

NATIONAL POLICY ON CHILD DAYCARE FACILITIES IN SRI LANKA

Final Draft - NC



NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment

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ABBREVIATIONS

CDC	Child Development Centers
DCC	District Coordinating Committee
Div.CC	Divisional Coordinating Committee
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FHB	Family Health Bureau
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
ILO	International Labor Organization
MoH	Ministry of Health
NAITA	National Apprentice and Training Authority
NCC	National Coordinating Committee
NCPA	National Child Protection Authority
NSECD	National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PCC	Provincial Coordinating Committee
RPC	Regional Plantation Companies
UNCRC	United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child
TVEC	Tertiary and Vocational Education Commissio

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Childcare plays an important role in the lives of children and families. For children quality childcare means support for their holistic development. For parents and families, it means security and safety for their children. Research on brain development reveals the basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. Early experiences affect the quality of that architecture by establishing either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the learning, health, and behavior that follow¹. Research also shows children do best when they are at home for their first year and in the following years, they can benefit from good quality care and education in group settings². Numerous studies also have confirmed the positive and lasting effects of quality care on children's development and school achievement. These studies emphasize the critical importance of quality environments in nurturing children's emerging social, emotional, cognitive, and language skills. When parents cannot provide such experiences, childcare services are the best replacement. Quality childcare environments are safe and protect children from abuse, neglect, and stress providing plenty of opportunities for children to learn through play and interactions with more knowledgeable adults and peers.

Childcare is also considered an investment that brings social and economic returns to a country. Affordable and quality childcare has been argued as a greater investment, highlighting its potential to secure a 'triple dividend of young children's positive development, women's empowerment, and economic growth³. Labor force participation is one of the key factors that contribute to empowering women. It is also an important factor that contributes to a country's economic development. However, despite these advantages, global data shows that female labor force participation is declining in many countries. According to the World Bank, it has declined especially in middle and low-income countries⁴. Lack of quality childcare has been identified as one of the major reasons that keep mothers out of the workforce. Studies suggest that higher availability of affordable childcare

¹ Harvard University (n.d) In Brief: Science of Early Childhood Development. Retrieved June 3. 2021 from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of-eed/>

² Willoughby, M. (2016) Quality Early Years Care and Education: What to Look for in an Early Years Service. Retrieved June 25. 2021 from https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/barnardos-quality_early_years_care_and_education.pdf

³ UNICEF (2019) Child Care and Working Families: New Opportunity or Missing Link. Retrieved May 26. 2021 from <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/UNICEF-Childcare%20-Family-Friendly-Policies-2019.pdf>

⁴ The World Bank (2021) Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (% of female population ages 15+) (Modeled ILO Estimate) Sri Lanka. Retrieved June 18. 2021 from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=LK>

exhibits high maternal labor force participation rates and provision of childcare, especially for pre-school aged children, helps mothers achieve a satisfactory work–life balance⁵.

The World Bank reveals that female labor force participation in Sri Lanka has declined from 36.6 % in 2017 to 33.5% in 2019. A recent study conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) on the factors affecting women’s labor force participation in Sri Lanka has also revealed the extent to which socio-cultural norms and perceptions hinder women’s access to employment opportunities⁶. This study has found that gender stereotyping related to household responsibilities has led to indirect discrimination in the hiring process of jobs. One of the remedial measures suggested by the ILO is the provision of affordable (perhaps publicly financed) care services that would reduce the burden of unpaid care work on women.

In traditional Sri Lankan society, extended family is common and grandparents played a significant role in caring for children. However, a recent study indicates⁷, this role as well as dependency ratios have changed today leaving parents responsible for the care of young children and elderly family members. This study opines that Sri Lanka has the fastest aging population in South Asia and this coupled with the increase in non-communicable diseases has meant that grandparents are older and less able to care for their grandchildren. With diminishing family support home-based care could be difficult for Sri Lankan families.

The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka has declared in the Directive Principles of State Policy that *“The state shall promote with special care the interests of children and youth, to ensure their full development, physical, mental, moral, religious and social, and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination (Chapter VI, Article 27[13]”*. Further, Sri Lanka has become a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1990. Subsequently, it introduced the Charter on the Rights of the Child in 1992. In realization of a child’s right to be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, explicitly outlined in the UNCRC and the Charter on the Rights of the Child introduced by the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL), successive governments have introduced numerous policies. These policies include Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to Address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2016-2020), National Policy for Alternative Care of Children in Sri Lanka, 2019, National Child Protection Policy, 2019, National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development 2018, and the National Policy on the Elimination of

⁵ Daniela Vuri (2016) Do childcare policies increase maternal employment, IZA World of Labor. Retrieved June 6, 2021 from <https://wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/241/pdfs/do-childcare-policies-increase-maternal-employment.one-pager.pdf>

⁶ International Labour Organization (2016) Factors Affecting Women’s Labour Force Participation. Retrieved June 15, 2021 from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-colombo/documents/publication/wcms_551675.pdf

⁷ Warnasuriya, R (2020) Growing Need for Childcare Support Sri Lanka. Retrieved May 17, 2021 from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/growing-need-childcare-support-sri-lanka>

Child Labor, 2017. In addition to these policies, the Government has approved a national guideline on the operation of daycare centers to facilitate a secure environment for children in 2017.

One of the landmark legislation's in the history of ensuring the rights of children in Sri Lanka, is the National Child Protection Authority Act, No 50 of 1998. The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) was established under this Act to formulate a national policy on the prevention of child abuse and the protection and treatment of children who are victims of such abuse; for the coordination and monitoring of action against all forms of child abuse; and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The main function of this Authority spelled out in Section 14 of the Act is to advise the Government in the formulation of a national policy on the prevention of child abuse and the protection and treatment of children who are victims of such abuse. Following the Act, the NCPA presents the National Policy on Child Daycare Facilities to standardize, supervise and monitor child daycare facilities, minimize risks for children and promote quality daycare services for children in Sri Lanka.

1.2. STATUS REVIEW

1.2.1. CHILD DAYCARE FACILITIES IN SRI LANKA

The paucity of reliable data limits presenting a clear picture of historical evolution and the current status of child daycare facilities in Sri Lanka. Except for one survey conducted on daycare facilities in 2010 covering all nine provinces in Sri Lanka, no recent national level study was available. The survey carried out in 2010 has presented data on early childhood development (ECD) centers as well as the extent of provision of day care centers in Sri Lanka. However, it was limited by the non-inclusion of Northern and Eastern Provinces and Polonnaruwa district and limited representation of some of the provinces such as Southern, North Central and Uva⁸. In addition to this survey, data obtained from the National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development (NSECD) was also helpful in reviewing the status of daycare facilities in Sri Lanka.

Types of Child Daycare Facilities

As mentioned in the National Survey (2010) emergence of daycare facilities in Sri Lanka is mostly a product of employed women, lack of domestics to help parents to look after children, and the decline in the number of extended families. Several types of daycare centers cater to the need of providing care for children to fulfill the needs of such families. National Daycare Guidelines formulated by the NCPA have categorized these centers into 3 types as follows:

⁸Children's Secretariat (2010) National Survey on Early Childhood Development Centres. Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs. Retrieved May 7.2021 from <http://www.childprotection.gov.lk/documents/National%20Child%20Protection%20Policy%20-%20final%20-%202013.10.4.pdf>

- a) Centre based child day care,
- b) Workplace based child daycare and
- c) Home-based child daycare.

Center-based Daycare accommodates Infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-aged children where the center may or may not function between 7 a.m. to 12 noon as a preschool for children. Government or non-government-managed drop-In Centers for children are also included in this category. Operating hours may vary based on the requirements of parents and the capacity of Staff members. However, these centers are closed by 6 p.m.

Workplace-based child day care centers are set up by employees or employers of an organization to operate within the working hours of the workplace. After-school daycare centers conducted by the school authorities are also included in this category. Centers managed by employers or employees in workplaces may function during weekends based on the requirements of the employees and employers.

Private Home-based daycare is provided to children in private residences other than the home of the parent or the guardian for longer than 2 hours. In most cases, parents are required to pay for the service provided by the caregivers.

Day Care Facilities in the Estate sector

Although daycare services provided in estates are workplace-based, they differ considerably from daycare services provided in other workplaces. These daycare services have a history of more than a century evolving as a result of high female labor force participation in estates during the British colonial period. The objective of introducing daycare facilities for children during this period was to look after them when parents worked in the estates. These were known as 'PulleMadu', and children were taken care of by a retired worker or 'PulleAmmu'. These centers provided only child-minding services, with no attention given to the stimulation, growth, and development of the children⁹. However, this situation has changed with the expansion of free education and the establishment of the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) a tripartite organization consisting of the GOSL, Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs), and Plantation Trade Unions. Today 'PulleMadu's' have transformed into Child Development Centers (CDC) with preschool education for children from 3-5 years becoming a part of its services. The PHDT has formulated its own guidelines to regulate these ECD centers.

⁹ Warnasuriya, R., Sosale, S., Dey, S. (2020) Integrating Early Childhood Care and Education in Sri Lanka. Retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34646/9781464816185.pdf>

1.2.2. CURRENT SITUATION

As mentioned earlier in this document, data concerning child daycare center facilities in Sri Lanka are scant. This may be due to a lack of research on childcare facilities in Sri Lanka. There is also ambiguity related to the registration of child daycare services. According to the National Daycare Guidelines introduced by the NCPA, daycare centers should be registered with the Provincial Departments of Probation and Childcare. However, in many provinces, child daycare centers catering to children under five years of age are registered with the regulatory bodies established for preschool education. In the Uva Province, daycare centers or any other center conducted for the physical and mental development and security of children below five years of age have to register with the Early Childhood Development Authority¹⁰. Furthermore, there are daycare centers registered as businesses in the Provincial Departments of Business Names Registration. This ambiguity as well as limited studies on daycare centers make it difficult to describe the current situation more precisely. However, despite these limitations, the NSECD was able to provide some recent data on the number of child daycare centers and children enrolled in these centers in Sri Lanka. Although conducted a decade ago, the National Survey on Early Childhood Development was also a useful source of information that contributed to painting a comprehensive picture of child daycare centers in the country. Data gathered from these sources reveal the following:

- In 2016 there were 1209 daycare centers serving 23365 children island-wide. A majority of these centers are situated in the districts of Colombo (189) and Kurunegala (200).
- According to National Survey conducted in 2010, the day care centers in Sri Lanka are managed by private institutions or individuals, public institutions, religious organizations and non-governmental organizations. A majority is managed by private sector. A majority of day care centers (56%) charge fees. However, there are also non-fee levying day care centers operated as welfare centers.
- Medium of communication in a majority of daycare centers is mother tongue (73%). However, there are daycare centers that integrate bilingualism (Sinhala and Tamil/Sinhala and English/Tamil and English) to communicate with children in the centre.
- The National Survey, 2010 reveals that some daycare centers operate without adequate indoor and outdoor spaces. The survey also reports that situation regarding appropriate indoor and outdoor equipment and learning materials in daycare centers is far from satisfactory. It states that parents support could have obtained to provide these facilities even in low income communities, but lethargy and disinterest seem to be causes for non-availability of these essential materials.
- Caregivers in child daycare centers are responsible for the safety, care and protection of the young children placed in their care. They need to possess proper training in childcare.

¹⁰Uva Provincial Council(2017) Statute of Early Childhood Development . Retrieved July 1, 2021from https://www.up.gov.lk/images/2017/01/1706_10-E.pdf

However, 2010 survey reveals that a considerable percentage of caregivers (43%) have not received any training in caring for children. The situation is unlikely to change even today without a proper monitoring system.

- Many child daycare centers do not provide meals for children. A majority brings meals from home.
- The National Survey 2010 reveals that a majority of caregivers work in the child daycare centre as well as in the preschool. The impact it makes on children's development has yet to be studied.
- Although frequent meetings with parents are essential only half of the centers covered by the National Survey 2010, conduct monthly meetings. This prevents parents being a part of daycare centre activities.

Global research reveals affordability, accessibility, trust, and quality pose key constraints in accessing child care services. These constraints are common in many countries including Sri Lanka. The report 'Tackling Childcare: The Business Case for Employer-Supported Child Care in Sri Lanka' published in 2018¹¹ reiterates these constraints when it states 'unavailability of affordable and quality childcare bars many parents from continuing or returning to paid work'. It also states that in the absence of accessible childcare for employees, Sri Lankan employers face difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled workers, along with high absenteeism, low maternity return rates, and inadequate leadership diversity. In this situation expansion of affordable high-quality daycare facilities for children of working parents is imperative.

Currently, the National Child Protection Authority has introduced national guidelines for child daycare centers to address the current needs in the country (see Annexure 01). The Cabinet approved it on 25.7.2017. The objectives of the National Guidelines are as follows:

- I. To promote professional and safe child day care services for children between 4 months and 12 years.
- II. To ensure a quality assured, standardized process among all Child Day Care Centers island wide.
- III. To ensure that children's care and overall childhood development needs are met and are aligned with their developmental goals.
- IV. To provide guidance for the setting up of Child Day Care Centers equipped with the ability to reach the minimum standards specified, and for improving existing Centers.

¹¹International Finance Corporation (2018). Tackling Childcare: The Business Case for Employer Supported Child Care in Sri Lanka. Retrieved June 2, 2021 from <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fe0a2fa6-6dde-483a-be75-48c0cc66ceb2/Report.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mulpGtj>

The National Guide for Child Day Care Centers in Sri Lanka was developed by the National Child Protection Authority in cooperation with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services and the National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development with the consultations of the all stakeholders and relevant experts in the field of providing child day care facilities.

The national guidelines introduced a formal process for registration of child day care centers, minimum standards, and a monitoring mechanism. It covers the following 15 main aspects related to child care under the national guidelines.

1. Main principles that govern child daycare centers
2. Registration process
3. Provision of staff
4. Physical environment of child daycare centers
5. Care, education and play
6. Health and Safety
7. Child rights and child protection
8. Diversity and equal opportunities
9. Children with disabilities
10. Private home daycare centers
11. Drop-in centers
12. Working in collaboration with parents/ guardians
13. Record keeping
14. Monitoring and complaints
15. Web-based information center

In addition, the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 4 Curriculum on child care giving has been drafted in collaboration with the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) and the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) by the NCPA. This curriculum can be made mandatory for those who wish to become child caregivers since it would promote the quality of the care provided to children.

2. THE NATIONAL POLICY ON CHILD DAYCARE FACILITIES

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This section presents the National Policy on Child Daycare Facilities in Sri Lanka formulated by the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) to promote high-quality child daycare services for Sri Lankan children. It applies to all daycare services provided to children in Sri Lanka. The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) creates the conditions to develop and regulate child daycare services to ensure equitable and affordable daycare facilities for children, especially for working parents through this National Policy. Upon its full implementation, Sri Lanka will be able to provide equitable and affordable high-quality child daycare facilities to meet the needs of all parents and families who seek enriched environments of care for their children.

The proposed National Policy on Child Daycare Facilities has been formulated covering the following five areas for action.

- a) Equitable access to affordable child daycare services
- b) Improving quality of the care provided for children in the centre
- c) Care for children with disability
- d) Child daycare centre management
- e) Regulations and Governance

Policies are stipulated for each of these areas along with proposed strategies. An implementation structure stating roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders also has been presented in the policy.

2.2. TERMINOLOGY

Caregiver is a person who provides direct care for children¹². He/she meets the basic needs of children such as providing meals, dressing, supervising when they play, cleaning, and protecting them from any potential harm. Caregivers should also provide beneficial learning environments for children in their care.

Child Daycare Centre is an establishment that offers daycare to preschool children enabling their parents to engage in their work¹³. These may be operated in workplaces or homes/families for stipulated hours. In this policy, the child daycare center is defined as centers that offer daycare facilities for all children within the age range between 4 months to 12 years as stipulated in the National Daycare Guidelines introduced by the NCPA.

Children with disability are children with any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it difficult to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation limitation)¹⁴. Children with disabilities are a diverse group with a wide range of needs. Some disabilities may be hidden or not easy to see.

Equitable and affordable child care Equity is defined as personal or socioeconomic circumstances, such as gender, ethnicity, language, disability, or family background, that are not obstacles to reaping the benefits of childcare services¹⁵. Affordable means these services are not expensive. Access to daycare services should be both equitable and affordable.

Inclusive practices recognize the diversity of children, enabling them to fully participate in learning activities. Inclusive practice values the diversity of the children as a resource that enhances the learning experience.¹⁶ Inclusive approach to teaching means recognizing, accommodating, and meeting the learning needs of all students, acknowledging that students have a range of individual

¹² Merriam- Webster Dictionary. "Caregiver." Retrieved July 2, 2021 from Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caregiver>.

¹³ Collins Dictionary (n.d.) Definition of Daycare Centre. Retrieved July 2, 2021 from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/daycare-centre>

¹⁴ Disability and Health Overview. Retrieved June 24, 2021 from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html>

¹⁵ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2008) Policy Brief: Ten Steps to Equity in Education. Retrieved June 10, 2021 from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/39989494.pdf>

¹⁶ Equality Challenge Unit (2013) Equality and Diversity for Academics: Inclusive Practice. Retrieved June 12, 2021 <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/e-and-d-for-academics-factsheet-inclusive-practice.pdf>

learning needs and are members of diverse communities and avoiding stereotyping of students as belonging to specific groups with fixed predictable and fixed approaches to learning¹⁷.

Quality of childcare is defined as a degree of excellence which means not average, but excellent. Bottom line, parents need to feel that the child care provider they select will offer a safe and stimulating, loving environment in which their child will mentally and physically thrive¹⁸.

Responsive caregiving recognizes that every child has unique needs and preferences, and that young children learn best through back-and-forth social interactions with trusted adults. It is teaching and parenting practice that promotes the social and emotional health of children. It involves, tuning into child cues (eye gazes, gestures, facial expressions, sounds etc.), thinking about what the child is trying to communicate and responding to the child in a sensitive way¹⁹.

2.3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

The National Policy on Child Daycare facilities is guided by the following principles.

1. All children have the right to survival and development.

2. All actions concerning children should take into account the best interest of the child or group of children as the primary consideration. The Interest of others (parents, community, state) should not be the overriding concern²⁰.

3. Every child in the daycare should have the opportunity to develop in an environment that is safe, secure, and responsive to children's needs. It gives parents the feeling that their children are in safe hands and would contribute towards the increase of working parents' productivity.

4. Caregivers should be well trained, and trustworthy and should possess the right attitudes and skills and respond appropriately to children's different needs. Knowledge of the growth and development of children, their learning styles, and their unique characteristics is essential for caregivers.

¹⁷ University of Tasmania (2018). Teaching and Learning: Inclusive practices. Retrieved June 13, 2021 from <https://www.teaching-learning.utas.edu.au/unit-design/inclusive-practices>

¹⁸ California Department of Education (n.d.) Defining Quality Child Care Retrieved 20 June 2021 from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/caqdefinecare.asp>

¹⁹Rackas, L. (2019) What is Responsive Caregiving. Retrieved May 11, 2021 from <https://info.childcareaware.org/blog/responsive-caregiving>

²⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Articles 6 and 3 Retrieved May 30, 2021 From <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

5. Respect for children’s developmental needs, their views, unique characteristics, and the cultures of their families is paramount for their healthy development. Caregivers should respect children and protect them from any form of discrimination. No child should be discriminated against based on appearance, gender, ethnicity, religion, social status, or disability.

6. Relationships between the caregiver and the child’s parents/guardians/family are of utmost importance for the child’s well being. When the relationship between parents and caregivers is characterized by respect and a constructive approach, the children have a more positive attitude to the setting and to learning²¹.

7. Play and leisure is an important requisite in daycare environments. Children learn many things through play. They learn to make friends, collaborate, make decisions, and experience both failure and success. Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognizes the right of every child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities and free and full participation in cultural and artistic life.

8. Children with disability should not be left behind. While promoting Inclusion where ever possible, child care services specifically designed for such children should be made available to promote their well-being.

2.4. VISION AND MISSION OF THE POLICY

VISION

Equitable and affordable high-quality, child daycare services with opportunities for children to reach their full potential in safe, loving, and nurturing environments that meet the needs of children, parents/guardians and Families.

MISSION

To ensure all child daycare facilities in Sri Lanka

- conform to standards and regulations,
- provide a valuable service to parents, especially working parents and families in delivering safe, affordable, high quality care
- involve parents/guardians in centre activities enabling them to become full partners of their children’s progress ; and
- support children’s physical well-being, social, emotional and cognitive development enabling them to become responsible citizens.

²¹Barnardos National Children’s Resource Centre (2006) Parental Involvement: A handbook for Child Care Providers. Retrieved from https://www.barnardos.ie/media/1495/parental_involvement.pdf

2.5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

This Policy aims at facilitating the expansion of child daycare facilities and regulating them to provide equitable and affordable high-quality care that supports children’s holistic development in safe caring environments and gives working parents/families the feeling that their children are in safe hands.

1. To expand equitable access to affordable child daycare facilities for children of working parents/families.
2. To facilitate provision of high-quality child daycare services to ensure children reach their full potential.
3. To expand high quality child daycare facilities for children with disabilities.
4. To enhance effectiveness of the child daycare management.
5. To introduce an implementation framework to ensure effective governance and accountability.

2.6. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

AREA 1: QUALITY OF CARE PROVIDED

POLICY 1.1: Ensure that the physical environment in every child daycare centre is safe, adequately spacious, well-equipped and suitable to fulfill the needs of all children.

1. Strengthen relevant responsible authorities to implement national guidelines stipulated by the NCPA on the physical environment of the child daycare facility.
2. Introduce concessionary loan schemes, and other financial assistance to qualified child daycare service providers to upgrade the physical environment with required space, furniture, learning materials, and play materials.
3. Provide financial or material support to establish new centers with physical environments that meet the national guidelines stipulated by the NCPA.
4. Facilitate child daycare centers in targeted areas through appropriate guidance and financial support to improve physical environments to suit children’s developmental needs.

5. Promote generating interest in the private sector and philanthropists to improve physical environments in child daycare centers conducted as a welfare service.
6. Facilitate child daycare centers to separate the space allocated for the preschool from the center premises.
7. Enhance awareness of parents/guardians on the influence of the physical environment on children's development.

POLICY 1.2: Ensure every child daycare centre promotes children's right to good health and nutrition.

1. Provide guidelines on healthy food and drinks, mealtime environment and play environment for caregivers.
2. Ensure that children's physical and emotional needs are monitored regularly by the caregivers.
3. Facilitate caregivers to design children's environment in the centre to promote children's interest in good health and nutrition.
4. Facilitate awareness programs for parents/guardians on health, physical activity and nutrition.
5. Encourage utilizing services of the community and front-line health care officers to promote health and nutrition of children.
6. Facilitate access to quality health, dental, and developmental screenings and comprehensive follow-up for children in child day care.

POLICY 1.3: Ensure every caregiver provides effective responsive care in the child daycare.

Strategies

1. Strengthen caregivers' ability to identify the child's needs and wants, to follow the child's lead, help the child to focus, support the child's exploration, and scaffold development.
2. Facilitate awareness programs for parents/guardians on responsive care-giving enabling them to recognize the needs and preferences of children and respond appropriately to promote their development.

3. Introduce resources and guidance to caregivers to facilitate responsive care-giving practices in the child daycare setting.
4. Facilitate practices that ensure every child feels a sense of belonging and feels positive about him/her.

Policy 1.4: Ensure every child daycare centre provides children the opportunity to learn and thrive.

Strategies

1. Facilitate child daycare centers to be equipped with age-appropriate resources such as educational material and equipment that allow children to explore and discover.
2. Facilitate child daycare centers to set up a literacy center/ library to support children's language development. Family and community support can be obtained for the provision of these resources.
3. Guide for child daycare centers to adopt a routine to facilitate learning opportunities. This may support older children to engage in formal educational activities.
4. Promote caregivers to provide age-appropriate play situations that enhance children's learning.
5. Facilitate the production of learning materials that can be used by any adult to enhance children's learning.
6. Facilitate providing learning spaces that are welcoming and comfortable and everyone including children with disability or suspected disabilities gets an opportunity to participate.
7. Ensure caregivers share information with parents/guardians that can support children's learning.

Policy 1.5: Ensure that every child in the daycare centre is protected from abuse and other environmental dangers, and feel safe and secure.

Strategies

1. Provincial institutions responsible for child daycare centers shall ensure all staff recruited to work in the child daycare center is trustworthy and with good character. They act in the best interest of the child. Caregivers should be capable of taking steps to protect the child

from discrimination, bullying, and other environmental dangers.

2. Introduce a code of ethical conduct for all caregivers and other personnel working with children.

3. Introduce mechanisms to ensure that all children in the daycare center are protected from all forms of abuse and violence. Caregivers should be trained to identify such situations, provide referrals while ensuring care and confidentiality, and make children, parents/guardians and families aware of reporting pathways.

4. Facilitate caregivers to empower children in the child daycare center to be safe in a variety of situations through awareness programs on personal safety.

5. Strengthen provincial institutions responsible for child daycare centers to take appropriate action concerning child abuse and other environmental dangers.

Policy 1.6: Ensure that caregivers in every child daycare centre are professionally qualified.

1. Provide necessary guidance every caregiver to acquire professional qualifications in childcare stipulated in the National Guidelines

2. Facilitate capacity-building programs that reflect the most recent knowledge for caregivers on care-giving practices.

3. Facilitate and strengthen caregivers' capacity to protect children from physical dangers, emotional stress, and environmental risks.

4. Provide necessary guidance to access the provision of resources such as handbooks, and other materials to support caregivers to update their knowledge and skills on child development, learning, and child protection.

5. Support caregivers to acquire skills necessary in engaging families in child daycare center activities appropriately and create environments where families and staff can learn from each other.

6. Facilitate emergency preparedness of caregivers to ensure continuity of child daycare services before, during, and after an emergency.

7. Introduce a valid assessment criterion to gauge the caregiver's knowledge, attitude, and practices.

8. Facilitate capacity-building of caregivers identifying and dealing with children's developmental disorders or developmental delays.

AREA 2: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE CHILD DAYCARE FACILITIES

Policy 2.1: Ensure equitable and affordable access to child daycare facilities

STRATEGIES

1. Facilitate government institutions to provide affordable child daycare facilities in their work premises for their workforce. A childcare development fund can be established to support this cause.

2. Facilitate non-governmental employers to provide child daycare facilities in their workplaces by providing incentives such as tax credits.

3. Design a system of an affordable child daycare center in multiple settings such as family-based, community-based, and non-governmental organization based.

4. Introduce a universal child benefits program that provides direct financial relief for all families that need child daycare services for their children or a child daycare subsidy scheme to support parents/guardians to meet the cost of quality childcare on per child basis, (families receiving or eligible to receive support from social protection schemes and children with disability can be given preference).

5. Facilitate provincial governments to plan affordable child daycare facilities for eligible families in targeted areas (under-served, un-served, and disadvantaged areas). Subsidized daycare can be provided as a social support service at a minimal cost as suggested in the Alternative Care Policy (page14)

6. Introduce a concessionary loan scheme for qualified caregivers to establish child daycare centers on a cooperative basis.

7. Introduce an insurance scheme for child daycare centers to ensure continuity and sustainability of services.

8. Promote inclusive practices in the child daycare center to increase enrollment of children with disabilities. Incentives could be provided for such services.

AREA 3: CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

Policy 3.1: Ensure equitable access to affordable, high-quality daycare facilities for children with disability.

Strategies

1. Facilitate national and provincial government institutions to establish/promote high-quality, affordable child daycare centers for children with disability.
2. Promote inclusion of children with disability through increasing public awareness of the benefits of inclusion and providing incentives for child daycare centers that include such children.
3. Provide financial support through subsidies, tax deductions, concessionary loan schemes, etc. for institutions/individuals who provide childcare support for children with disability.
4. Facilitate providing appropriate resources for child daycare centers catering to children with disability and providing training to enhance the knowledge and competencies of caregivers serving in such centers.
5. Promote establishing a fund or introducing a program to facilitate child daycare centers for children with disability.
6. Facilitate collaboration within the government sector institutions such as health, social services, child development for screening, health visits, caregiver development, etc.

AREA 4: CHILD DAY-CARE CENTRE MANAGEMENT

Policy 4.1: Ensure an efficient and effective child daycare centre management.

Strategies

1. Facilitate child day care services to provide written information on its management for parents/guardians and families since client satisfaction is important.
2. Ensure child daycare management adheres to National Child Daycare Guidelines stipulated by the NCPA.

3. Ensure child daycare management work in collaboration with parents/guardians and families of children in the center.
4. Ensure that records prescribed in the National Child Daycare Guidelines are updated regularly to be accurate and current.
5. Facilitate child daycare management to use realistic and flexible daily and weekly schedules in the facility.
6. Facilitate child daycare management to ensure that risks are minimized and managed appropriately.

AREA 5: REGULATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

Policy 5.1 Ensure effective regulations and accountable governance for child daycare

Facilities.

Strategies

1. Define core elements of centre-based, workplace-based and home-based childcare facilities. Facilitate introducing effective regulations for each type of child daycare centers.
2. Strengthen the institutional and individual capacity of the provincial institutions responsible for childcare, by increasing their capacity and investing more in their professional development.
3. Facilitate Provincial Departments of Probation and Child Care to maintain a data base of child daycare centers and implement a consolidated registration system in respective provinces.
4. Develop quality assurance instruments to assess quality of the care provided.
5. Facilitate NCPA for regular monitoring of child daycare centers.
6. Facilitate use of current information system that tracks important indicators of child daycare facilities.
7. Promote the role of private sector service provision, subject to effective government oversight and regulation.

- Facilitate advisory services from national, international, local non-governmental agencies etc

2.7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

The GOSL shall implement the National Policy on Child Daycare Facilities through the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child development. To adopt a reporting system from national to grassroots level and vice versa for effective implementation of the policy, coordination committees shall be established at different levels of governance linking the central government at ministerial level, with lower tiers. These committees shall coordinate and facilitate activities related to strategies stated in the respective areas of the policy (Figure 2.1 presents the implementation structure of the policy).

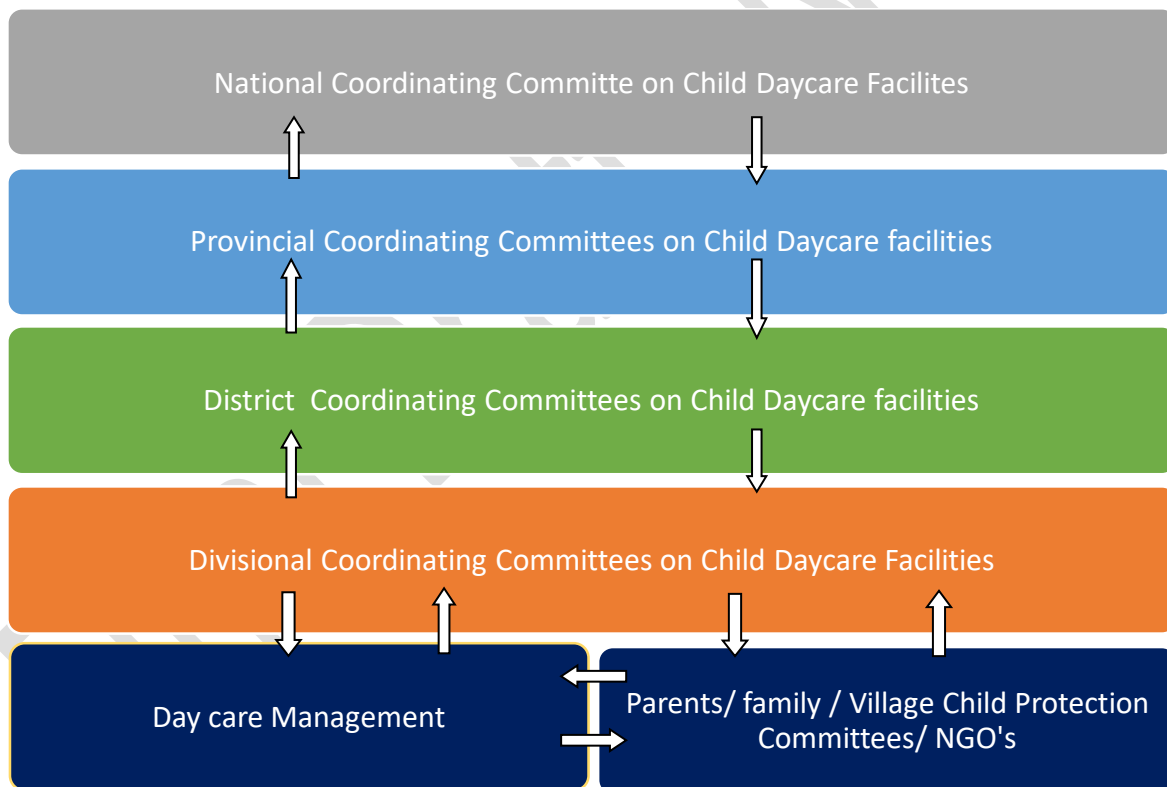


Figure 2.1: Implementation structure of the National Policy on Child Daycare Facilities

2.7.1. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEES

- **The National Coordinating Committee on Child Day Care Facilities.**

The National Coordinating Committee (NCC) shall be appointed by the Secretary of the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child development. The NCC shall oversee the implementation of the policy and make adjustments when deemed necessary. The NCC also has the power to appoint technical committees consisting relevant expertise related to areas for action stated in the policy when deemed necessary. It shall be chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child development or an officer appointed by the Secretary. The Department of Probation and Childcare services act as the secretariat of this committee and shall be responsible to operationalize the recommendations of the committee. The committee shall consist of the following members:

1. Secretary of the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child Development or a representative appointed by the Secretary (Chairperson).
2. Commissioner, Department of Probation and Childcare Services (Secretary).
3. Provincial Commissioners of Probation and Childcare Services.
4. Chairman/Deputy Chairman of National Child Protection Authority.
5. Director or Deputy Director/ Assistant Director of National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development.
6. An Additional Secretary appointed by the Secretary of Ministry of Education.
7. A representative appointed by the Ministry of Finance.
8. Director or a senior executive officer appointed by the Director, Sri Lanka Women's Bureau.
9. Director or a senior executive officer appointed by the Director, Department of Social Services.

10. Director or a senior executive officer appointed by the Director, Family Health Bureau.
11. Director General or a senior executive officer appointed by the Director General of the Plantation Human Development Trust.
12. Director or a senior executive officer appointed by the Director, Child and Women Bureau, Sri Lanka Police Department.

Members of the NCC are appointed for a period of three (3) years by the Secretary of the Ministry responsible for the subject women and child Affairs. It will meet twice a year and the quorum shall be more than 50% of members

▪ **Provincial Coordinating Committees on Child Day Care Facilities.**

The CRC Monitoring Committees in each province shall appoint a subcommittee to function as the Provincial Coordination Committees (PCC) to oversee the implementation of the policy at provincial level. It has the power to appoint technical committees consisting relevant expertise related to areas for action stated in the policy when deemed necessary. The PCC shall be chaired by the Chief Secretary of the province or a senior officer appointed by the Chief Secretary. The Provincial Department of Probation and Child Care Services in the respective province shall act as the secretariat and shall be responsible to operationalize the recommendations of the committee.

1. Chief Secretary or a senior officer appointed by the Chief Secretary (Chairperson).
2. Provincial Commissioner, Department of Probation and Childcare services (Secretary).
3. Provincial Director or a representative appointed by the Director of the Provincial Department of Social Services.
4. Provincial Director or a representative appointed by the Provincial Director of Education.
5. Provincial Director or a representative appointed by the respective Provincial Departments of Health Services.
6. Director of the Provincial Preschool Authority/Unit.
7. A senior executive officer representing the Police Department.

8. A representative of the Plantation Human Development Trust (if applicable).
9. A representative appointed by the Chairman/NCPA.
10. A representative of the district coordination committee on child daycare facilities.
11. A representative nominated by the Provincial Chief Secretary from Non Governmental Organization (NGO) works for children.

Members of the PCC are appointed by the Chief Secretary on the recommendation of the CRC Monitoring Committee for a period of three (3) years. The committee shall meet thrice a year and the quorum shall be more than 50% of the total number of members.

▪ **District Coordinating Committee on Child Day Care Facilities.**

District CRC Monitoring Committee shall appoint a subcommittee to function as the District Coordinating Committee (DCC) on Child Daycare Facilities. This committee shall be chaired by the District Secretary or an Additional District Secretary appointed by the District Secretary. The District Probation and Childcare Officer/ District Senior Probation Officer shall act as the secretary of the committee.

Members of the committee shall be:

1. District Secretary or an Additional District Secretary appointed by the District Secretary (Chairperson).
2. District officer in Charge of Probation and Child Care Services/ District Senior Probation Officer (Secretary).
3. Director or a representative nominated by the director of District Health Services.
4. Director or an officer nominated by the director of provincial Preschool Authority/Unit.
5. Director or an officer nominated by the director Zonal Education Office.
6. Senior Superintendent of Police.
7. District ECD Officer.
8. District Social Service Officer (Central Government)

9. District Social Service Officer (Provincial Council)
10. District Child Rights Promotion Officer/ Assistant
11. District Counseling Officer
12. District Women Development Officer.
13. District Child Protection Officer (NCPA).
14. District Psychosocial Officer (NCPA)
15. A representative of the Divisional Coordinating Committee on Childcare facilities.

Members of the DCC are appointed by the District Secretary on the recommendation of the CRC Monitoring Committee for a period of three (3) years. The committee shall meet on quarterly basis and the quorum shall be more than 50% of the total number of members.

▪ **Divisional Coordinating Committee on Child Day Care Facilities.**

Sub committees appointed by the Divisional CRC Monitoring Committees established in each Divisional Secretariat Division function as the Divisional Coordination Committees (Div.CC) to implement the National Policy on Child Daycare facilities at Divisional level. The Divisional Secretary or Assistant Divisional Secretary shall be the chairperson of this committee. The Probation Officers attached to the Divisional Secretariats shall act as the secretary of this committee. The committee consists of the following members,

1. Divisional Secretary or Assistant Divisional Secretary (Chairperson).
2. Probation and Childcare Services Officer/ Probation Officer In charge (Secretary).
3. Divisional Medical Officer of Health or an officer appointed by the Divisional Medical officer of Health.
4. Divisional Director of Education.
5. ECD/Development Officer/Assistant.
6. Social Services Officer.

7. Manager, Samurdhi.
8. An officer attached to relevant Provincial institution established for ECCD/preschool education.
9. Child Rights Promotion Officer.
10. Counseling officer/ Assistant
11. Child Protection Officer.
12. Women Development Officer.
13. Police officer representing Women and Child Desk.
14. Two members representing child daycare centre Managers.
15. Two members representing parents/family.

Members of the Div.CC are appointed by the Divisional Secretary on the recommendation of the CRC Monitoring Committee for a period of three (3) years. The committee shall meet at least twice a year and the quorum shall be more than 50% of members.

2.8. SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF CHILD DAYCARE CENTRES

The policy shall facilitate implementation of a well-developed framework for supervision and monitoring of child daycare centers operating in Sri Lanka. The Department of Probation and Child Care Services and Provincial Departments of Probation and Child Care Services, with the support of District Secretariats and Divisional Secretariats shall supervise child daycare centers to ensure that they comply with standards and guidelines provided by the GOSL and provide a quality service to children parents/families. National Child Protection Authority shall monitor quality of all daycare centers. A well-coordinated monitoring mechanism is implemented to enhance quality and efficiency of monitoring.

A comprehensive current information system needs to be established in the NCPA , the Department of Probation and Child Care Services and the Provincial Departments of Probation and Child Care Services for data collection, compilation and analysis. Tools should be developed for effective monitoring of child daycare centers and their compliance with administrative rules, regulations and policies. All these institutions are required to maintain a data base of all child daycare services including child daycare services provided to children with disability.

Evaluations should be conducted to measure the outcomes, identify gaps and improve the performance of all daycare centers. To improve the quality of child daycare services provided to children the relevant institutions should introduce a performance rating system and reward quality service providers. This would increase awareness among parents/guardians in relation to quality of the child daycare services.

2.9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

▪ **The Ministry in Charge of the subject Women and Child Development**

Currently, the National Child Protection Authority, the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Women's Bureau, National Committee on Women and the National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development are the institutions functioning under the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child development. Among the tasks assigned to this Ministry are empowering women with knowledge and skills to enjoy a successful life, saving children from all forms of abuse, providing and monitoring methodologies that ensure their wellbeing, creating a child friendly school environment and ensuring education for all²².

Since the Department of Probation and Child Care Services is responsible for children who need care, this institution shall play an important role in providing care needed for children in daycare centers. It shall be the main Department in the Ministry in overseeing implementation of the Policy.

The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) advises the GOSL in the formulation of a National Policy on the prevention of child abuse and the protection and treatment of children who are victims of such abuse. As such, this policy has been formulated by the NCPA with a view to provide all children who need daycare facilities safe, loving, nurturing and well protected environments that meet the needs of children, parents and families. It has a role to play as a member of the NCC in ensuring the daycare centers are safe for children. Monitoring of quality, safety and security of daycare centers is the sole responsibility of the NCPA.

The Women's Bureau designs implements and evaluate programs suitable for economic and social empowerment of women. As a member of the National Coordinating Committee It shall contribute in the implementation process of this policy and ensure working women quality childcare facilities.

²²<http://www.childwomenmin.gov.lk/>

- **Ministry in Charge of the Subject Health and Nutrition**

The Ministry of Health (MoH) is major stakeholder in health and nutrition status of Sri Lankan children. The National Policy on Maternal and Child Health introduced by the Ministry in 2012 covers women during pregnancy, delivery and post-partum period, and newborns, infants and children up to 18 years.²³ With regard to the implementation of the National Policy on Child Daycare centre Facilities the aforementioned institutions of the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child development shall work closely with the MoH and its Family Health Bureau (FHB) in matters concerning health, nutrition and psychosocial development of children in daycare centers as well as policy matters with regard to child daycare facilities.

- **Ministry in Charge of the subject Education**

Children up to 12 years who spend their time after school in daycare centers are covered by this policy. Conversely, there are after school daycare centers mostly run by private schools. Recognizing the authority of the Ministry of Education (MOE) with regard to the school education, the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child development shall work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in the policy implementation process.

- **Department of Social Services**

The Department of Social Services has a significant role to play to achieve equity in the implementation process of the National Policy on Child Daycare Facilities. It has an island-wide network which is invaluable in providing care opportunities for children who are placed in most vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. Children placed in disadvantaged situations such as disability is one of the priority areas of this Policy. Since childcare needs integrated approaches and strategies the Ministry in Charge of Women and Child Development shall work closely with the Department of Social Services in providing child daycare facilities to most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families as well as such marginalized communities.

- **Provincial Councils**

The 13th Amendment to the constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Probation and child care services and the supervision of the management preschools have been devolved to Provincial Councils. Therefore, Provincial Departments of Probation and Childcare Services are responsible in expanding access, ensuring quality and effective management and overall monitoring of the functions of child daycare centers. Since providing opportunities for learning in the daycare

²³ National Policy on Maternal and Child Health, Ministry of Health Retrieved on July 3.21 from http://www.health.gov.lk/moh_final/english/public/elfinder/files/publications/publishpolicy/4_Maternal%20and%20Child%20Health.pdf

centre is an important area in this policy and some of the child daycare centers are operating with early childhood development centers, provincial regulatory bodies established for early childhood education should support the Provincial Departments of Probation and Childcare Services in the implementation of the National Policy on Child Daycare Facilities. The Provincial statute on preschool education of the Uva Province shows that daycare centers especially daycare centers operating with the preschools have been supervised by the PC. In this context, it is envisioned that the PCs shall work in collaboration with the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child development at national level and with the Provincial Departments of Probation and Childcare Services at provincial level to implement this policy effectively.

- **Plantation Human Development Trust**

The Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) implements social development programs to enhance the quality of life of the community in the estates managed by the Regional Plantation Companies. It manages child daycare centers for children of their workers. To uplift the life of this community and provide their children opportunities to learn and develop in caring environments, the PHDT will closely work with the Ministry in charge of the subject women and child development and the Provincial, District and Divisional Coordinating Committees in the process of implementing the National Policy on Child Daycare Facilities.

- **Child Daycare Centre Management**

As a key stakeholder in the provision of child daycare facilities the management should comply with the standards and regulations laid down by the GOSL. The management is responsible for the structural quality (infrastructure facilities and space; health and safety provisions; adult - child ratios and group size; staff qualifications; staff wages etc.²⁴) and the process quality (daily experiences of children in the child daycare settings) of the child daycare centre. Process quality consists of the social, emotional, physical and instructional aspects of children's activities and interactions with caregivers, peers and material that are considered as proximal determinant of child development. Child daycare management would be represented in their respective Div.CC and shall work with the committee for effective implementation of this policy.

- **Parents/guardians, Family and Village Child Protection Committees.**

Children thrive when parents and caregivers are partners in their day-to-day activities.²⁵ Since child's identity is rooted in his/her family they feel secure when they know that parents trust teachers and

²⁴Bonetti, S., (2018) Structural Elements of Quality Early Years Provision: A Review of the Evidence, Retrieved from https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Early-years-structural-quality-review_EPI.pdf

²⁵ Retrieved on July 8, 2021 from <https://childwatch.com/blog/2018/11/02/family-engagement-a-partnership-between-childcare-centers-and-families/>

vice versa and that there is a mutual respect between them. As beneficiaries of child daycare services and ground level stakeholders of the policy implementation process parents/guardians, families and village child protection committees are represented in the Div.CC. They shall work with other stakeholders to implement this policy successfully.

- **Non-Governmental Organizations.**

Non-governmental organizations in the country that are active at the national and international levels regarding child safety and development are also working closely with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and provincial, district, and regional coordination committees to implement this national policy on child daycare facilities.

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