

## **BRIEF REPORT ON THE DIALOGUE ON THE COORDINATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

**Venue: Park Inn Hotel, 118 Katherine Street, Sandton**

### **PREAMBLE:**

The Director of Motheo Training Institute Trust, Mr. Rex Molefe attended the Dialogue on the coordination of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Services and this dialogue on coordination of Early Childhood Development Services was organized by National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and its partners, such as Department of Basic Education, Education Dialogue South Africa, Ilifa Labantwana and others.

### **PURPOSE:**

This was a dialogue on the possibility of migration of ECD from the Department of Social Development (DSD) to the Department of Basic Education (DoE) and also to examine the status quo of ECD Service provisioning in South Africa.

### **PRESENTATIONS:**

Presentations during this dialogue were made by the following organizations:

- UNICEF
- Ilifa Labantwana
- Department of Basic Education
- Department of Health
- ECD Forum Diepsloot

It is also worth mentioning that the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), Union formations, such as COSATU were part and parcel of this dialogue and that a key department that was missing was the DSD.

### **DELIBERATIONS:**

Inputs on the coordination and provisioning of ECD based on perspectives and proposals were made and the attendees and/or participants came up with substantive recommendations which ought to be taken to various Government Departments, existing structures and in particular to the South African Early Childhood Development Intersectoral Forum which is a Statutory Body deriving its existence and mandate from the National Early Childhood Development Integrated Policy and the National Development Plan.

The meeting did not resolve on the issue of ECD migrating from DSD to DoE as there is no formal communiqué from the Government apart from the talks that are taking place within the Government circles. The position of the Civil Society in the dialogue was clear and that is to say Civil Society needs to be engaged on this matter formally by the Government. Civil Society also needs to be consulted as consultation is a Constitutional requirement and imperative. As such, Civil Society

will appreciate such consultations right from the initial planning stages and throughout the process and **not** when a decision is already taken.

Many issues were raised, including schoolification of early childhood development which might have some negative serious implications on the holistic development of children and the big issue for the Civil Society is not merely about migration of ECD from the DSD to DoE ,it is about proper and effective coordination and appropriate provisioning of ECD, proper financing and resourcing of ECD services , comprehensive coverage and universal access to quality ECD service provisioning.

### **Challenges/issues that were raised:**

- The system lacks awareness of children with disabilities
- There is no systemic ability to regulate/promote quality
- Fractured civil society structures – we need one voice
- Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined in government
- The regulatory framework is prohibitory
- Lack of coordination shown by DSD not being present at this dialogue

### **Successes so far**

- The ECD system harnesses massive network of social capital and local delivery experience
- Political interest has crystallised into policy – resources need to follow
- Government is beginning to plan for continuum of services
- Pioneering programmes that can show the way to scale
- Management tools for ECD have been developed

### **How should ECD services be delivered?**

- A child's development should be followed from conception onwards
- Continuing of targeted ECD programmes
- Strengthen integrated nutrition strategy – to prevent early stunting
- Engage with municipalities, government departments and civil society to build full spectrum of services
- The role of parents needs to be emphasised upon
- Administrative, regulatory data and quality assurance systems must be in place
- Nutrition must be a national priority
- Roles and responsibilities across departments and levels of government must be clearly defined and there needs to be accountability within these roles
- ECD needs to be sufficiently funded
- ELOM must be used as a national tool to assess school readiness
- Professionalise the sector
- Cross departmental coordination
- Need a comprehensive data management system to track the child

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The attendees and/or participants came up with some substantive recommendations and the main ones were:

- Further discussions on the migration of ECD from DSD to DoE need to take place between Government and ECD Civil ECD Organizations. Civil Society needs to be part of these discussions as part of consultations right from the beginning.
- ECD Sector as a Civil Society need to be united and speak with one voice and be able to coordinate around issues of advocacy and lobbying
- Effective coordination of ECD Service Provisioning is required and such coordination structures should be located and housed within the Presidency.

These are some of the recommendations and there were also some 11 principles that were summed up by the Chief Executive Officer of NECT, Mr. Godwin Khosa and this is what ought to inform the process around this issue going forward. Some of the 11 Principles include:

Need for open engagement, dialogue and transparency

Regulatory framework that recognises the dynamism of the ECD environment

Political will

Need for systems such as databases

The need to facilitate and support government and civil society

The need to professionalise the sector

Clear goals – expanding quality and coverage

**WAY FORWARD:**

It was agreed that there shall be further deliberations on the recommendations and that these recommendations should be submitted to various Government Departments and the National ECD Integrated Forum to be debated. The recommendations should be accompanied by other proposals which come from different forums and organizations so that they can be consolidated and presented to the interdepartmental Committee, Interministerial Committee and finally to the cabinet in Parliament.

**CONCLUSION:**

Therefore, as Motheo Training Institute Trust and many other Civil Society Organizations, we hope that these recommendations will be taken forward as recommended herein to avoid a talk shop.

**SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS:****Caring for children in the first 1000 days Sebotse Ngake**

DoH's main priority as it relates to ECD is the implantation of the Nutrition Guidelines and the road to health card. The Nutrition Guidelines aim to improve nutrition status of infants and young children attending ECD programmes.

The Road to Health card which has been restructured around 5 pillars:

- Nutrition

- Love, play and talk
- Protection (Immunisation and so forth)
- Healthcare (Provision of Interventions)
- Extra care (Birth registrations, food security etc)

### **Transition to formal schooling Marie Louise Samuels**

DBE's main priorities lie within the mandates they work with which are:

(1) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) goal #4 which is access to quality education for all

(2) the national development plan and

(3) ECD in Medium Term Strategic Framework with the indicators being:

- the participation rate in organised learning; and
- the percentage of children under 5 years old who are developmentally on track

DBE aims to making 2 years of quality preschool for 4 and 5 year olds compulsory before grade 1 and to also address coordination weakness. There has been progress in that the expansion of the grade R programme has seen nearly 95% of children entering grade 1 having attended grade R. Education participation amongst young children has also increased, however the quality of service provision is still a challenge. The way forward includes finalising a comprehensive integrated strategy, an integrated data management system, a comprehensive integrated monitoring system and organising an annual ECD Indaba.

### **Panel Discussion**

#### **UNICEF**

#### **Coordination**

Main challenge is the lack of coordination within the departments and a lack of coordination within civil society organisations. There may be too many people looking from the outside in rather than supporting government. To combat this, we need to step back from our own turf and create some clear role differentiation.

#### **Ilifa Labantwana**

#### **Issues on resourcing**

The sector is under resourced. The funding model focuses on children who are fortunate enough to have access to ECD centres. The government is struggling to scale up ECD centre based programmes. A system that provides quality education needs to be created as the focus is currently on compliance rather than quality. The current budget needs to be significantly increased to meet SDG goals so we

need rapid scale up. We should draw on lessons learned and tap into what already exists. We also need to support community based environments.

### **ECD Forum Diepsloot**

We need to involve those that work in these environments in the decision making process. Department requirements cannot be met in Diepsloot and other informal settlements and therefore these settlements cannot gain access to benefits and when the department of health comes to implement programmes they do not have the resources such as nutritional services.

**Report compiled by: Mr. Rex Molefe-The Director of Motheo Training Institute Trust**