



جائزة خليفة التربوية
Khalifa Award for Education

Winner of the 2025 Khalifa International Award for Early Learning: Best Programs, Curricula, Teaching Methodologies and Practices

Planète Enfants & Développement

Abstract

The Community-Based Childcare Center (CBCC) for Garment Factory Workers Project is an initiative providing childcare services for children under the age of three in Cambodia. Funded by the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) through the World Bank, the project was implemented by Planète Enfants & Développement (PE&D) from April 2020 to March 2024. Its primary objective is to establish quality, sustainable community-based childcare services to enhance child development, while simultaneously supporting garment factory workers by improving employment and labor outcomes and reducing unpaid household childcare burdens.

The project was successfully established and operated 13 centers in Kampong Speu (10 centers) and Kampong Cham (3 centers) provinces. These centers are specifically designed and equipped to ensure the safety, security, health and development of infants and toddlers. Enrolled children are cared for by trained caregivers and receive three healthy, nutritionally balanced meals daily, prepared by trained cooks.

To support quality service delivery, the project set high expectations for structure and process quality. Standards provide for an appropriate child-to-caregiver ratio, trained caregivers, regular health checkups, age-appropriate toys, and nutritious meals following the health ministry's guidelines. Daily activities at the centers adhere to pedagogical materials and guidelines developed by the project with technical support and endorsement from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and other government entities. All centers operate full-time from Monday to Saturday to align with parents' work schedules.

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The CBCC project has had a positive impact at multiple levels, including the social and economic well-being of children, parents, garment factories, local communities, and government institutions. The project ensures that all children enrolled in the centers are in good health and have access to an environment conducive to their development. No case of stunting was found in CBCCs, compared to an average of 33% in Kampong Speu and 22.8% in Kampong Cham, and nor has there been any case of underweight compared to a prevalence of 22% in Kampong Speu and 18% in Kampong Cham. In the focus group discussion in June 2024, parents reported observing significant physical and cognitive development in their children.

For parents, the availability of affordable childcare enables them to remain employed and more productive at work, ultimately contributing to improved household stability and economic outcomes. Enrolling in CBCCs reduced the average number of workdays missed by parents to only 0.53 days from 0.73 days per month for both mothers and fathers. Parents employed prior to enrolling in CBCCs, reported an average monthly income increase of \$19.40 due to taking on overtime work made possible by childcare availability. Additionally, 37% of households reported that parents started working after enrolling their child, with an average income increase of \$307.40 per month—nearly seven times the cost of CBCC tuition. These impacts were particularly strong for women, who are more likely to leave the workforce after childbirth. CBCCs also eliminated an average of 48 hours of unpaid care work per household for families of enrolled children.



THE COMMUNITY BASED CHILDCARE CENTER (CBCC) FOR GARMENT FACTORY WORKERS PROJECT

I. What is CBCC?

Community-Based Childcare Center (CBCC) for Garment Factory Workers

The Community-Based Childcare (CBCC) for Garment Factory Workers is a project initiated and implemented by Planète Enfants & Développement (PE&D) from 2020 to 2024, funded by the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) through the World Bank. CBCC is the first ever project in Cambodia to provide facilities where trained caregivers provide age-appropriate and developmentally adapted nurturing care for young girls and boys aged 3 to 36 months. It is a service embedded within the community, with different external services and stakeholders involved. This means it should make links with the other locally available child-friendly services in order to support children's holistic development.

Table 1: Key Features of CBCC Management and Accessibility

Aspects	Description
Management structure	A CBCC Manager oversees operations and is accountable to a Management Body or Advisory Committee (AC). AC is composed of community representatives who provide support, advice, and oversight for the childcare centers. They also work closely with the CBCC Manager.
Operating hours	Monday to Saturday from 6:30 am to 4:30 pm, flexible upon parents' requests
Health	Monthly health check up by health center staff
Meals	Two meals and one snack daily
Monthly fee	45\$
Support for poor families	Discounts are available for families identified as poor through Cambodia's ID Poor system.

The CBCC Project stands out as an innovative project by integrating both structure quality and process quality to create a robust foundation for childcare, learning and development.

1. Structure Quality

- **Standardized Building and Age-Specific Features:** CBCC facilities are designed with thoughtful structure and spatial planning to ensure safe, functional, and stimulating environments for young children. The layout includes zones tailored to the developmental needs of babies and toddlers, creating age-appropriate spaces. Each CBCC also features a breastfeeding room, providing a private area for mothers to feed their babies during visits.
- **Trained Caregivers:** CBCC ensures that all caregivers possess the necessary qualifications and skills to deliver quality, developmentally appropriate care. Caregivers undergo 25 days of preservice specialized training and refresher training and coaching.
- **Child-to-Caregiver Ratio:** To maintain personalized attention, the maximum number of children per CBCC is capped at 25– 5 children aged 3 months to one year, and 20 children aged 1 to 3 years with four trained caregivers.

2. Process Quality

- **Toys and Learning Resources:** CBCCs offer age-appropriate toys to promote cognitive and social skills through play and interaction.
- **Nutritious Food:** CBCC provides meals designed to support physical growth and cognitive development. Cooks follow a menu featuring local and seasonal ingredients, ensuring meals meet the nutritional needs of young children. Menus are updated monthly based on Ministry of Health guidelines and validated by the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) representative.
- **Health Check-up:** CBCCs collaborate with local health centers to provide monthly health checkups and growth monitoring for children. These checkups ensure early detection of potential health issues and promote the overall well-being of every child.
- **Hygiene Standards:** The program prioritizes a clean and healthy environment to protect children from illness and support their well-being.
- **No-screen Policy:** To foster a focused and engaging environment, screens are not allowed within the CBCC premises.

By embedding these innovative practices, the CBCC Project provides a warm, welcoming, and stimulating environment where children can grow, thrive, and reach their developmental milestones while their parents are engaged in work. Furthermore, as a community-integrated service, CBCC collaborates with external services and stakeholders, fostering links with locally available child-friendly resources to support children's holistic development.

II. Importance of the CBCC Project

Early childhood development is at the core of Cambodia's development plan. CBCC Project addresses critical challenges in providing quality childcare, supporting families, and fostering early childhood development in Cambodia. It aligns with the Cambodia Education 2030 Road Map of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, which emphasizes the importance of children's development, well-being, and health. The project also supported the strategic plan for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment (Neary Rattanak V and VI, 2019-2023 and 2024-2028)¹, recognizing childcare as crucial for increasing women's participation in the labor force. The UN also claimed that the existence of child care services can promote children's healthy development, for they can serve as referral points for health and other social services, as well as provide opportunities to integrate resources and support for caregivers related to early childhood development (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2024).

Cambodia's economy heavily depends on the garment manufacturing industry, which accounted for over US\$5 billion or roughly 80 percent of Cambodia's total export revenue in 2019 (World Bank, 2024a). The same report showed that as of 2018 Cambodia had a total of 1,159 garment factories, providing jobs to more than 800,000 people, approximately 90 percent of whom were women. The main target area of the CBCC Project, Kampong Spue had 116 garment factories as of 2019 which provided wage employment for a total of 112,288 workers, 84 percent of whom were women. While some garment workers lived near the factories, many traveled up to two hours to work each day, often using crowded minivans or open buses. About half of urban garment workers were married, 75 percent of whom had one or two children.

¹ These are the strategic plans for gender equality, developed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), to promote gender mainstreaming and advance women's empowerment across all sectors.

Challenges still persist for working parents in the factories. While the Cambodian government's Labour Law mandates factories with over 100 female workers to establish child care facilities or provide support for children aged 18–36 months, compliance remains limited. According to the Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) 2018 report, many factories fail to meet these requirements, lacking childcare facilities and adequate time for nursing, which forces many women to take unpaid leave to care for their children. The birth of a first child is often a turning point for women, as it is strongly associated with dropping out of the labor force. Many new mothers do not return to their original factories after maternity leave, and while some later re-enter the workforce when their children are older, they often switch to different factories, forfeiting the seniority benefits they had previously earned. As a result, many mothers either leave the workforce or rely on grandparents or other relatives to care for their children during working hours. While grandparents traditionally serve as a source of childcare, some research revealed that they often provide only limited attention and are unable to ensure adequate stimulation or nutrition.

Access to early childhood services remains limited. Despite efforts to expand early childhood education (ECE) services in Cambodia, institutional childcare options remain severely limited. The Cambodian government has focused on providing ECE primarily for children aged 3 to 6 years old. However, as of 2023, only 33.4% of children in this age group have access to these services (MoEYS, 2023), falling significantly short of the 80% target set in the 2014 - 2018 Education Strategic Plan. Data on coverage for children below the age of three is even more limited. MoEYS does not report on enrollment rates for this age group. However, a World Bank survey of preschools and childcare centers found that only 22% of facilities offer services for children under three, with almost none admitting children under two years old. Informal childcare arrangements, such as home-based daycares or unregulated childcare services are likely more common but remain untracked and uncertified, making their quality and accessibility difficult to assess. Additionally, existing facilities for children aged under three are primarily limited to private urban daycare centers, which charge high fees. This makes them inaccessible to many families, especially garment factory workers, who are among the groups most in need of affordable childcare (World Bank, 2024b).

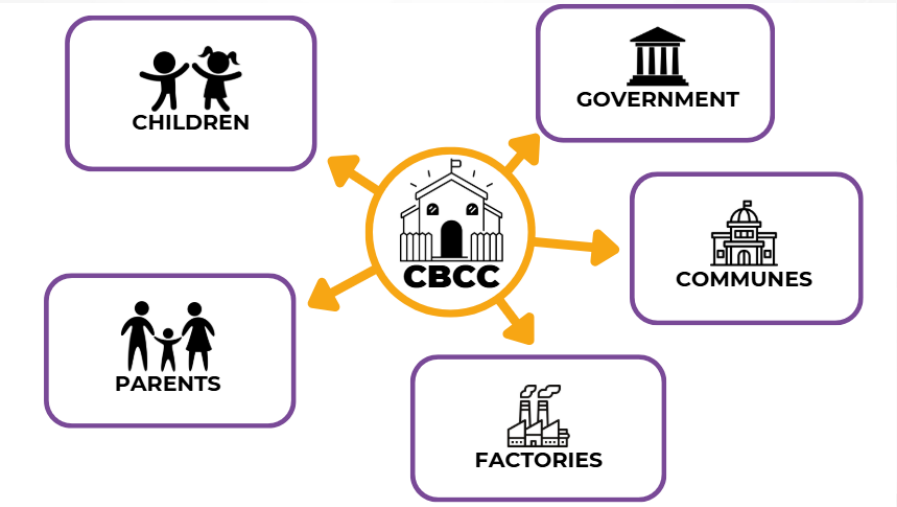
This lack of quality care constraints parents' labor market options, with many mothers in households without access to relative-provided care being forced to drop out of the workforce entirely. Moreover, insufficient access to childcare increases the risks to children's healthy development and hinders Cambodia's development plan and its progress toward achieving SDG 4.2, which aims to ensure universal access to quality early childhood care and education by 2030.

CBCCs offer a practical and affordable solution to these challenges, providing high-quality child care tailored to the needs of garment factories. By offering a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment, CBCCs empower working mothers to remain in the labor force without compromising their children’s well-being. This innovative model breaks cycles of poverty, supports women’s workforce participation, prioritizes early childhood development, and builds a brighter future for Cambodia’s children.

III. Impacts of the Program

To evaluate the impacts of the project, two type of evaluation methodologies were employed (1) primary data including, parent satisfaction survey and focus group discussion were employed to understand the extent to which the project has achieved the expected outcomes and (2) desk review and secondary data, including PIM2 and government policies/strategies, are used for assessing the project effectiveness. Following the evaluation, figure 1 shows the groups of beneficiaries who have been positively impacted by the CBCC Project.

Figure 1: Social and Economic Impact of CBCCs



Source: PE&D, 2024

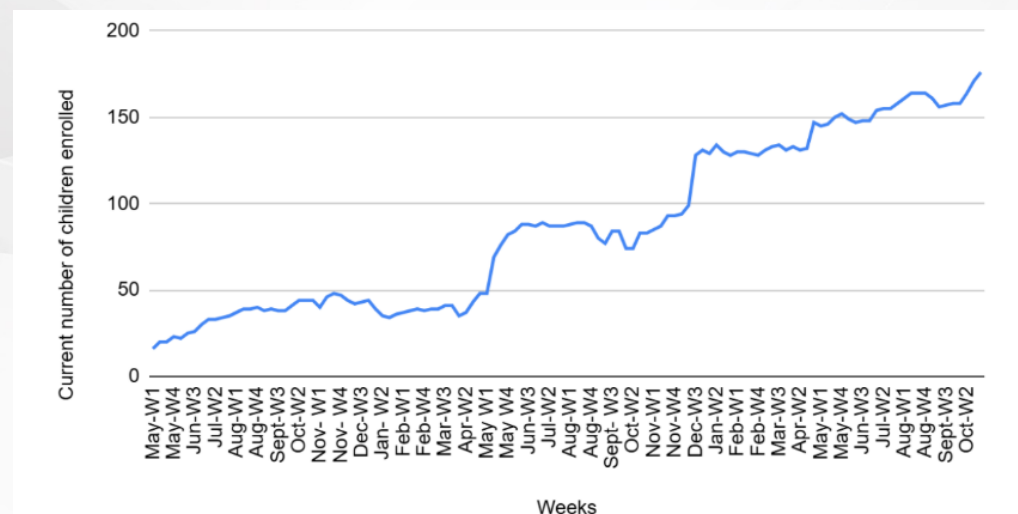
2 PIM (Project Implementation Manual), is to establish quality, sustainable community-based childcare services for garment factory workers that improve employment and labor outcomes, reduce unpaid household childcare, and improve child development.

1. Children

As of the 4th week of October, 2024, a total number of 177 children have benefited from the program. It has been acknowledged by health centers' staff as well as by parents that the children enrolled in CBCC develop themselves very well in terms of fine and motor skills, social interactions, language as well as physically. Moreover, no any case of stunting was found in CBCCs, compared to an average of 33% in Kampong Speu and 22.8% in Kampong Cham, and no any case of underweight happened compared to a prevalence of 22% in Kampong Speu and 18% in Kampong Cham.

In the focus group discussion in June 2024, parents reported observing significant physical and cognitive development in their children. They also shared their perspective that the daycare staff prepared healthy and nutritious meals for the children, who also sleep in comfortable rooms. They believe these factors contribute to their children's growth and reduced sickness. PE&D's monthly monitoring also documented that staff of the Health Centres do regular checks up on kids' weight and height, and reported that all of the kids increase their weight and height after staying at daycare for several months.

Figure 2: Current number of children enrolled between May 2022 and October 2024



2. Parents

CBCCs have proven to reduce absenteeism and increase income for parents of enrolled children. Enrolling in CBCCs provides significant benefits to parents, particularly by decreasing the likelihood of quitting their jobs due to frequent absences caused by their children's health issues. A focus group discussion revealed that both mothers and fathers often work to increase household income, with most women employed as factory workers. Participants noted that with access to CBCCs, they no longer worry as much about their children and can concentrate fully on their jobs. Dropping their children off at daycare in the morning allows them to focus on work without distraction. Many participants expressed concern about their family's income when daycare was unavailable. Quantitative data collection indicates that enrolling in CBCCs has reduced the average number of workdays missed by parents to only 0.53 days from 0.73 days per month for both mothers and fathers. The Implementation Completion and Results Report by the World Bank in 2024 also documented that parents who are employed prior to enrolling in CBCCs, reported an average monthly income increase of \$19.4 due to taking on overtime work made possible by childcare availability. Additionally, 37% of households reported that parents started working after enrolling their child, with an average income increase of \$307.4 per month—nearly seven times the cost of CBCC tuition. These impacts were particularly strong for women, who are more likely to leave the workforce after childbirth.

CBCCs also eliminated an average of 48 hours of unpaid care work per household for families of enrolled children. This outcome exceeded expectations, largely due to the extended opening hours of CBCCs, which were adjusted based on parental feedback to align with garment factory work schedules (CBCCs were open for 60 hours per week). Children attending CBCCs maintained an attendance rate of approximately 80%. The reduction in unpaid care work enabled a significant proportion of parents to seek employment outside the household, substantially boosting household income. Focus group discussions revealed additional benefits: prior to the availability of CBCCs, older siblings often cared for younger children, leading to frequent absences from school. With CBCCs, parents missed fewer workdays, and older siblings missed fewer school days, promoting both educational and economic outcomes.

● Workforce more available professionally

*When my child stayed in the daycare, each month, I rarely took leave.
I decreased work day off from my job because of it.*

*I enrolled my child because I get to go to work and
my child can eat and sleep enough.
If we keep our child at home, we would not be able to go to work.*

*I have decreased my chance of taking leave at work to take care
of my child when they are sick. If my child stayed at home and got
sick, I would take leave to take care of my child. But at the daycare, if
my child gets sick but not serious, I never take leave from work.*

Source: PE&D, 2024

3. Communes

CBBCs bring tangible benefits to local communes by enhancing education, creating jobs, and improving the quality of life for families. One of the main advantages is the increase in knowledge and education, as CBCCs give children access to early learning opportunities that prepare them for school and future success. This also helps raise awareness among families about the importance of early childhood education. CBCCs also create employment opportunities within the community by hiring caregivers and support staff. This not only provides jobs but also strengthens the local economy. In addition, the centers help boost income for the community, as parents can continue working while their children are cared for, contributing to their household income and the local economy. The centers also contribute to better social services and family well-being by offering affordable and accessible childcare. Families no longer need to choose between work and ensuring their children are safe and cared for, which improves their quality of life and reduces financial stress.

4. Factories

CBCCs have a profound positive impact on factories and brands by enhancing workforce productivity and improving corporate reputation. By supporting CBCCs, factories demonstrate a strong commitment to social responsibility, showcasing their dedication to the well-being of their employees and their families. This not only improves the company's image but also aligns with ethical and socially responsible business practices. Additionally, CBCCs enable factories to comply with national labor law requiring childcare support for employees, thereby reducing the risk of non-compliance and enhancing their reputation as responsible employers. Furthermore, compliance with the labor law is increasingly demanded by buyers, who prioritize working with factories that uphold ethical labor practices and provide adequate support for their employees' welfare. The availability of CBCCs allows workers to focus more effectively on their jobs, knowing their children are cared for in a safe, nurturing environment. This directly translates into increased productivity and reduced workplace stress. Workers report fewer absences, as they no longer need to stay home to care for their children, particularly when the centers also address minor health concerns. This reliability minimizes workforce disruptions and ensures smoother operations.

5. Government

The guidelines developed for CBCC are flexible and can also be applied to other childcare services. This adaptability helps the government streamline childcare services and meet the diverse needs of communities more effectively. Moreover, with standardized curricula and trained professionals available, high-quality childcare services can be consistently provided, strengthening early childhood education systems and benefiting the government in the long run. The CBCC Project also has raised public awareness about the importance of early childhood development and has fostered greater community support and involvement, easing the burden on government-led initiatives. Over time, investing in childcare services brings significant advantages, such as increased female employment, a more skilled workforce, lower healthcare costs, reduced violence, and fewer social expenses.

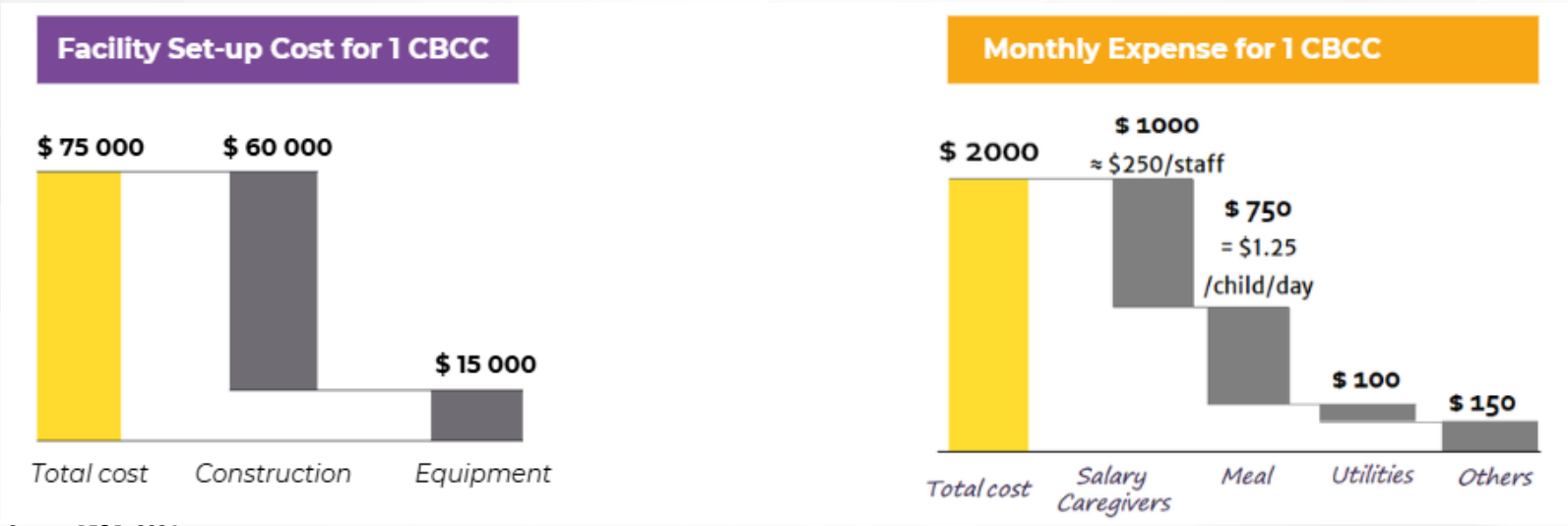
Indicator	Description	Means of Evaluation
Health of children	Children showed significant physical and cognitive development; no cases of stunting or underweight compared to local averages.	Focus group discussion and health center staff monitoring
Absenteeism	Reduced absenteeism for parents, with average workdays missed dropping to 0.53 days from 0.73 days per month.	Impact evaluation baseline survey and focus group discussion
Income of parents	\$19.4 monthly for overtime work; \$307.4 monthly for new employment, exceeding childcare costs.	Parent satisfaction survey and focus group discussion
Unpaid work	CBCCs reduced an average of 48 hours of unpaid care work per household for families of enrolled children.	Focus group discussion

IV. Sustainability

The project successfully established 13 CBCCs across 113 communes in Kampong Speu and Kampong Cham provinces. The project is set to transition into a public service managed by local communes, ensuring long-term integration into Cambodia's governance system. 11 ACs were established beginning in the first year of the project and were fully operational by the time of project closure. While ACs were originally intended to monitor and advise on the quality of CBCCs, they took on a heavier administrative role as the project progressed, including managing the budgets of the 13 CBCCs, paying salaries and center costs, advising, and monitoring center quality, and socializing the CBCCs with households in the community to build trust and sufficient demand. At project closure, all ACs were effective at budget management, and in many cases, were able to proactively solve issues related to the CBCCs such as improving waste management and center hygiene, or providing overtime pay to caregivers. The presence of local leaders in ACs helped the project to gain the endorsement and support of local governments, who felt a degree of ownership and responsibility for the centers. This likely contributed to the financial support CBCCs received from commune budgets to remain operational. ACs were effective in resolving complaints raised by the community and in monitoring certain quality aspects such as food quality, security around CBCCs, and caretaker behavior.

Setting up a CBCC required a total cost of \$75,000, including \$60,000 for construction and \$15,000 for equipment like furniture and educational materials, the cost was higher than planned due the covid-19. The monthly operating cost for one CBCC is on average \$2,000, which covers \$1,000 for caregiver salaries (approximately \$250 per caregiver), \$750 for meals (around \$1.25 per child per day), \$100 for utilities, and \$150 for miscellaneous expenses. All 13 CBCCs are still running 7 months after the end of the project, without funds from the project. The running costs have been covered so far mainly by the parent's fees and the grants provided by two factories and one buyer. The project considers that sustainability can be achieved in a long-term duration given the contributions of parents (around 50%), communes (around 25%) and the private sector (25%).

Figure 3: Cost breakdown



Source: PE&D, 2024

3 Two among 11 communes had two CBCCs each, while the remaining nine communes had one each.

Through this CBCC Project, PE&D produced an operational guideline which was endorsed by the Cambodian government, providing a clear and replicable framework. These guidelines include two key manuals—the Operations Manual and the Administration & Management Manual—which detail practical aspects such as staff-to-child ratios, administrative processes, building plans, and material lists. Complementary resources, such as training curricula and instructional booklets, further enhance the quality of care and guide caregivers and trainers. Additionally, these materials assist external stakeholders in monitoring, evaluating, and improving childcare services. To expand its reach, PE&D and the government have been working on alternative flexible models tailored to different contexts, in line with the government’s sub-degree which have already been drafted.

- **Enterprise-Based Childcare:** Facilities located in the compounds of the factories to directly support working parents.
- **Government-Initiated Childcare:** Centers within government buildings for public-sector employees.
- **Home-Based Childcare:** A cost-effective option for communities with fewer resources.

The core value of these models is to ensure the quality and affordability of childcare services while promoting accessibility for diverse communities, providing sustainable solutions that align with the Cambodian government's commitment to early childhood development.

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About Planète Enfants & Développement (PE&D) in Cambodia

Planète Enfants & Développement (PE&D – www.planete-eed.org/en) is an international NGO headquartered in France. Operating in Cambodia since 1984, PE&D aims to create equal opportunities from early childhood. Its mission is to build environments that protect, educate, and integrate children from birth, promoting their holistic development.

PE&D focuses on four key strategic areas:

- Early Childhood Development (ECD)
- Education, Training and Entrepreneurship
- Social Support for Families
- Protection of Women and Children from Violence

PE&D's commitment to ECD in Cambodia

To protect and educate the most vulnerable children, it is essential to address the environments that shape their development.

- **Within their families:** Supporting households to transition away from a day-to-day survival system by addressing financial, employment, health, and violence issues. This includes protecting mothers, empowering them to become more autonomous, promoting childcare, and prioritizing education from the earliest age.
- **Within the educational sphere:** Developing childcare centers, schools and training educators, improving pedagogical and educational practices, and constructing and equipping schools to ensure children are stimulated from their first months and receive quality care and education.
- **At the national level:** Collaborating with national and subnational authorities and other development partners to design and implement policies related to Early Childhood Development, ensuring sustainable and impactful actions for child development over the long term.