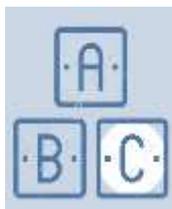


KwaZulu Natal Early Childhood Development Community of Practice
Meeting Highlights 16 March 2021

Virtual meeting



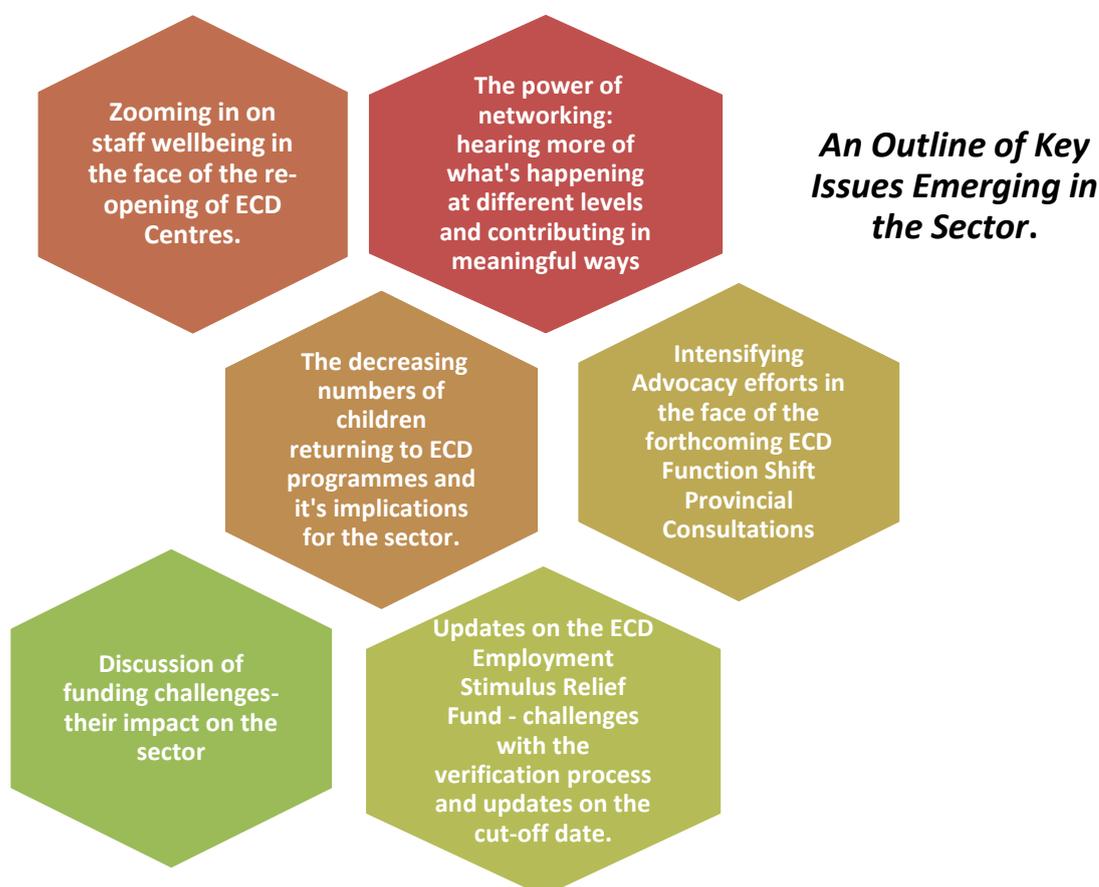
WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Patsy Pillay, the facilitator for the KZN ECD CoP, welcomed participants to the first virtual KZN ECD CoP meeting for 2021. The CoP participants were invited to check in by introducing themselves, which organization they were from and expectations for the meeting.



SETTING THE SCENE

BRIDGE ECD Project Manager, Thandeka Rantsi, explained that this being the first CoP of the year, the meeting would be conversational and focus on identifying key sectoral developments and planning for the CoPs that would follow later in the year. Reflecting on the developments that have emerged in the sector, on-the-ground experience and shared challenges that participants are facing, the following emerged as the key issues to be prioritised:





NATIONAL ECD COP UPDATE

Sector developments

Thandeka shared updates on the following key developments in the sector: ECD Employment Stimulus Relief Fund; Updates on the ECD Function Shift; The Real Reform Campaign; and the World Forum Activities.

- **ECD Employment Stimulus Relief Fund** - Following a presidential announcement made in October 2020, a total of about R496 million from Presidential Employment Stimulus Package was allocated to support the sector, following the negative impact of C-19 on ECD services. All types of ECD services (Registered, conditionally registered or unregistered), including centre and non-centre based services like Play groups; Toy Libraries; Child Minders; and Mobile ECD programmes were considered eligible to apply for the fund. This process was led by the Department of Social Development (DSD), with the Intersectoral Forum Steering Committee and the DG Murry Trust (PMO) assisting the application, funding disbursement process and overall project management features. Supporting organisations were appointed to give capacity to the DSD. To date, about 28280 applications were submitted, by the closing date.
- **ECD Function Shift from DSD To DBE** – From 1 April 2022 the Department of Basic Education (DBE) will assume responsibility of ECD, based on Chapters 5 and 6 of the Children’s Act 2005 (No. 38 of 2005). This includes the handling of subsidies and funding involved in the provision of ECD. The DSD will retain the welfare elements of provisions. There will be further consultations on the process, starting 9 April 2021.
- **Real Reform Campaign** -The Real Reform for ECD Campaign was launched in October 2020 in response to the Children’s Amendment Bill which did not address the issues the ECD sector has with the Children’s Act. Given that there has been insufficient consultation with the DBE and SALGA, parliament will not be able to consider the current amendments and a new process of consultations will be instituted. The Real Reform is campaigning for stronger advocacy from the sector to apply pressure on parliament to accelerate this process-the ECD sector simply cannot afford to wait another five years. The Campaign’s efforts are geared towards five key reforms:



1 We need a one-step registration process for ECD providers and different types of ECD providers must be regulated differently.

2 All children attending any type of ECD programme should be able to access the early learning subsidy if they need it.

3 Simpler, adequate health, safety and programme standards must be in place and must be accessed through one process.

4 It must be made clear that you can get conditional registration if you can't meet all the registration requirements and MECs must support providers to meet requirements and report on their systems of support.

5 The infrastructure needs of the sector must be supported.

REFORM 1 We need a one-step registration process for ECD providers. Different types of ECD programme providers including playgroups, toy libraries and home-based care must be regulated differently. A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate.

REFORM 2 All children attending any type of ECD programme should be able to access the early learning subsidy if they need it.

REFORM 3 Simpler, adequate health, safety and programme standards must be in place and must be accessed through one process.

REFORM 4 It must be made clear that you can get conditional registration if you can't meet all the registration requirements. MECs must support providers meeting their commitments to meet registration requirements and they must be required to report to the Minister on progress achieved.

REFORM 5 The infrastructure needs of the sector must be supported. Current providers (including on private land) should be able to receive support and municipalities must be required to provide for and maintain sufficient and appropriate ECD infrastructure in their regions.

(Source: www.ecdreform.org.za)

- **World Forum Virtual Tour** – Due to the C-19 pandemic, the World Forum has initiated a virtual ECD world Tour, as opposed to the usual face-to-face conference held every two years. This year South Africa will be featured

alongside nine other countries, showcasing various aspects of the South African ECD landscape. The Virtual Tour will take place on 7 – 14 April 2021.

PLENARY DISCUSSION



ECD Employment Stimulus Relief Fund: There also issues with the applications for ECD Employment Stimulus Relief Fund – CoP members expressed that they have had challenges accessing funding due to SARS compliance and bank account requirements. The application process is onerous and the challenges are compounded by the fact there are people charging exorbitant amounts of money to assist practitioners with the application process.

ECD Function Shift from DSD to DBE:

- CoP Members expressed concerns about the Function Shift, especially as it relates to how the DSD and DBE would communicate information moving forward- Will there be a directorate specifically for ECD or Are ECDs going to be under the same umbrella as the Grade R? Who are the departments going to be answerable to?
- The CoP noted, with great concern, comments from a recent Portfolio Committee meeting, where the growing perception seems to be that ECD is a form of social entrepreneurship and not necessarily a foundational and critical service. These sorts of perceptions create challenges for the sector, especially when coupled with the forthcoming budget cuts from DSD, and the effects that these budget cuts will have on practitioners, particularly those registered on the Vanagasali ECD Campaign.
- Added to these concerns are questions about:
 - the retrenchments of Social workers, who are integral to ECD - who will supplement the services that social workers provided?
 - What will this mean for the safety and wellbeing, social and emotional needs of children?
 - And with the function shift, how will the Departments cater for compulsory grade RR, with the budget cuts?
 - Will there be adequate infrastructure, with the move to have an ECD site in every district?
 - What will the service delivery model be?
 - Will the service delivery model yield quality learning and development outcomes and how will this be measured?

To this end, it was resolved the sector needs to look towards advocating for its own service delivery model, which will be raised at the provincial Function Shift consultations. This is very important, because of the well-documented challenges that primary schools have with infrastructure (i.e. pit latrines, water shortages etc.) and the possible implications that this might have children. Tied to this, were pedagogical concerns about a schooling ethos vs a community/ play-based learning ethos. These issues all need to be well ventilated ahead of the NECT 's a broad consultation, on behalf of DBE, with the sector on the 9 April and the subsequent provincial consultations with the DBE and DSD. For further details, please click [here](#).

Way forward:

- **Retention of ECD practitioners:** Having lost people to C-19, and with more people losing their jobs, the CoP noted that more can be done to attract young people to join the sector. This could be accompanied by the provision of mentorship and support.
- **Advocacy:** There is a big need for advocacy in the sector. While interest groups are useful knowledge sharing vehicles, the CoP resolved to focus its attention more on advocacy work, in the next year. In this spirit, BRIDGE will share accessible informational material that practitioners can use to understand, reflect on and advocate for the legal framework concerns surfaced through the Real Reform Campaign.

OTHER UPDATES



- Next CoP dates: 3 June, 19 August and 4 October 2021.



CHECK OUT

Next, Thandeka and Patsy thanked participants for their attendance and participation, and the meeting was brought to a close

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name and surname	Organisation	Email Address
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