

AIDE ET ACTION

SCHOOL READINESS TOOLKIT

FOR LOCAL & DISTRICT AUTHORITIES







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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Within the framework of Aide et Action Southeast Asia's priority goal for 2019–2023, the project "Promoting Quality and Inclusive Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) and Parenting in Cambodia" aims to ensure access to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) for children aged 3 to 8 years through enhanced teaching and quality of learning, responsive parenting, and local ownership.

The present school readiness toolkit targets specifically local authorities and aims to:

1. Create a common language and approach on school readiness (SR)
2. Introduce and share Aide et Action's theory of change on SR to local authorities
3. Provide tools and techniques for local authorities to support SR and key actors in their communities

The guiding principles of this toolkit include, among others:

- The UN Convention on Child Rights (CRC)
- Int'l Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- The 1999 General Comments of UNCESCR
- The UN 2004 General Comments on ECCE
- The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)
- Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG no.4.2)

School readiness is a broad concept that embraces the readiness of the child, their families, communities, ECCE services, and schools in order to provide nurturing and enabling environments for social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. This strategy and toolkit use the term "School Readiness" as a shorthand for much broader concepts of child and family wellbeing.

The aim of this toolkit is to develop capable and confident local authorities to ensure that all children in their communities receive the necessary support to be ready for school or that 100% of children are in school during the new school year.

MAIN PURPOSE

The main purpose of the school readiness toolkit is to reinforce local authorities' capacities in supporting ECCE in the communities for which they serve. This toolkit aims to provide local authorities with an understanding, practical guidance and tools to promote school readiness, facilitate the development of children and support their families, teachers and school management in the process.

UNDERSTANDING THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit is an innovative resource for local authorities to understand and ensure quality, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of ECCE and SR in their communities.

This toolkit is divided into four main sections that are colour-coded for ease of reference:

Section 1: Focuses on key concepts and definitions (green section)

Section 2: Focuses on school readiness dimensions (blue section)

Section 3: Focuses on the role of local authorities in achieving school readiness (purple section)

Section 4: Focuses on need assessment checklists and conceptual frame work for school readiness (dark blue section)

NOTE: The key indicators and actions are suggested to help meet the local authorities school readiness. It is important to keep in mind that these lists may not be applicable to all contexts and neither are they to be used as a package.

Why do local authorities need this toolkit?

It is important that local authorities understand school readiness so that they may be able to support the children in their communities. All children are unique, they learn in different ways and develop at different rates. It is important to ensure that children have the

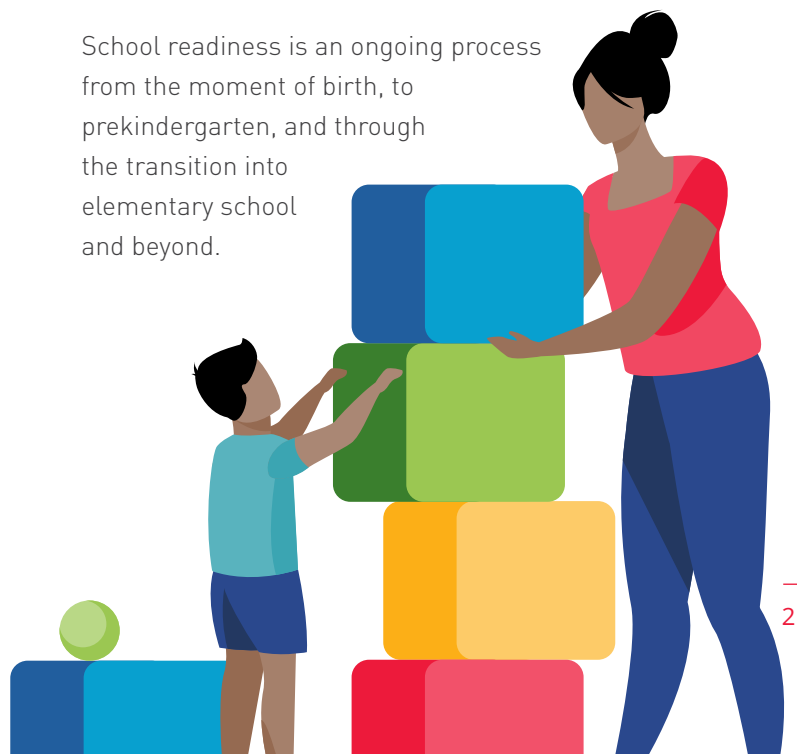
skills, dispositions and attitudes to be successful as they start their journey through school and that those who may need additional support are identified and supported early in order for them to reach their full potential. Early years providers, schools, families/ caregivers, communities and local authorities all have a shared responsibility to ensure that each individual child is ready to start their learning journey as they enter school.

How is the toolkit useful for local authorities?

Children's readiness for school is made up of multiple components and shaped by numerous factors. Improving school readiness, therefore, must address children's development of skills and behaviors as well as the environments in which they spend their time.

The ultimate purpose of this toolkit is to guide local authorities to ensure that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning and schools are ready to help children learn.

School readiness is an ongoing process from the moment of birth, to prekindergarten, and through the transition into elementary school and beyond.



SECTION 1: KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The key concepts of school readiness are made up of multiple components and shaped by numerous factors to address children's development of skills and behaviours as well as the environments in which they spend their time. District Governor, Local Authorities, Parents/Caregivers and Schools have to efforts to ensure that all children are ready for school.

1.1. Definition of School Readiness

School Readiness is about children entering the formal pre and primary education having the necessary social, emotional, cognitive and language competences and skills in order to be able to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences, successfully learn and progress to later stages of learning, and become capable and responsible citizens.

Families/Caregivers, school and local authorities must work together to provide environments and developmental experiences that promote growth and learning to ensure that all children in their communities enter school eager and excited to learn.

In developing the school readiness; five developmental areas are needed to be considered or taken:

- Approaches to learning
- Health and physical well-being
- Language and communication development
- Social and emotional development
- Cognitive and general knowledge

In addition to the definition of school readiness, the task force developed a series of indicators related to the above developmental areas. These indicators provide guidance on the child's readiness status and caregivers, teachers and other child care providers with a tool to better inform them on the strengths and needs of each individual child when entering school. It is important to note that every child develops differently and at different rates, and that not every child will have mastered all of the skills and behaviors when entering primary school.

ECCE services, schools, and families all have a shared responsibility to ensure that each individual child is ready to continue their learning journey as they enter school and get off to a flying start. Schools have a responsibility to foster and support smooth transitions to enable each individual child to settle and continue their learning. Communication and collaboration between all those involved is key to successful transitions.

For children to be school ready, it is necessary that caregivers/parents, teachers, and communities collaborate to provide nurturing and enabling environments where all children can enjoy cognitive stimulation, emotional security, physical safety and health, and safely pass through the transition period between home and school.

School readiness can facilitate successful enrolment, adjustment, progress, and achievement of children — particularly those from marginalised or minority backgrounds. In short, school readiness is about "gaining skills and competences" and "transition and continuity".

The process of school readiness for children starts in early years and shall continue into early grades of primary school when children need to interact with their new surrounding environment, peers, and adults.

However, school readiness is neither merely about academic achievement nor is it about children adapting to schools. School readiness is as much — or even more — about schools and families having the capacity and knowledge to adapt to the academic, cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical needs of children to help them learn and prosper.

School Readiness Main Actors:

Main actors in school readiness include children; families/ caregivers; schools/teachers; and communities. This is shown in Figure 1 (Juliette Torabian, 2019, copy right).

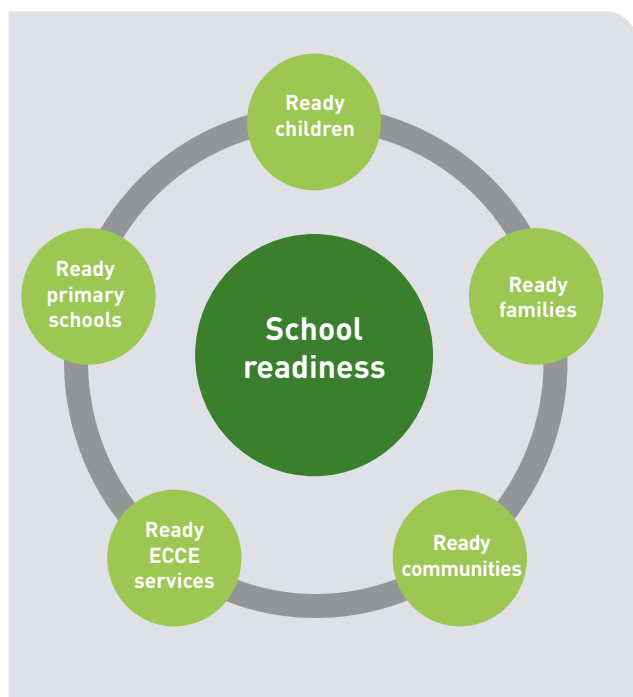


Figure 1: The Main Actors Of School Readiness

1.2. Early Childhood

Early childhood is defined as the period from birth to eight years old when children go through remarkable growth (height/weight) and brain development. This is a critical period during which children are highly influenced by their surrounding environment and people.

1.3. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

ECCE forms the foundation of a lifelong learning process during which children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills are developed enabling them to become capable, caring, and responsible global citizens in future. At national and provincial levels, ECCE is an effective investment towards improving early years' literacy and completion rates.

1.4. Rights-Based Child-Friendly Schools

UNICEF has developed a framework for rights-based, child-friendly educational systems and schools that are characterised as "inclusive, healthy and protective for all children, effective with children, and involved with families and communities- and children" (Shaeffer, 1999). A child-friendly school (CFS) is a holistic approach that recognises children's rights and works to fulfil these rights. It addresses challenges of educational access, quality, and management through advocacy, capacity development, service delivery, and partnerships.

Specifically, CFS is:

The CFS model is to move schools and education systems progressively towards quality standards, addressing all elements that influence the wellbeing and rights of the child as a learner and the main beneficiary of teaching, while improving other school functions in the process. Quality standards should make it possible for all children to access school, survive from grade to grade and complete the cycle on time; they should also provide an enriched educational experience through which students can thrive, develop and achieve their full potential.

To this end, CFS models are concerned with harnessing the full involvement and support of all parties in a position to facilitate children's right to a quality education. These parties, or 'duty bearers', include parents, communities, teachers, school heads, education planners and civil society groups, as well as local and national governments and their external partners. Their involvement enables schools and education systems to provide the conditions and resources necessary for achieving the quality standards CFS models envision.

As for scope, CFS models embrace a concept of quality that goes well beyond pedagogic excellence and performance outcomes. The focus is on the needs of the child as a whole, not just on the 'school bits' that educators traditionally feel responsible for. The scope of a CFS model includes multidimensional coverage of quality and a holistic concern for the child's needs.

Inclusive:

- Does not exclude, discriminate, or stereotype based on differences
- Provides free and compulsory education that is affordable and accessible –especially to families and children at risk of marginalisation
- Respects diversity and ensures equality of learning among all children (e.g., girls, children from ethnic or other minorities, those affected by HIV/AIDS, children with disabilities, as well as internally displaced and refugee children)
- Responds to diversity by meeting the differing circumstances and needs of children (e.g., based on gender, social class, ethnicity, and ability level)

Effective for Learning:

- Promotes good quality teaching and learning processes with individualised instruction appropriate to children's development level, abilities, and learning style through active and collaborative learning methods
- Provides structured content and good quality materials and resources
- Enhances teacher capacities in CFS, and their commitment to child protection
- Promotes quality learning outcomes by defining and helping children learn what and how to learn

Healthy and Protective of Children:

- Ensures a healthy, hygienic, and safe learning environment with adequate water and sanitation facilities
- Provides health services such as nutritional supplementation and counseling
- Promotes life and green skills
- Enhances physical and socio-emotional health of teachers and learners alike
- Helps defending and protecting all children from abuse and harm
- Provides positive psychological experiences for children

Gender-Sensitive:

- Promotes gender equality in enrolment and achievement
- Eliminates gender stereotypes
- Guarantees girl-friendly facilities, curricula, textbooks, and teaching-learning processes
- Socializes girls and boys in a non-violent environment
- Encourages respect for others' rights, dignity, and equality

Involved with Children, Families, and Communities:

- Child-centred: promoting child participation in all aspects of the school life
- Family-focused: working to empower families as the child's primary caregivers and educators and helping children, parents, and teachers in establishing harmonious and mutually respectful relationships
- Community-based: encouraging local partnership in education, connecting communities and their members to learn, collaborate, and ensure the fulfilment of child rights and wellbeing

In short, a rights-based child-friendly school is:

- **Child-seeking:** actively identifying excluded children to get them enrolled in school and included in learning processes; treating children as subjects with rights and the States as duty bearers with obligations to fulfil these rights; promoting and helping to monitor the rights and well-being of all children in the community.
- **Child-centred:** acting in the best interests of children; leading to the realisation of the child's full potential; and concerned both about the "whole" child (including their health, nutritional status, and well-being) and about what happens to children — in their families and communities — before they enter school and after they leave. (UNICEF, 2012).

In pursuit of quality, therefore, CFS models cut across sectors to address the child's needs comprehensively. Within this intersectoral and holistic framework, CFS models are concerned as much with the health, safety, security, nutritional status and psychological well-being of the child as they are with teacher training and the appropriateness of the teaching methods and learning resources used for schooling.

Some key points may help local authorities to ensure schools meet the minimum standards for child-friendly schools:

- How well children are prepared to start and continue school
- How well they are received by schools and teachers prepared to meet their needs and uphold their rights
- How far their general health and well-being are addressed as an integral part of promoting learning
- How safe the schools are as places for learning and how completely they provide an overall gender sensitive environment that is conducive to learning
- The extent to which schools and teachers respect the rights of children and operate in the best interest of the child
- The extent to which child-centred teaching methods are embraced as good practice and standard methodology by teachers and the school
- How far child participation is encouraged as standard practice in classroom interaction as well as in the broader operation and management of the school
- The extent to which effort and resources are invested in creating stimulating classrooms that support active learning for all
- The availability of adequate environmentally sustainable facilities, services and supplies that support the needs of the whole child and also of all children
- The use of pedagogy that challenges and dismantles discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or social background

Proponents of CFS maintain that all of these factors, interacting in a dynamic and organic manner, constitute the 'packaged solution' that can be confidently described as a 'child-friendly school'.

1.5. Equity, Equal Opportunity (equality), and Diversity

Equity is about fairness and inclusion in education so that all students have the resources necessary for a high-quality education according to their needs. When concerned with equity, you may ask: "should students coming from poor and marginalised communities receive more support to ensure that they are included and can catch up with the schooling system".

Equality is about ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity and is not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics. In other words, equality means that no one should have poorer chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe in, or whether they have a disability. The question "should every student have/ receive the relevant textbooks according to their level of study" is a matter of equality.

Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people and placing a positive value on those differences. Diversity means celebrating and valuing how different we all are. This is strongly linked with promoting human rights and freedoms based on principles of dignity and respect. It is important to recognise that none of us fit neatly into separate "packages" based on which we can be labelled or discriminated against. In school readiness, respecting diversity means raising awareness and knowledge among parents and teachers on the fact that children learn and develop differently. These differences shall not lead into labelling children but shall serve as a basis for tailoring teaching and assessment methods to encourage further development and wellbeing of all children.

1.6. Child Protection and Safeguarding

Everyone has a responsibility to keep children safe from harm and abuse including parents, teachers, and communities. There are different forms of abuse and violence against children, including:

Neglect is harmful to the wellbeing of children as they are poorly taken care of by their caregivers. Cases of neglect can include poor hygiene, diet, being left alone at home; not be taken to school or medical appointments. Parents may neglect their children for different reasons and therefore need to be trained on different forms of neglect and their impacts on children.

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts, hits, or injures a child.

Emotional abuse is when someone shouts at, uses threats, or makes fun of a child to make the child feel frightened, worthless, or unloved. Exposure to scenes of violence between parents or other people in their home or surrounding environment can also be harmful for children.

Sexual abuse is where someone influences, involves, or forces a child to look at or take part in sexual activities. This could include encouraging unwanted touching, sexual harassment, involving a child in watching pornography or forcing a child or young person under the age of consent to have sex.

1.7. Transition and Continuity

Transition happens when children/students leave one social context and enter another, for example from home to ECCE and from ECCE to primary education. In general, in the course of a transition period three stages take place:

- The first phase is characterised by a detachment from an earlier social structure: in SR projects, this is when a child moves from home to ECCE or primary education and refers to the level of preparedness, attitudes, and reactions of children, family members, and teachers
- The second phase is the transition phase when the child is in the process of developing different

identities that match both the new social environment (ECCE/ School) and the old one (home). This phase also includes other shifts, including a) caregivers getting used to this new life style change and learning to collaborate and interact with an external and different socio-cultural and educational system; b) teachers at ECCE and primary education accepting that they are interlinked and the ensemble of their approaches and activities can hinder/ promote children's development and adjustment; and c) communities' socio-cultural resources and support systems that shall adapt to provide for better development and wellbeing among children, families, and teachers

- The last and third phase is the re-incorporation of children, families, teachers, and communities into a new social relationship that nurtures safety, security, respect, inclusiveness, and equity hence accommodating socio-cultural and educational needs of all parties involved as they assume new identities and responsibilities

In ensuring that all children are already in school, it is significant to conceptualise transition as a period of change and continuity. Elements that continue, such as relationships and availability of resources in the community, can be drawn upon to help shape a new range of roles and responsibilities and create a smooth and safe process of transition for local authorities.

The questions below can be used as a tool for local authorities to determine if a CFS meets the minimum standards:

- Are ECCE services and primary schools creating enabling, inclusive child-friendly environments in a continuous and harmonious manner through, e.g., their curriculum, teaching/assessment methods?
- Are communities providing in/formal resources and supporting families with young children?
- Are children enabled to adjust and progress in learning environments?
- Are families/caregivers capable of assuming a balance between their roles as caregivers and as social partners to schools and in communities?

1.8. Holistic Education

A holistic education draws on principles of a whole child approach and subsequently gives equal importance to educational, emotional, social, cognitive, and moral needs of children rather than simply focusing on their academic achievement.

Adopting a holistic approach in school readiness means:

- Emphasising learning by doing through play and arts
- Shifting curriculum and pedagogy towards a whole child approach and child friendly concepts
- Providing regular opportunities for caregivers, teachers, and communities to work together and exchange in non-violent manners
- Facilitating understanding of meaningful and active learning as opposed to rote learning
- Emphasising collaboration and coordination instead of competition and conflict
- Raising awareness on social responsibility and democracy
- Integrating both ECCE services and primary schools in curriculum development processes to ensure continuity and transition
- Promoting teamwork, socialisation, and sharing among children but also other actors
- Replacing learning from textbooks with other varied learning resources
- Creating life-long learners among all SR actors
- Helping shift assessment and teaching/learning processes to include all children
- Assisting children to become confident, self-directed learners, and active and capable citizens

NOTE: School readiness shall be understood in a holistic way and as a continuous process during which children accumulate knowledge and build on simple skills to perform in more complex ways across different domains of development — and not only one domain. Developing skills in each of these domains are affected by the environment in which children grow and “normal” levels of development differ across cultures, ethnic, and religious groups and even among families. Therefore, the list of school readiness skills provided in this toolkit does not serve as a normative tool but as a general framework for the type of skills/abilities that can demonstrate children’s school readiness.

School readiness skills and behaviors are not to be used to determine school eligibility; all children who meet the legal age requirement are entitled to a public-school education. School readiness skills and behaviors are aligned to policy of early childhood development and are designed to be used.



SECTION 2: SCHOOL READINESS DIMENSIONS

School readiness is defined by two characteristics on four dimensions. The characteristic features are **'transition'** and **'gaining competencies'**.

The four dimensions of school readiness are:

1. Ready children, focusing on children's learning and development
2. Ready families/caregivers, focusing on parental and caregiver attitudes and involvement in their children's early learning and development and transition to school
3. Ready schools, focusing on the school environment along with practices that foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children
4. Ready local authorities, focusing on being involved with school, parents/caregivers and preparing themselves for engaging children to school

All four dimensions are important and must work in tandem. School readiness is a process of transition that requires the collaboration of individuals, families and systems.

With respect to school readiness, transition is defined as children moving into and adjusting to new learning environments, families learning to work with a sociocultural system (i.e. education), and schools making provisions for admitting new children into the system, representing individual and societal diversity. In school readiness, the four dimensions are interlinked, building competencies and preparedness in children, schools and families/caregiver.

2.1 Ready Children

The first dimension of school readiness is children's readiness for school: this refers to a range of behaviours, skills and abilities allowing the child to adapt to the environment, routines and relationships characteristic of formal education. It is important to note that the child's readiness to school cannot be achieved without support and strong commitment from families and caregivers, schools and local authorities. Each year, as children start formal schooling, there are discussions between parents/caregivers and educators about children who are, or are not, 'ready for school'. It refers to whether a child is ready to make an easy and successful transition into school. The term 'child readiness' might be used in the same manner in reference to beginning preschool (Kindergarten). Child readiness can be actively facilitated with a little forward planning to ensure that children regularly participate in activities that develops the appropriate skills required to help optimal learning when they start school.

While we often consider academic learning as the benchmark for child readiness (e.g. writing their name, counting to 10, knowing the colors), it actually refers to a much broader range of skills including independence and self-care, social and emotional skills, physical and motor skills, speech and language usage, cognition and general knowledge skills.

Some key indicators are listed below:

- Children being able to greet others and say goodbye
- Knowing their own name and family members
- Starting to take interest in pictures and written words or letters
- Children are curious and want to play and learn
- Children starting to identify their feelings such as when they are happy, sad or cross.
- Children being able to communicate their needs.
- Children being able to play with other children and learning to take turns
- Children learning to be able to go to the toilet and dress by themselves

Child Growth and Development

Children are considered ready for school according to a range of behaviours, skills, and abilities they have when entering primary school. A general understanding exists around four main development skills among children – based on a whole child approach (Figure 2):

- **Social:** Being able to get along with other children, demonstrate basic manners, assert themselves, and being able to play independently as well as with others

- **Emotional:** Being able to manage their emotions, cope with minimal adult contact in large groups, focus on tasks, follow directions and instructions from teachers, cope with the stress of the new school environment, and understand the rules
- **Physical:** Basic health, fine motor skills (such as being able to grip a pencil and turn pages in a book) and physical coordination (being able to run, jump, climb, and play ball)
- **Cognitive:** Basic number sense, basic thinking skills, being able to wait and take turns

In many cases social and emotional skills are combined and presented as one category while language skills that children being able to talk and listen to adults and other children, speak clearly, communicate needs, understand stories, and begin to identify some letters and sounds.

Child readiness is about a combination of healthy growth and development. Growth is normally characterised by a progressive curve indicating gain in size, height, and weight. Child development, on the other hand, is an interactive and complex process of change in cognitive, emotional, social capacities of a child as shown in the graph in Figure 3.

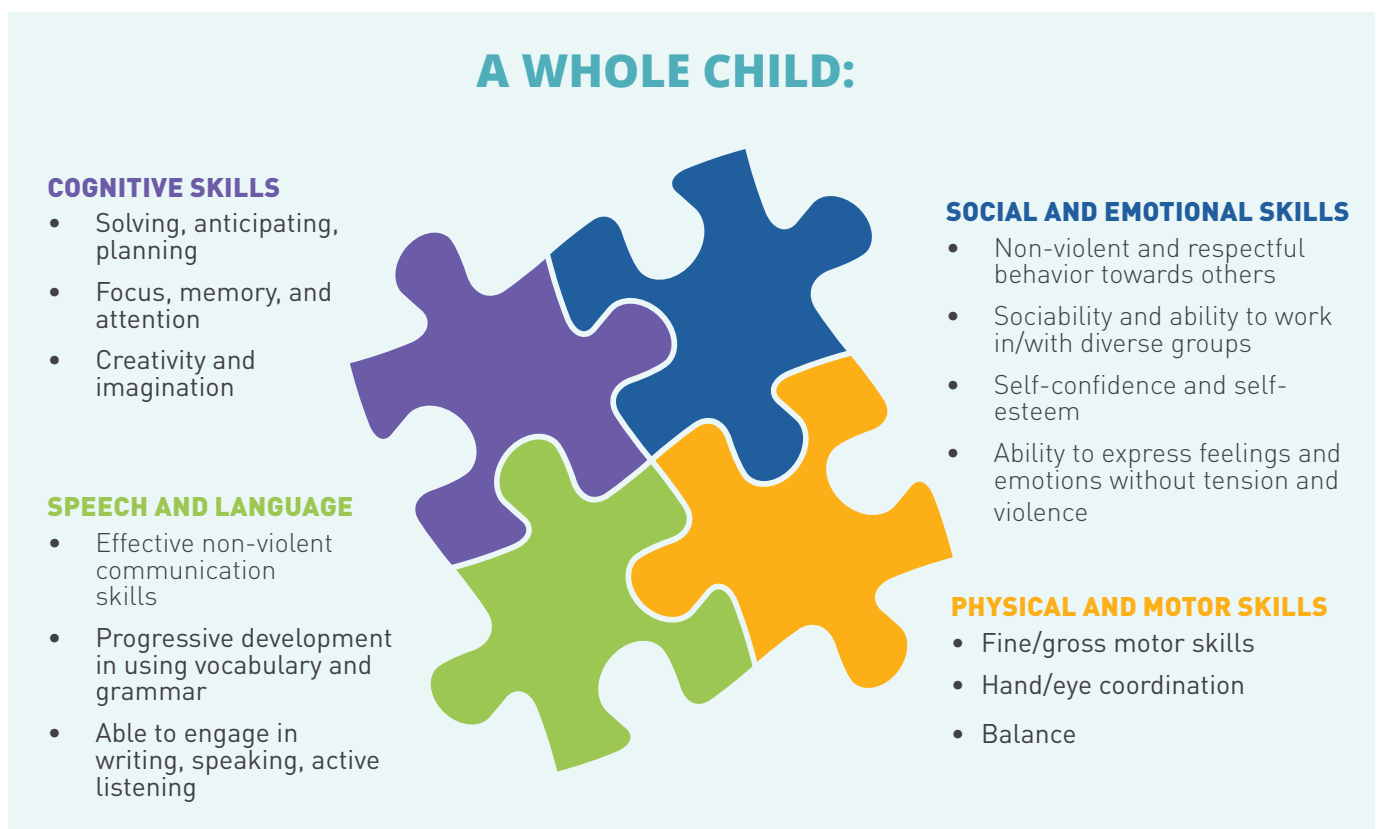


Figure 2: A Whole Child Approach

CHILDREN WHO START SCHOOL READY TO LEARN, HAVE BETTER LIFE CHANCES

In the broadest sense, child readiness is about children, families/caregiver, early environments, schools, and communities. Children are not innately “ready” or “not ready” for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before going to school.

NOTE: School readiness shall be understood in a holistic way and as a continuous process during which children accumulate knowledge and build on simple skills to perform in more complex ways across different domains of development — and not only one domain. Developing skills in each of these domains are affected by the environment in which children grow and “normal” levels of development differ across cultures, ethnic, and religious groups and even among families. Therefore, the list of school readiness skills provided in this toolkit does not serve as a normative tool but as a general framework for the type of skills/abilities that can demonstrate children’s school readiness.

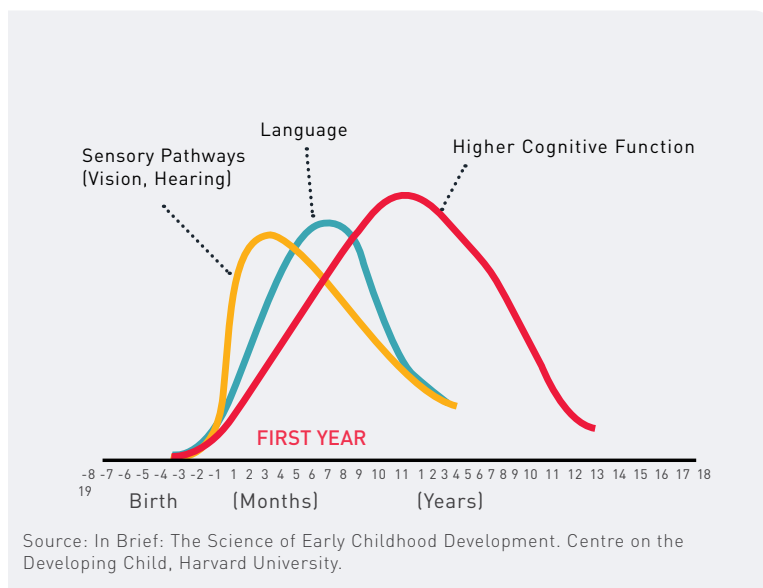


Figure 3: Human Brain Development

2.2. Ready Families/Caregivers

The second dimension of the school readiness is families’ readiness for school. Prior to entering school, the family is the most important context for development. The family, as an institution, has been broadly defined as a co-residing social unit. With reference to school readiness, family is understood as those members who co-reside with the young children, including biological and non-biological caregivers, siblings’ grandparents, aunts, uncles and extended family members etc.

Supportive parenting and stimulating home environments have been shown to be among the strongest predictors of school performance during primary school and beyond. Although the school readiness literature typically focuses on a couple of years prior to primary school entry, families prepare their children for school right from birth. The care provided for development through antenatal visits, breastfeeding and early stimulation behaviours for newborns and infants are early indicators of parenting practices that promote the learning and development of children (WHO 1999).

Readiness among families differs based on elements mentioned above, however, generally a ready family is one that:

- Engages with the child through reading, singing songs, drawing, storytelling, and playing games
- Maintains supportive and responsive relationships with the child to help them learn, gain confidence, and gradually grow independent
- Shows a commitment to ensure timely enrolment of young children in ECCE/primary schooling
- Reaches out and maintains a positive relationship with school and community to the benefit of the child’s safety, security, inclusion, and wellbeing as part of the society

2.3. Ready Schools

The third dimension of the school's readiness for children paradigm is schools' readiness for children, also known as "ready schools". Schools' readiness for children is defined in terms of the aspects of the school environment that support a smooth transition for children (and their families) into pre and primary school and advance learning for all children.

Most ECCE differ greatly compared to the education philosophy, teaching style and structure of pre and primary school. Creating continuity and maintaining learning expectations for children between early learning and pre and primary school environments is a defining characteristic of ready schools.

School's readiness for children can be also define by another three differences categories as below:

Ready Schools: Accept all children and provide a seamless transition to a high quality developmentally appropriate learning environment by engaging families and the whole community. A ready school welcomes all children and their families with opportunities to enhance and build confidence in their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Children in ready schools are led by skilled teachers as defined above.

Ready Staff: Include a school principal and teaching staff who understand age appropriate development, possess the skills to develop appropriate curriculum based on children's development, recognize, reinforce, and extend children's strengths and who are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences, including children with special needs.

Ready Systems: Describes the availability, quality, and affordability of proven programs that influence child development and school readiness. It also includes the degree to which public and ECCE promote policies and practices including data collection that enhance access to needed supports, information and tools that help all other components (family, educators, schools and children) be ready for children to be ready for school.

Ready schools challenge every child. They may set different standards for different children, reflecting different rates of development, but they do not excuse children from success. They set high standards for all children, and commit themselves to zero failure.

Some indicators of a ready school are listed below:

- Ready schools promote a smooth transition between home and school
- Ready schools strive for continuity between home and school
- Ready schools help children learn and make sense of their complex and exciting world
- Ready schools are committed to the success of every child
- Ready schools have high expectations of children and adopt a child-centred approach
- Ready schools build a strong connection with families and listen carefully to what they say about their child
- Ready school support families, sharing ideas and information about achieving school readiness
- Ready schools are committed to the success of every teacher and every adult who interacts with children during the school day
- Ready schools make sure their staff members are well informed and experienced in Early Years, Child Development and current initiatives
- Ready schools create a learning environment which is welcoming, safe and suitable for everyone's need
- Ready schools have strong leadership

PROMOTE SCHOOL READINESS AND A SMOOTH SCHOOL TRANSITION FOR ALL CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

We consider it crucial to work in partnership with colleagues in early years provisions in order to support and promote school readiness and a smooth school transition for all children and their families.

STARTING SCHOOL IS A KEY MILESTONE FOR CHILDREN, WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER WITH FAMILIES AND SCHOOL TO SUPPORT CHILDREN ON THEIR SCHOOL JOURNEY AND IN REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

2.4. Ready Local Authorities

The fourth definition of school readiness is referred to the key actors that involved with ECCE. Those key actors are included District Councils (Education Office), Commune Councils, and Head of Villages who work closely with schools, teachers, parents/caregivers and communities to achieve and improve school readiness.

The roles of local authorities are of the highest importance in re/building education, maintaining peace and safety, coordinating educational interventions, and even financing projects. Ready local authorities provide the necessary in/formal resources to promote and facilitate wellbeing and development of children and support their families. For instance, one significant point is a child's right to education which can be the basis of collaboration and coordination among communities and schools and caregivers.

Local authorities can support rights-based education by advocacy; awareness raising; financing CFS training and schools; promoting ethical codes of practice and hence creating a basis of trust and accountability among members of the community, teachers, and families.

Some of the activities that ready local authorities pursue (with regards to ECCE/SR) include, but are not limited to:

- Ready local authorities promote children's rights and child-friendly learning-teaching practices at home and in schools
- Ready local authorities organize inclusive learning opportunities for all children
- Ready local authorities give voice to children and reflect their needs in decision making
- Ready local authorities encourage families' participation in facilitating progress and development of their children
- Ready local authorities hold regular meetings with teachers and families/caregivers
- Ready local authorities provide safe environments for children, teachers, and caregivers to work and mix
- Ready local authorities help with formal registration of children (at birth/at school) — This is called community-based registration (CBR)
- Ready local authorities create synergies and incentives to involve caregivers in school decisions (Parents/teachers associations — PTA)
- Ready local authorities coordinate and conduct M&E on the progress of schools and families towards child-friendly learning environments
- Ready local authorities reflect local needs to national authorities

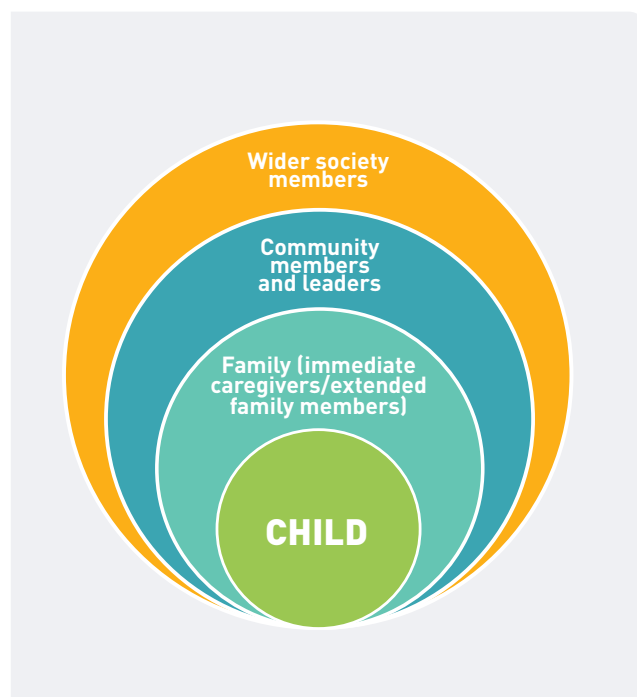


Figure 4: School Readiness Dimensions

SECTION 3:

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ACHIEVING SCHOOL READINESS

Local authorities are well placed to drive and influence action through the services they deliver, their regulatory and strategic functions, and their roles as community leaders, and social services providers. Action on education can deliver many local benefits, including lower unemployment, economic improvement and reductions in illiteracy and improved quality of future life. Furthermore, increasing awareness on education can result in avoided costs from illiteracy and poverty.

The toolkit aims to increase the collaboration and support from the local authorities as well as from communities to enhance the implementation of the relevant early childhood education and development.

3.1. The Role District Governors

Below is a description of functioning and structuring of district governance and education office.

Article 4, Chapter 2¹: Functions of Khan administrations shall perform the functions which determine by the law on administrative management of the provinces/ municipal, municipalities districts, Khans and functions delegated from the province/municipal administration as stated in article 48 of this sub-decree.

In addition to the functions stated in the paragraph 1 of this article, Khan/district administrations shall perform function as agency of ministries, institutions, capital administration, line departments and other units in accordance with the effective regulations or under the agreement between ministries, institutions, capital administration, line departments, other units and Khan administrations.

Article 7¹:

Each Khan administration shall have the following offices and units:

- Administrative and Personnel Office
- Planning and Finance Office
- Procurement Unit
- Council Secretariat Office
- Education, Youth and Sport Office
- Land Management, Urban Planning, Construction and Land Office
- Legislation and Local Conflict Mediation Office
- Public Work, Transport, Sanitation, Environment and Public Order Office
- Economy and Community Development Office
- Social Affairs and Social Well-being Office
- One-Window Service Office

3.2. Role of Education Office in District/ Khan Governors

Article 17¹: The education, youth and sport office shall act as the secretariat of Khan administration in education, youth and sport tasks and shall have duties in managing, supporting, coordinating, monitoring and evaluation of functions as following:

- Early childhood education affairs
- Primary education affairs
- Secondary education affairs
- Non formal education affairs
- Youth development affairs
- Physical education and sport affairs
- Other tasks as assigned by district governor

¹ The Functions And Structure Of Khan Administration, Sub-Decree, Royal Government of Cambodia

Function to be Delegated In the Education

1. Management of Early Childhood Education

- Management of Pre-school Personnel
- Management of pre-school students
- Planning
- Management of finance and properties
- Management of goods, building, construction, renovation, infrastructure maintenance and other services
- Management of public pre-school program
- Management of private pre-school program
- Management of inclusive learning program and multilingual program (for Khan administration with ethnic minority)
- Management of nutrition program
- Management of scholarship program for poor children at school
- Management of Parental education program in conjunction with public pre-school program and community pre-school program

2. Management of Primary Education

- Management of primary education personnel
- Management of contracted primary school teacher
- Management of student
- Planning
- Management of finance and properties
- Supply of main textbook
- Management of goods, building, construction, renovation, infrastructure maintenance and other services
- Management of school management committee operation
- Management of School Cluster Development Committee
- License Issuance
- Management of Child Friendly School Program
- Management of multilingual program (for Khan with ethnic minority)
- Management of accelerated learning program
- Management of School Feeding Program

- Management of special education program
- Management of scholarship program for poor student
- Management of health and hygiene education program

3. Management of non-formal education

- Management of personnel
- Recruitment and management of contracted teacher
- Mobilization and management of students, learners and participants
- Preparation of Activity Plan
- Management of finance and properties
- License Issuance
- Management of vocational literacy program
- Management of post-literary program
- Management of primary education equivalent program and preparation class
- Management of income generation program
- Management of re-enrollment program

4. Administrative works supporting general secondary education establishments

- Administrative works
- Management of personnel
- Planning, Finance and Properties



3.3. Understanding the Sangkat/ Commune Councils

Article 41: Law of the commune/Sangkat management has two roles to play in promoting and protecting the good governor's, managing by using all the resources that lead to sustainable development to fallibility the local needed in their own commune/Sangkat and share the common interests of the people and the national interests in accordance with the government policy.

Council of commune/Sangkat is responsible for a range of vital services for people and businesses in defined areas. Among them are well known functions such as social care, schools, housing, and planning. Local councils, which are the most common type of local authority, are made up of councillors who are elected by the public in local elections. Councillors work with local people and partners, such as local businesses and other organisations, to agree and deliver on local priorities. The decisions are implemented by permanent council staff, council officers, who deliver services on a daily basis.

Roles and responsibilities of Sangkat/Commune administration include:

- Ensuring public security and public services
- Arrange all the necessary public services and the better work to be done
- Encourage people to care for the health and well-being of the people.
- Promoting the development of the economy, the society, and the economy to improve the living standards of the people
- Protecting the environment, natural resources, culture, and national heritage
- Reconcile the views of the people in order to achieve the understanding of the destination.
- Fulfill the general duties to meet the needs of the people.

3.4. Understanding the Head of Villages

The village is a gathering place for many families and homes. Many villages come together to form a Sangkat/ Commune. Villages are not the administrative level enshrined in the constitution. Each village is managed by a village chief, accompanied by a deputy village chief and a village member as assistants. Village chiefs have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Representing all the people in the village and the main line for connecting the village and the commune council
- Increase consultation, receive guidance and cooperate with its Sangkat/Commune Council
- Participate in meetings of Sangkat/Commune Committees when required by the Sangkat/Commune Council to advise on relevant matters in the village
- Must report all issues related to its village to be included in the annual report of Sangkat/Commune Council
- Must attend Sangkat/Commune Council meetings in case of request from Sangkat/Commune Council
- Must ensure the provision of information in public documents related to their village to its citizens. They may include information on Sangkat/Commune Council meetings, development plans, and commune budgets
- Be responsible for carrying out the tasks assigned by their Sangkat/Commune Council
- Village chiefs do not have the authority to decide any matter within the jurisdiction of the Sangkat/Commune Council without the transfer of power from the council. Sangkat/Commune cannot comply with the Prakas of the Ministry of Interior approved by the National Committee for Sangkat/Commune Support

3.5. The Role of Sangkat/Commune Council/ in Education

In accordance with the law, there seems to be a lack of responsibility demanded from the local authorities and commune councils in regards to education. This is something that would greatly benefit from positive change in the form of more involvement in ECCE, SR and education as a whole.

This toolkit hopes to be the driving force behind imitating that change and attempts to encourage commune leaders to get more involved in the education sector and take more responsibility with school readiness beyond the scope of the role outlined by law.

The local authority is responsible for providing guidance to schools and other educational settings about their community duties to promote quality of education for all children and should undertake the following actions:

- Participation and cooperation with ministries, institutional partners for supporting, developing, updating and implementing early childhood policy
- Participation in the development and implementation of need assessments on early childhood care and education development services
- Put early childhood education and development in the development plan of commune/Sangkat
- Maintain knowledge and data about how many children are ready to enter primary school level.
- Meeting with community members for understanding the additional learning needs of all children
- Ensuring that suitable provision is made for children with additional learning needs who require education other than in a mainstream classroom
- Establishing regular meetings between the parents/caregivers and teachers
- Recognizing and encouraging children's learning
- Maintaining good relations with the student's parents/caregivers, teachers and school management
- Providing any information to schools, teachers and communities

- Attending school activities and being an active member of school community
- Encouraging parents/caregivers to bring their children to school when they are at school age
- Promoting awareness within the community on the importance of early education
- Encouraging enrolment and attendance to school, and keeping of the living conditions of children in the community
- Establishing community meetings with caregivers/parents
- Improving school readiness, it is critical that regular communication, sharing of information and discussion be strengthened between pre- and primary schools
- Promoting partnership working between different NGOs or private sector
- Promote equality and inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged families, looking out for children in need by removing barriers of access to free places and working with parents to give each child support to fulfill their potential

Local authorities are well placed to drive and influence action on education through the services they deliver, their regulatory and strategic functions, and their roles as community leaders, large-scale procurers and social landlords. The local authority is responsible for providing guidance to schools and other education settings about their statutory duties to promote high standards of education for all children.

SECTION 4: CHECKLISTS AND FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

This checklist and framework is made for district governor, commune/sangkat council, head of village to check in all dimensions including self-assessment.

Those dimensions are:

1. Ready Children Checklist
2. Ready Family/Caregivers Checklist
3. Ready ECCE/School/Teacher Checklist
4. Ready Local Authorities' Checklist

4.1. Ready Children Checklist

Child readiness is a measure of the skills, abilities and behaviors that will enable children to participate and succeed in school.


School readiness is about the holistic development of the child – their social and emotional skills, physical skills, communication skills and cognitive skills. Children cannot thrive at school if they haven't developed the skills to manage things like getting along with other children, following instructions, and communicating their needs.


Note that the list is not exhaustive. Children can have different levels of development in each domain and their overall skills/abilities is what can make them school ready. Children have multiple intelligences including musical/rhythmic; visual/spatial; verbal/linguistic; logical/mathematical; interpersonal; intrapersonal; bodily/ kinesthetics; and naturalistic. This indicates that they may learn and develop differently within the contexts of their homes, schools, and communities

Local authorities can use the criteria and indicators on the next page to assess the school readiness of children within their communities.



A child is considered school ready if they meet most/or a good part of the skills in the checklist:

NO.	KEYS INDICATOR CHECKLIST			
		Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT - The child is able to:				
1	Show independence and feel comfortable without the presence of an adult			
2	Separate easily from the family/caregiver at drop-off			
3	Have self-esteem and feel competent			
4	Accept authority and can follow simple rules at home and at school			
5	Be independent in dressing, eating, going to the bathroom			
6	Express feeling in a non-violent and healthy manner			
7	Work on tasks independently			
8	Ask questions and seek help when necessary and not when attempting to seek attention			
9	Follow certain routines at home and at school			
10	Cope with disappointments without violence			
11	Show perseverance and determination when working on a task			
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT - The child is able to:				
1	Take turns and share with others			
2	Form healthy and non-violent relationships with peers			
3	Socialise with all peers but also have a group of closer circles of peers/friends			
4	Be able to take responsibility to lead and/or to follow a group depending on the task			
5	Handle conflict non-violently			
6	Show social manners (saying thank you; sorry; please; etc.)			
7	Respect and work with peers regardless of their background's appearances, disabilities			
8	Work play and win/lose as part of a team.			
PHYSICAL & MOTOR DEVELOPMENT - The child is able to:				
Gross motor skills:				
1	Run easily, climb and move with agility			
2	Balance when walking along a beam			
3	Distinguish between left and right			
4	Throw and catch a ball			
5	Hop on one leg and both legs			
6	Maintain balance while standing on one leg for a few seconds			
7	Dance and move rhythmically to music			
8	Sit on a chair or on the floor without flopping over			

NO.	KEYS INDICATOR CHECKLIST			
		Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
	Fine motor skills			
9	Hold and use a pencil or other writing tools			
10	Hold and use a pair of scissors			
11	Cut along straight and curved lines			
12	Use fingers to do pasting, cutting, tearing, placing pegs, etc.			
13	Hold and manipulate small thing using all fingers			
	COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT - The child is able to:			
1	Recognise shapes and colours			
2	Build a jigsaw puzzle			
3	Detect similarities and differences in a picture			
4	Distinguish foreground and background in a picture			
5	Estimate, anticipate, plan, and evaluate			
6	Group and classify objects and intangible information			
7	Copy patterns and shapes (easy to difficult)			
8	Know numbers and be able to do basic calculations			
9	Understand and be able to show concepts such as more/less, first/second; big/small; longer/shorter,			
10	Solve problems individually and as part of a group			
11	Memorise and recite short songs/stories; movements; play roles;			
12	Have a notion of time (weekdays, seasons, time of the day)			
13	Follow verbal/visual/aural instructions			
14	Listen to stories and recall events in sequence, answer questions about characters, and use their imagination to finish the story or use the characters to make a new story			
15	Recognise letters of the alphabet and their sounds			
16	Read through picture books and tell the story			
17	Participate in discussions and activities			
18	Remember what they have learnt before and connect it to new themes (of course based on a well-designed sequential curriculum and syllabi)			
19	Complete tasks individually or as part of a group			

Families/caregiver, early care and ECCE services, school staff and community must work together to provide environments and developmental experiences that promote growth and learning to ensure that all children in communities enter school eager and excited to learn.

4.2. Ready Family/Caregivers Checklist

Local authorities can use the criteria and indicators below to assess the school readiness of families and caregivers within their communities.

A family or caregiver is considered school ready if they meet most/or a good part of the criteria in the checklist.

NO	INDICATORS	YES	NO
1	Family members/caregivers have an opportunity to meet with teachers and voice their concerns and needs		
2	Families/caregivers have the necessary knowledge and awareness about children's rights/school readiness/development domains/the importance of supporting, reading, playing with their children		
3	Families/caregivers assume their share of responsibilities with regards to preparing children for school or they believe it's not their job but the teachers' job to educate children		
4	Families/caregivers participated in training that can help them with their childcare skills		
5	Families/caregivers have the necessary knowledge and skills with regards to general health, hygiene, nutrition, psychosocial and emotional needs of children		
6	Family/caregiver has documentation to prove age of child (registration of birth)		
7	Family/caregiver has considered the school readiness of their child (conducted child SR assessment)		
8	Family/caregiver has visited the perspective school and established a relationship with teachers and or school management		
9	Family/caregiver participates in parent / teacher meetings, conferences and / or events		
10	Family/caregiver has discussed the schedule with the child and the child is aware of what they can expect		
11	Families/caregivers have worked to identify the child's feelings and concerns about starting school and have worked together to address them		
12	Families/caregivers have brought their child to visit the school, to see his/her classroom and meet the teacher before school officially starts		
13	Families/caregivers knows know that expect on their first day of school and what is expected of them.		
14	Families/caregivers reassure that child that if any problems arise at school, you will be there to help resolve them.		
15	Families/caregivers try to have child meet a classmate before the first day of school so she will already have a friend when school starts.		
16	Families/caregivers arrange for their child to walk to school together with another child in the neighborhood.		
17	Families/caregivers have the necessary means (financial, educational, literacy) to help prepare children for school tasks but also as emotionally balanced, sociable and capable individuals		
18	Families/caregivers are aware of and try to undo gender norms that can undermine their children's capabilities. Families/caregivers treat and bring up their children in a gender-sensitive manner		

4.3. Ready ECCE/School/Teacher Checklist

Local authorities can use the following criteria and indicators to assess the readiness of schools in their communities:

NO	INDICATORS	YES	NO
1	The school has information and data about the households that have children of school age in community		
2	The school has conducted enrolment campaigns before new school year started.		
3	The school has relevant new school year information made available to families / caregivers and wider community.		
4	The school has prepared the enrolment forms and documentation		
5	The school has conducted communication and engagement activities with all families and caregivers in the community		
7	The school has their curriculum and teachers prepared for teaching and learning		
8	The school has child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures in place		
9	The school has consulted with community representatives in order to encourage, advise and support families, caregivers and community members		
10	The school is safe, girl-friendly and accessible to children with disabilities and children with special needs		
11	The school has an inviting learning environment and a safe place for children to play		
12	The school classrooms are equipped with child-friendly learning and teaching materials		
13	The school has trained all teachers and staff on child-centred teaching methodologies		
14	There are mechanisms in place to share useful information on children between school teachers across academic levels		
15	The school meet the national standards for pre- and primary school teachers' qualifications		
16	There a national/local code of practice/ethical guidelines for ECCE/primary teachers?		
17	Are all ECCE and primary teachers trained according to the national qualification framework before being hired?		
18	Teacher training curriculum contain subjects such as CFS, child rights, child psychology and development; inclusive teaching/learning/assessment methods; equal opportunities and diversity; classroom management; syllabus design; addressing special needs in classrooms; child protection and violence against children (non-violent action and reporting); first aid, nutrition, health, social skills development through play; gender equality; green and life skills, etc.		
19	Teachers are well trained to adapt teaching and assessment methods to improve early years' literacy among all children		
20	Teachers are trained on methods of advocacy and awareness raising among colleagues, caregivers, and communities		
21	Teachers able to communicate properly in the language of instruction and/or the language of minorities		
22	Teachers are aware of their ethical obligations and responsibilities towards children		
23	The school provide access to clean water, toilets etc		
24	The school has enough and accessible storybooks/picture books for everyone or in the libraries		
25	The school is safely separated—by fences, for example—to avoid safety and security risks for children		
26	Children freely play and learn inside and outside classrooms		
27	The school has common standards or national regulations that oblige all ECCE/primary schools to implement CFS and/or CRC		
28	The school legal/administrative support mechanisms in place in case of violence against children		

4.4. Ready Local Authorities' Checklist

Local authorities and community members should undertake the following keys actions and may use the following checklist to ensure their own school readiness:

NO	INDICATORS	YES	NO
1	Local authorities have adequate data in regards to children in their areas who are of pre-school and primary school age		
2	Local authorities make regular school visits to ensure that schools are ready for children		
3	Local authorities regularly meet families/caregivers to ensure that all children are ready for school		
4	Local authorities work to identify children of compulsory school age in their area who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education		
5	Local authorities understand and work to raise awareness on the importance of ECCE and school readiness		
6	Local authorities are maintain good relations with students, families / caregivers, teachers and school management		
7	Local authorities work to ensure that their community has community preschool service available and work to make available		
8	Local authorities join meetings and forums between school, families/caregivers and communities		
9	Local authorities are involved in the planning and coordinating school enrolment campaigns		
11	Local authorities support teachers/staff in the individual challenges of every child when entering preschool and primary school in order to ensure that smoothest transition possible between home to pre and primary school		
12	Local authorities are aware that children with disabilities need may need a special education and find intervention where appropriate		

4.5. School Readiness Conceptual Framework for Local Authorities

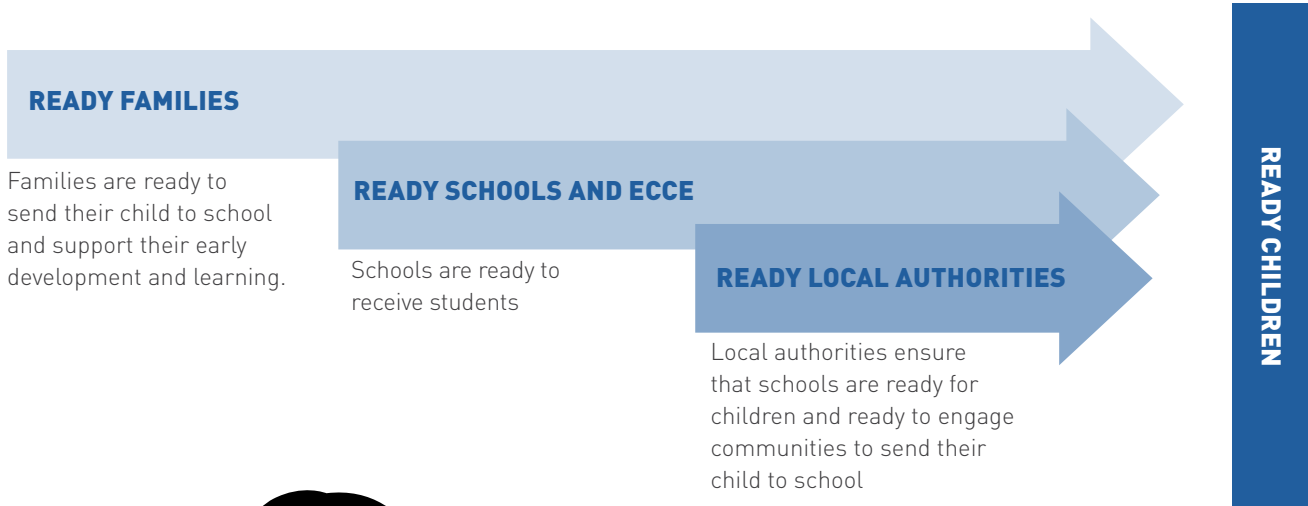
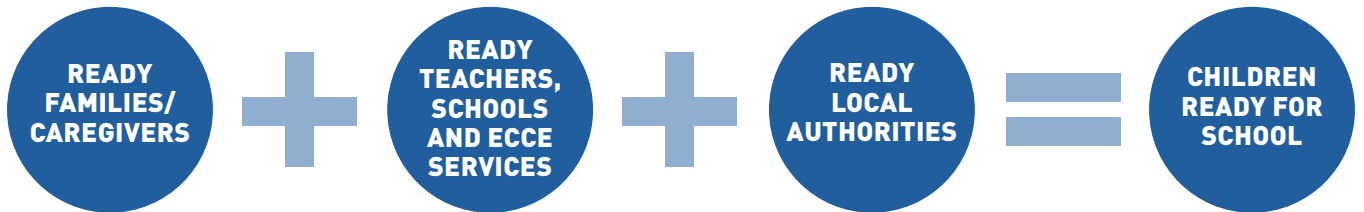
School readiness encompasses children, schools and families/caregivers as they acquire the competencies required for a smooth transition and interaction with the other dimensions of the paradigm. The paradigm of school readiness is made up of four dimensions – a child's readiness for school, the family's readiness for school, the school's readiness for children and the readiness of local authorities.

On the next page is the conceptual framework and key indicator that local authorities should engage in before the start of every new school year. This strategy is aimed at services and how they work together. More importantly it recognises that "children" must be at the centre of everything we do. A strategy is only successful if it makes a difference to the life chances of children. To ensure that the local authorities are ready, the following the actions need to be taken.

DIMENSION	FOCUS ACTIONS	INDICATORS
READY CHILDREN	<p>Children are over 3 years old</p> <p>Children are familiar with the location of their school</p> <p>Children are feeling positive about starting school</p> <p>Children can express their needs</p> <p>Children have their learning materials prepared</p>	<p>Children associate starting school with something positive</p>
READY FAMILIES	<p>Parents/Caregivers show commitment to ensure timely enrolment of young children in ECCE/primary school</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers reach out and maintain a positive relationship with the school and community</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers engage with the child through reading, sing favourite songs, drawing, storytelling and rhymes, playing games, use a variety of words as they talk together</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers maintain supportive and responsive relationships with the child to help them learn and gain confidence</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers build their confidence and praise them for their efforts and achievements</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers encourage them to have a go at new activities and keep on trying even when things go wrong</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers make time to play, have fun together and show an interest in their talk and ideas</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers support them as they learn to manage and express their feelings</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers give them time to say what they need, make choices and follow simple instructions</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers talk with them about their interests, ideas and everyday things, such as what they see in the shops and at the park</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers encourage them to have a go at dressing themselves and using the toilet independently</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers get active together, play outside and make time to walk, run, climb and have fun</p> <p>Parents/Caregivers talk positively about going to school, meet with staff to talk about their child and become familiar with school life</p>	<p>Parents are happy to see their children in school</p>

DIMENSION	FOCUS ACTIONS	INDICATORS
READY ECCE/ SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS	<p>Date of new school year is set and shared with the community</p> <p>Working closely with schools to conduct enrolment campaigns</p> <p>New school year banners were hanged in front of school's wall and public areas</p> <p>Registration form and desk were served and warm welcome to the parents</p> <p>Classroom are arranged and organized with child-friendly materials</p> <p>Teacher and caregivers are prepared for school</p> <p>Teachers from preschools and primary schools regularly meet to exchange information on children's individual characteristics on children</p> <p>Teachers from primary schools are trained on ECCE and SR</p> <p>Conduct exchange visits of children and teachers from preschools to primary schools</p> <p>School time table and calendar are developed</p> <p>School has availability, accessibility, affordability, and adaptability of programs, curriculum, and services in both ECCE and primary levels schools provide learning environments that are physically and emotionally safe and protective for all children</p>	<p>There are no out of school children in the communities</p>
READY LOCAL AUTHORITIES	<p>Local authorities know many children in the communities are over 3 years old and need to go to school</p> <p>Visited the school to ensure that school is ready for new academic year</p> <p>Visit each household and inform them about the new school year to ensure that children are ready for school</p> <p>Lead enrolment campaign with school management and staff before school start to ensure that parents and children aware about new school year</p> <p>Posted publicly at commune council's halls, public places or villages on enrollment campaigns, meet with parents at home or by other means</p> <p>Promote children's rights and ECCE</p> <p>Organize inclusive learning opportunities for all children</p> <p>Meet parents and children and reflect their needs in decision making</p> <p>Encourage families' participation and facilitate progress and development of their children</p> <p>Encourage dialogue and conduct regular meetings between teachers and caregivers</p> <p>Enforce dialogue between pre- and primary school teachers through quarterly meetings</p>	<p>There are no out of school children in the communities</p>

The local authorities' readiness indicators initiative, "making progress for young children,". The local authorities also agreed on a core set of common dimensions that had emerged from their efforts. Dimension were organized around components which, taken together, shape the extent to which children are prepared for school. The framework for the "school readiness" appears below:



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A community preschool graduation ceremony attended by H.E Prak Kosal-Vice General Director of ECCE Secretariat and Director of Early Childhood Care and Education of Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, Kep province, Cambodia, 2019.



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