

# Save the Children's Theory of Change in Practice in Bhutan



**S**ave the Children has an exceptional opportunity in Bhutan to make "impact at scale" for disadvantaged Bhutanese children with limited investment as relatively modest funding results in programming at the national level. Save the Children also does not pay for any operational costs of its government and NGO partners in Bhutan and thus, coupled with the low level of corruption in the country, the return on investment is very high.

Even though Save the Children is a very small development player in Bhutan bringing in just over US \$ 700,000 per year on an average - many of the innovations nurtured and promoted by Save the Children have been taken to scale and institutionalized by the Bhutanese government a small example of our Theory of Change at work.

Presented below are some examples of these SC innovations that are now affecting 'impact at scale':



## Early Childhood Care & Development (ECCD):

Promoting Innovations and evidence for taking ECCD programming to scale

Early Childhood Care & Development (ECCD) programs did not exist in Bhutan prior to 2007. The Ministry of Education (MoE) and Bhutanese society in general had a limited understanding of ECCD's benefits. With the limited resources at their disposal, the government's priority had been to focus on primary and basic education. Hence most young children 0-6 years lack stimulation and interaction with others that is necessary for their holistic development cognitive, psychomotor, social, and emotional. Thus, the Government, being unsure of the impact of ECCD, had been hesitant to commit its limited resources to ECCD programming.

The Government's perception of ECCD started changing in 2008 and this was articulated in the Ministry of Education's tenth five year plan objectives (2008-2013) to 'provide support mechanisms to promote good practices for early childhood care and development for children between 0-6 years of age.'

However, the government's major concern was how to provide effective ECCD programs in a cost-effective manner that can be implemented in all the 20 districts of the country with government funding.



## Therefore, Save the Children has played a pioneering role in:

- creating the evidence base needed for the RGOB and other major donors to support ECCD as a core program for children in Bhutan
- developing three models of ECCD program delivery namely, the Community ECCD Centres located in both urban and rural areas; the Workplace ECCD Centers for the children of low wage earning employees which runs on a cost-sharing model between the employer and government and SC; and, Parenting Education Programs

As of 2013, the status of ECCD programming in Bhutan is as follows:

1. The first and the only Training Manual for Training of ECCD Teachers/Facilitators developed by Save the Children is widely used by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF and other ECCD stakeholders to train all ECCD teachers and will be adopted as the national training manual with some revisions.
2. The first and the only ECCD Curriculum developed by Save the Children is now widely used by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF and other ECCD stakeholders for all their ECCD programs and will potentially be adopted as the national ECCD curriculum with some changes and revisions.
3. The Parenting Education curriculum and the facilitator's training manual developed by Save the Children is also being widely used by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Royal Education Council, UNICEF and other ECCD stakeholders for their own parenting education programs and has the potential to be adopted as the national curriculum.
4. A draft National ECCD Policy (with intensive inputs from Save the Children and UNICEF) is on the verge of being adopted by the government.

## 2 SPEA (School-based Parents Education and Awareness) Program:

Helping parents and teachers address emerging challenges facing today's adolescents



The School-based Parents Education and Awareness (SPEA) program is a platform to facilitate communication between the teachers, parents/guardians and their adolescent children. SPEA gives parents and teachers a forum where they discuss child-rearing experiences, learn about new issues/problems in the lives of their

children, and be educated on the special needs of today's youth in Bhutan. It also enhances parents'/ guardians' and teachers' ability to communicate more comfortably with their children on any issues concerning these adolescents/ youth including sensitive topics such as teenage pregnancy, relationships, reproductive health

issues etc.

The SPEA program was first innovated by Save the Children in 2000 to help the government's department of youth and sports address the emerging problems facing Bhutan's youth as they struggled to cope up with the exposure and changing environment brought about by

development and other influences.

The SPEA program is currently being implemented in all 20 districts of Bhutan jointly by Department of Youth and Sports (DYS) and SC. It is active in 153 lower secondary, middle secondary and higher secondary schools. In many schools, parents are actively involved in co-



facilitating the SPEA sessions with the focal teachers.

The SPEA program functions through focal 'teachers' and focal 'parents' using a manual 'A Guide for Facilitators on the SPEA Program' developed by Save the Children and the Department of Youth and Sports. The manual contains modules such as; Understanding Adolescence, Parenting, Substance Abuse and Reproductive Health, Careers and Employment. The SPEA program is offered to all parents who have children enrolled in their

schools and are encouraged to establish Parent Support Groups (PSGs) as a means of providing advice and support to one another, and to ensure sustainability.

The SPEA program is fully institutionalized by the government from 2013 onwards in all the higher secondary, middle secondary and lower secondary schools. Save the Children's role is only to provide technical assistance, monitoring support and in innovations.

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### Life Skills Education:

Providing Adolescents and Youth with Access to information and skills to make positive decisions.

Most of the parents and caregivers of these adolescents and youth of today grew up at a different time under different environment. Hence, parents are ill equipped to deal with their children who are facing a lot of challenges, issues and problems so they are unable to recognize and help their children.

Thus, Save the Children helped the Department of Youth and Sports (DYS) devise a program to enhance the psychosocial competencies of adolescents to deal with these challenges on their own terms through the introduction of Life Skills education. SC's pioneer initiative Life Skills enhances a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

The LSE program was piloted through the widespread Scouting Movement which is active in 225 schools and 4 institutes nationwide with a current enrollment of approximately 50,000 children.

The self-instructional 'Life Skills Education Manual' for Scoutmasters developed by Save the Children has now been fully integrated into the scouting curriculum; In addition, the Ministry of Education has incorporated it into the school curriculum with financial support from UNICEF and UNFPA.





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#### The Youth Centres Program: Enhancing Young People's Access to Information and Counselling through the Youth Centres

The Save the Children-innovated youth centre program is a recognized platform through which education, information and counseling is provided to young people who are either in or out of schools in a safe youth-friendly and non-threatening environment. The Youth Centers have learning materials like computers, internet, library books and audio-visuals, and also conduct youth forums and seminars on youth-related issues such as unemployment; drugs, substance and alcohol abuse, gang fights, teenage pregnancy and child labor.

Save the Children in collaboration with the Department of Youth and Sports first established such a centre in 1999 in Thimphu and its subsequent overwhelming success in fulfilling its objectives have led to the establishment of more such centers in the past few years. As of 2012, seven Youth Centres are operational in six districts. The government has institutionalized the youth centers into its annual and five year plans and also established a permanent cadre of staff to manage the youth centers.



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