives and UNICEF for the invitation and privilege of working on this landmark project. Special thanks to Rina Gill, Assistant Representative for her expert guidance and support on both content and media; to all of the UNICEF support staff especially Aishath Shihab, Fathimath Naseem, Fathimath Haleem and Fawaz Shareef. Individual thanks to Dan O'Dell and Cassie Landers of UNICEF-New York for their many years of pioneer programming in the area of ECCD starting in the 1980s and for sharing resource materials. And finally, appreciation to Waheed Hassan of UNICEF-New York, for his assistance in getting funding for starting this project.

Critical stages of a child's development

PRENATAL

BIRTH

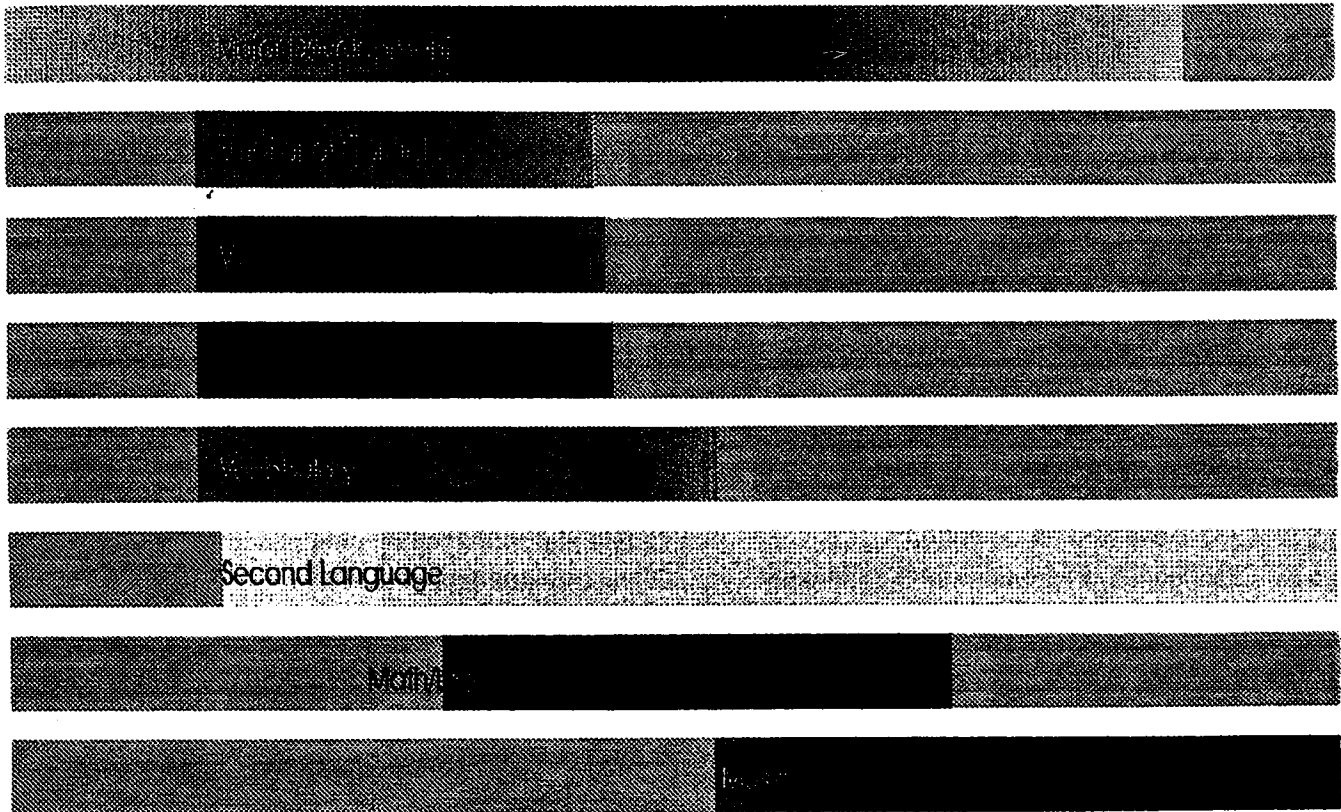
1 YEAR OLD

2 YEARS

3 YEARS

4 YEARS

5 YEARS



The importance of zero to five

The first five years of life are the most important years in a child's development. A child's brain is growing fast. Sounds, colours, touch, smells are all shaping a child's personality. With the right stimulation in these early years, a child's ability to think logically, to learn languages, to grow up confident and full of self-esteem are all enhanced. UNICEF's goal is for families to know about these critical, time-bound windows of opportunity and to increase the flow of useful information so they can take action to help children grow to their full potential.

**Process of Development of ECCD Project
Phase I : 13 March to 12 May 1999**

**Task 2: Development and Production of Prototype Materials
for Family Education**

Selection of the consultant:

The ECCD project required a consultant with:

- a background and proven experience in both child development and media production *for* and *about* children;
- training skills and the ability to guide, work with - and build the capacity of - a core team of local government and private sector individuals;
- experience of working in developing countries, particularly Asia.

The process and methodology used in this project included programming and production while simultaneously building local capacity. Phase I of the project consisted of developing an ECCD Strategy for the Maldives and the Development of some Prototype Materials for Family Education (the tasks are further detailed in the Part III: *Time Line* in the Strategy Paper). This appendix is a description of the process followed for the second task i.e. prototype development.

The process:

After two weeks of briefings and field visits, an ECCD Media Workshop was held. Participants included non-formal educators and preschool workers, parents and representatives from the media and fine arts. The objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Introduce the participants to ECCD and the critical importance of the first three years of life.
2. Review and critically analyze international media for and about children.
3. Brainstorm on core messages that would be culturally appropriate and doable in the Maldives.
4. Develop prototype media for and about children using ECCD principles and shared production guidelines.

Throughout the workshop, the interests and skills of individual participants become evident and were noted. The group work also allowed for identifying *team players* and those with complementary skills. These individuals were short-listed as potential resource persons and *trainees* for the project.

After the workshop, two actions took place at the same time:

- Focal points from both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture were identified.
- Individuals from the private sector were identified and where necessary, given contracts for production.

A small core team was then assigned to work on a daily basis with the consultant in developing prototype ECCD materials. This was done for several reasons. First, it ensures that the materials developed are *sensitive to - and appropriate for -* the Maldives. Second, the professional capacity of the team members is developed (NB: at that point, there were no local persons with qualifications in child development or the skills for developing quality media and materials *for* children 0-5 years or *about* children 0-3 years). Third, this capacity building, if done well, ensures that a consultant is not required for the same *terms of reference* (TOR) again. If she/he is requested by the Government and UNICEF to return, it should be for another phase of the project, with different TOR.

A photographer was identified at the workshop with both skills and interest in this project. However, a local illustrator could not be identified. Therefore, a decision was made that, for this first phase, the materials for and about children would use photographs/slides. The photographer was brought on board as part of the team which, together with the consultant, identified the prototype materials which would be developed for and about children. These included:

- Two posters: *one* for parents on several important things they could do to help their babies grow and develop in the first year of life; and the *second* especially for fathers listing the simple, practical interventions that they could make with their infant children. Both posters, and all caregiver materials, stressed not only *what* could be done with young children but also *how* it should be done and *why* this was important and beneficial for their child.
- A book on the importance of massage for babies and several suggestions on how massage is something one does *with* a baby rather than *to* a baby.
- Two books for children on building their self-esteem – one for children 0-3 years and the other for children 3-5 years.
- One book for children on the importance of play and specific, humorous ways that different family members can play with a child.

Again, there is a particular *process* of media development and production that has been shown to be useful and effective in several countries. This process ensures that even several years later, there are individuals (who previously did not have the appropriate skills) who can then continue to produce and develop unique and interesting media for and about children. The steps for phase one in developing the above-mentioned materials for the ECCD Project included:

1. Scriptwriting and editing with specific attention paid to the principles of child development and to literacy levels.
2. Detailed planning of "*the shoot*" – examples of the exact types of photographs to shoot and how they should "*tell the message without words*" (the same techniques should be used for illustrations).
3. Details regarding inclusion of girls, children and adults with disabilities, people with darker skin tones and those from a range of family and socio-economic backgrounds.
4. How to work with local children and families.
5. Specific differences in needs and development of children 0-3 years versus those 3-5 years.
6. A trial *shoot*, then reviewing and evaluating the photos with suggestions for improvement.
7. Formative research with the *target audience* of both children and adults and in the case of the Maldives, from the islands as well as the capital, Male. This includes identifying what one wants to evaluate, how to frame questions, the sequence of questioning, individual vs. focus groups, etc.
8. Brainstorming regarding design and layout, and edits/revisions based on formative research.

A similar process is used in the development of other media including radio and TV production, audiocassettes and other print material. The Strategy Paper delineates the rationale for selecting fewer messages and for deciding to supplement and complement these messages through various media and materials as well as interpersonal contacts.