

Elimu Community Light Early Childhood Development Program

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive explanation and understanding of the early childhood development (ECD) activities of Elimu Community Light (ECOLI). This will be done through an in-depth description and analysis of the situation of young children as well as the need for quality, accessible ECD. Early childhood care and development will be demonstrated as a need of not only children but of the community at large, then the ECOLI approach to addressing these critical issues will be described and a detailed summary of ECD provision as envisioned and conducted by ECOLI will be presented. The primary aims of this document are to inform readers on the important issues and needs of young children while simultaneously justifying and building support for ECOLI's ECD program.

Background

Part I: Children

In order to understand the situation of young children within the Arusha Municipality, their lives must first be framed in the wider context in which they live, highlighting the major external structural forces that influence and impact their lives.

The Wider Context – The Cyclical Nature of Poverty

Tanzania is a nation struggling to deal with high rates of poverty. Poverty reduction strategies and development activities have aimed at strengthening the economy; however, rising GDP has not translated into a rise from poverty and 34% of the population lives below the poverty line. For Tanzania's children, the statistics tell an even sadder story. A recent situational analysis of the condition of children in Tanzania revealed appalling numbers regarding the absolute poverty of children specifically, where absolute poverty is defined as "the proportion of children who suffered multiple severe deprivations of basic needs" (SitAn, p. 20). The startling findings revealed that 71% of Tanzanian children are living in absolute poverty. The percentage of children suffering from severe shelter deprivation is an even more astonishing 78% and those who are afflicted with severe water deprivation rests at 63% (SitAn, p. 20). These facts are simply unacceptable and are absolutely appalling. Clearly interventions must be taken to save the children and save the future of Tanzania.

The challenge lies in attacking the root causes of poverty, especially for the poorest of the poor. Poverty, if left on its own, is cyclical by nature and, for those most afflicted by it, it seems less like a cycle and more like a downward spiral. If one is born into a life where it is a struggle to meet everyday basic needs then there is little opportunity to achieve more than this. Unfortunately, the

likelihood of an individual living her/his whole life in poverty and dying in poverty is high if s/he was unlucky enough to be born into poverty. One generation gives birth to another without the socio-economic situation improving at all so the cycle begins once more from this disadvantageous starting point. Lack of opportunity and the struggle to meet even the most basic necessities of life prevent people from breaking the shackles of poverty and reaching a higher tier. Examples and evidence of this “poverty trap” are vivid and their consequences are countless.

The relationship between poverty and nutrition presents a stark exhibit of how the poverty trap functions and it always returns to the fact that children are the most severely affected group by poverty. Most poor families have not been adequately educated on the needs of children and may not even have access to such services. The result is that they do not know how to properly care for their children, especially with regard to their nutritional well-being. For example, only 4 out of 10 children under six months are exclusively breastfed, and these are the children whose mothers have survived childbirth despite Tanzania’s high maternal mortality rate (578 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) (SitAn, p. 133). The likelihood of a child not reaching age five in Tanzania is high as well with 91 out of every 1000 children dying before their fifth birthday (*ibid.*) and in Tanzania, over one third of all under-five deaths are linked with malnutrition, making it the single greatest cause of under-five deaths in the country (SitAn, p. 164). For those who do reach age five, they often are suffering from severe deficiencies with 71.8% of all Tanzanian children below the age of five suffering from some level of anemia, 37.7% stunted and 12.8% severely stunted (United Republic of Tanzania & Macro International, 2004-2005). The issue of childhood malnutrition largely stems in the nutrition of the mother as well because much of the development of a child occurs while it is in the womb or during the time that it is reliant on breast milk coming from the mother. Poor women unfortunately are generally undernourished themselves and are more likely to be marginalized in the household, forced into a position where their nutrition and health suffers.

The percentages above and the dangers implied by them are obviously higher for the lowest wealth quintiles, that being those who are the poorest of the poor with the least education and least access to social services. For example, McAlpine writes “there are significant differences in under-five mortality risk across wealth quintiles, with the top quintile experiencing a mortality rate 22 percent lower than the poorest (Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey & Tanzania HIV/AIDS Indicator Survey, 2007/8). A similar gap is observed between the best-educated women (secondary education or more: 78/1,000; no education 129/1,000)” (SitAn, p. 33). This is crucial because the way children develop all throughout life depends largely on how healthy they were in their formative years and how they perform academically also depends largely on how healthy they are. The link between nutrition and the cognitive and physical development of a child is inextricable and children simply will not be able to succeed in education (the main tool for escaping poverty as promoted in several schools of thought) if they have not been adequately developed. “Beyond the individual human suffering, malnutrition is a major impediment to economic growth and development. It contributes to poverty by increasing mortality, increasing susceptibility to disease, impairing cognitive development and educational achievement, and reducing work capacity and productivity in adulthood” (SitAn, p. 161). As if it was not already disadvantageous enough to be born into poverty, the other problems associated with it seem to act in union to ensure that you will not be able to gain the skills necessary to leave poverty. Poverty may refer only to an economic condition but it has real corporal effects on individuals afflicted by it. “Poverty coupled with low levels of female literacy means that many adults are failing to take care of their young children. Twice as many children of

mothers with no education or incomplete education were stunted as those whose mothers had at least secondary education (United Republic of Tanzania & Macro International, 2004-2005, p. 200, cited in SitAn, p. 98). The cycle of poverty continues when the children are not or cannot be positioned to leave it.

What Children Need

“Household poverty has a significant effect on children’s physical and cognitive development” (SitAn, p. 20). There is no difference, however, between the needs of a poor child in rural Tanzania and a child born into a wealthy family somewhere in the developed world. All children require protection, both from physical and social hazards as well as from treatable diseases which they can receive vaccinations against or treatment for. All children also must have their nutritional needs met whether it is through exclusive breast-feeding during the first six months of life or through ensuring that they are fed on a proper diet in later years as this is essential in ensuring that they will not be developmentally impaired which has a lasting impact throughout the entire course of life. Children also need to feel connections with other people beginning with their mothers, then other relatives and finally with other children or the wider community. These are the most basic needs that must be provided regardless of socioeconomic standing.

More than 80% of the brain is developed in the first five years of life and early childhood is a period of great opportunity for maximizing this potential. A child should be able to walk and speak by the end of toddlerhood and from this point forward physical and cognitive development are geared almost exclusively towards learning how to navigate society. It is between the ages of three and six that a child begins to recognize patterns and connections between things, learns to count, recognize numbers and letters, as well as learns how to hold and use pencils/crayons/markers/etc. It is at this age that children begin to interact more with other children and people outside of their immediate family so they begin to learn from different people in different settings. Positive and negative feedback is essential as early childhood is the period when kids not only learn a lot of behavior, but also begin to develop their own morals and values, feeling shame, guilt, and anxiety while simultaneously developing a sense of self and purpose including confidence and independence. This is a stage when children ought to enter pre-primary schools or early childhood care and development centers that will provide them with an adequate setting for their development, using a holistic approach during this fundamental period by educating them while also involving them in developmentally appropriate activities that build their abilities. However, what happens more often in Tanzania is that the potential of children is not reached in this time and instead they are failed by the society which is supposed to care for them and this has lasting consequences.

Tanzania’s Young Children

The young children of Tanzania are one of the most neglected and marginalized groups in the entire population. Little is known or understood about young children who fall into the age range from birth to approximately eight years and their needs are frequently left out or forgotten in public policy and development strategies, both nationally and internationally. Much of the focus is often placed on newborn children or primary school-aged children and beyond which leaves out a vital period of about six years. As should be more than evident by now, these are six of the most fundamental years of life, yet they are not prioritized. Further, there is very little research done on this age group and relatively few institutions that provide services for them (with only a small portion of these places equipped with properly trained professionals in the needs of young children.)

Often, the case is that young children are just grouped together with older children, both in terms of the education and care they receive which is developmentally inappropriate and in terms of data/statistics which are rarely disaggregated and therefore cannot illustrate if there are any differences between age groups despite the massive differences in their development.

Recently, however, priorities have begun to shift and the distinct needs of the marginalized young children are slowly beginning to be discovered, due largely to a change in international priorities which are now emphasizing early childhood more. Tanzania's poverty reduction strategy (MKUKUTA) now includes a target for ECD provision with a commitment given to "increasing the number of young children who are prepared for school and life" (Cluster II: Improvement of Quality of Life and Social Well-being, cited in SitAn, p. 105). The specific goal of the MKUKUTA is to "Increase in the number of young children prepared for school and schools prepared ready to care for children" (cited in SitAn, p. 100) though how this will be achieved, what targets they are aiming for, and the indicators by which progress will be measured are not specified. In addition, the government has instituted a "Decentralization by Devolution" policy which is supposed to delegate more power to local government authorities (LGAs) so that local democracy will dictate the agenda for their own areas. In many ways, this shift in policy gives more hope to those lobbying LGAs in establishing ECD as a priority however the policy change has not been accompanied by a shift in resources meaning that the central government has delegated some of its decision-making power but very little of its financial power. Therefore, LGAs do not have the budget to take action on issues of young children even if they have made it a priority.

Although these are positive steps forward in that early childhood development has become part of the agenda, there is disconnect between the words and deeds, with actions not mirroring the promises made. Politics and bureaucracy have ensnared progress on these critical issues. Meanwhile, children are still suffering and they remain underdeveloped at this fundamental step in their lives. The immediate impacts are being experienced by these marginalized children but the long-term impact will be felt by everyone as Tanzania loses another generation and fails to develop as a nation and lift its citizens out of poverty.

Part II: ECD

Early Childhood Development

Early childhood development (ECD or often "ECCD" for early childhood care and development) is a means of cultivating the minds of children between ages of birth to age eight in order to aid them in developing cognitively, physically, emotionally, and socially. As previously mentioned, more than 80% of the brain is developed before the age of five and this is an absolutely critical point in the life of a human. This is the phase when the most fundamental skills and values are taught which will be utilized throughout life and therefore this is the phase where we cannot afford to fail our children. Investment in this period of life is truly an investment that will pay life-long dividends with the benefits passing from generation to generation.

ECD takes a holistic approach to childhood and does not focus on developing some specific aspects of a child but rather views the entire experience of a young child as a member of a family and community with physical, social and emotional needs. The purpose is to produce individuals that understand their surroundings and are capable of successfully navigating their worlds. To do this,

they must learn how to interact with their environment and other individuals while also learning the skills that empower them to succeed. The belief is not that children need to receive education earlier in life but rather that they need to be provided with the opportunity to learn, play, and develop as people, not only as students. ECD takes children at the earliest stage applicable to cultivate their fertile minds and ensure that they are adequately prepared to take the next steps. In many ways, it also is a safeguard system so that children with challenges and disabilities or those that are developmentally behind can be identified as soon as possible and appropriate actions can be taken. The end result of ECD is that children are on the right path and are prepared to continue.

One way to conceive of ECD is as a form of social justice in that it is an early stage in which the playing field can be leveled, so to speak. It is a time to identify and correct problems before they manifest themselves in much more severe ways later on and/or become uncontrollable. It is a time of hope because it is not too late to make necessary corrections or counter other deficiencies. McAlpine writes “in the early years of childhood ability gaps widen between the advantaged and disadvantaged. If a child is not motivated to learn and engage early on they are at increased risk of disadvantage as an adult. The critical point of opportunity in addressing inequity is before the age of eight years. ‘The longer society waits to intervene in the life cycle of a disadvantaged child, the more costly it is to remedy disadvantage’ (Hackman, 2006)” (SitAn, p. 105). ECD should not be a privilege but rather an essential right that everyone is entitled to regardless of socio-economic situation. It should not become simply another tool to widen the gap between the rich and the poor, allowing the wealthy to become even more advantaged while the poor have no such option.

The early childhood development sector can be viewed as a branch of education but truly its purpose extends far beyond just education. It is not only distinguished from education in terms of its content, beliefs, and approach but unfortunately also differs in its development as a sector. It is receiving more attention lately but this has not translated into more funding. There is limited financial investment but also there is not much in place in terms of public policy or widespread understanding and acceptance of its importance. Communities are not yet aware that they have a shared responsibility to care for and develop their children. Likewise, the government has failed to see that the future is now, meaning that the next generation has already been born but they are not empowered or able to demand that they be invested in and receive quality care and education. The global development community has failed to see that early childhood development is an investment in national development and is indeed a much less costly price to pay comparatively when anticipating the future costs of ameliorating the issues that will manifest themselves when the world fails its people. Regardless, the positive news is that the need for ECD is being stressed and it is heading in the right direction in terms of becoming an essential resource for the improvement of society through investment in children.

ECD in Tanzania and Arusha

Although ECD has been placed on the development agenda and it has become part of plans, direct changes as a result have yet to be seen here in Tanzania and Arusha specifically. McAlpine describes the situation as follows: “The majority of the pre-primary schools attached to primary schools are poorly resourced and over 80% of ECD centers (including community-based pre-schools) are unregistered and in poor condition. Attendance at these schools may in fact do more harm than good for a child’s development. The lack of supplies and play materials, absence of trained teachers and the tendency to teach didactically and focus on literacy and numeracy skills make the learning

environment developmentally inappropriate” (SitAn, p. 22). When this information is analyzed even further, the problem really becomes evident.

ECD currently remains simply a privilege of the wealthy and the average annual cost of ECD per child far surpasses the cost for a student in a public secondary school. This fact reflects that ECD is still a highly privatized sector in Tanzania and it is generally affiliated with private institutions which only provide education to the elite. However, the data revealed above illustrates that even these expensive ECD centers do not actually have staff that have been trained professionally in early childhood development and they are generally just untrained caretakers or teachers who have been trained to educate older children of different ages and abilities. It would be an exaggeration to say that the status of ECD in Tanzania is that it is in shambles but there is clearly room for significant improvement of how ECD activities are actually conducted in terms of appropriateness, professionalism, and equity.

The need for quality and accessible ECD provision in Tanzania is more than evident. Research shows that “in primary schools, an average of 10% of children in Standard One are repeaters, indicating that children had not been prepared for school, that the curriculum content is inappropriate or that teachers are poorly trained to cope with induction classes. Learning outcomes are poor by the government’s own standards” (SitAn, p. 31). Children deserve better than that and it is up to parents, communities, and primarily the government to take action to ensure that Tanzania’s children are not failed but rather receive the adequate preparation they need. No one wins when the children lose. They become a burden, rather than an asset and simple investment early on can save much greater expenses later on, both in terms of finances and human capacity. ECD is in a sorry state and the children are suffering but the solution has been identified and groups are working on changing the situation.

Elimu Community Light (ECOLI)

Condensed History

Elimu Community Light (ECOLI) is an Arusha-based, local nongovernment organization (NGO) that began in 1999 and officially registered itself as such in 2006 in response to lack of proper care and development of children specifically in the Daraja II ward of the Arusha Municipality. The organization envisions a developed society with quality education and has its mission to advocate for the provision of ECD to children aged 0-8 years, impart knowledge and skills on positive care-giving and develop models of good practice in caring for small children. Two central beliefs inform the work of ECOLI and they are that the nation which is developing depends on its educated and skilled citizens and also that the foundation of adulthood is built in early childhood. What began simply with one ECD center in Daraja II has since expanded to include two more centers, one in the Themi ward and another in the Sokon I ward, all under the umbrella of the Elimu Community Light Children Unit (ECOLICU). It is through these centers that ECOLI undergoes its primary activity of providing quality ECD provision that is both affordable and accessible for the local communities.

The ECOLICU Early Childhood Care and Development Program

ECOLI implements a holistic approach to ECD in its centers with the aim of not only cultivating and educating young minds but also building the foundation of humans in their early years in a manner

that will enable them to one day break free of the critical cycle of ignorance, disease, and poverty. It has been developed and honed in the last decade of ECOLI's existence and has been influenced by a variety of sources. ECOLI founder and current coordinator Juhudi N. Mbwambo received college-level training in ECD in 2003 and served as an ECD consultant around that same era as well as a teacher. He used his education, experiences, and further research to develop the unique model of ECD used in the ECOLICU centers. It draws from many sources and has been developed over many years to reach its present stage and the history of the organization serves as a testament to its strength.

Structure

Each center has approximately 75 or more pupils aged 8 or younger present on any given day though only about two teachers are present due to budget restrictions caused by the fact that ECOLI provides affordable ECD but the student fees are too low to effectively cover the costs of having many teachers. The program runs Monday through Friday with children arriving as early as 7:30 AM and class being dismissed just after 11 AM each day. The day begins with all of the children engaging in activities that usually consist of singing songs and/or playing games together. The children are then divided into three separate groups depending on their levels of development and they receive a lesson and engage in other in-class activities that are specifically tuned to their abilities and level of development.

Curriculum and Skills Taught

The ECOLI approach uses a curriculum that is derived from many different sources and experiences of what works as well as what does not. Teachers implement ECOLI's unique curriculum which draws on both national and international educational publications which are catered specifically to the needs and development of young children. They are taught some lessons together as one group and others are taught separately as each child is at a different level of development. It is important to remember that ECD is about more than just learning academically and is instead about taking a holistic approach to childhood. Therefore, children in ECOLI's ECD centers learn not only reading and writing skills but also social and personal skills that help them understand this world that they are growing up in.

ECOLI's ECD focuses on developing children cognitively, physically, emotionally and socially as all of these different areas work collaboratively in influencing an individual. For example, children are taught how to write numbers and letters though they cannot be taught how to do this if they are not yet physically developed enough to hold a pencil and write with it. Children play ball games where they must throw and catch a ball with the teacher which is fun for them as play is a necessary part of childhood but it also aids the teacher in identifying the level of the child's motor skills development to see if they are indeed capable of doing things like holding a pencil. ECOLI implements many games and songs that develop children and help them understand things like language and society while developing them physically as well. For example, they learn how to understand the purpose of rules in games or learn lessons of discipline through songs which they recall later outside of the classroom so that they can better understand how the world seems to operate.

Children learn in the classroom how to greet people respectfully depending on their social standing or how to greet appropriately with regards to the time of day. They also learn the titles of different family members (i.e. brother, aunt, cousin, etc.) so that they can make sense of the family structure,

who everyone is, and how the relationships are formed. They are taught proper manners which are used as a means of requesting and getting what they need or want. Additionally, they are taught about the different dangers that exist in the home and community so they learn how to avoid them or just what the consequences can be. They are taught the skills to protect themselves and navigate their surroundings well.

Approximately one out of every ten students who enter primary school end up repeating their first year class, Standard One. Part of the reason for this is inadequate preparation and this can happen when children do not receive ECD. At ECOLI, there are three classes that the children are divided into and they all are taught different skills. The youngest class focuses mainly on learning how to use a pencil to write and they practice by writing the letters of the alphabet and numbers 1-10. This helps them learn to recognize the numbers and letters. As they advance, they begin to learn basic mathematics and identify letters with certain sounds. By the time they reach the third and final level, they are able to write all of the numbers through 100 and can phonetically pronounce different letter combinations which they can both read and write. The next step they need to take is to be able to read words syllabically and then they will be able to make sense of the sound combinations and know how to read.

In addition to the academic and social skills taught, children learn about topics like basic health through hygiene and nutrition. They are taught about which foods are good for them and why (as in which foods help them grow, which foods help brain development, etc.) as well as which foods to avoid. They learn how to properly use a pit toilet, how to properly wash themselves and when to do so. These are all valuable habits to learn to improve the health of the community and prevent the spread of some sicknesses and diseases.

Overall, children in ECOLICU centers learn valuable skills that they can implement at home, in the community and at home. They gain a better understanding of how society operates and what they can do to progress themselves.

Needs Addressed and Populations Served

Unfortunately, damage done earlier in life and developmental deficiencies cannot be reversed by ECOLI, nor can ECOLI single-handedly satisfy all of the children's nutritional and emotional needs which are not adequately addressed outside of the centers. However, this does not prevent ECOLI from trying to address these problems and this has been seen in the past through a feeding program which was briefly implemented in the Themi center and also in meetings with parents in which they are able to receive education on the specific needs their children need to develop properly. ECD is not just about educating children but rather must consider the holistic experience of young children and address all of their needs. Children need to be cared for and supported, not just taught how to read and write. They need to be understood just as much as they need to understand. ECOLI trains all of its teachers to know all of the needs of young children as well as how to identify them and address them. They are taught child psychology as well as necessary nutrition for children so that they can understand more what the experience of a child is and how best they can provide for that child when he or she is in the classroom and help develop them as individuals.

ECOLI serves a population that generally receives very little other services and is incredibly marginalized economically, socially, politically and even in their environment. ECD through ECOLICU centers is affordable to low income families and ECOLI is making these services available to more

than just people of means. Children come from the least desirable circumstances in severely impoverished communities where they often live in slum-like conditions. Their families face worries everyday in how to put food on the table or if they can afford for any accident or sickness to befall a family member. Many of the children have young parents who are uneducated themselves and never had a chance such as this when they were growing up which may be the reason that they were never able to leave behind the life of poverty that they were born into. The mission of ECOLI is to make this service available to those who need it most but otherwise would never be able to access it. This has created financial challenges for the organization and perhaps that is why no one else is providing this service and filling this need, but the bottom line is that it is indeed a need and it is just to make it available to all regardless of their socioeconomic position.

Outcomes

Children graduate from ECOLICU centers with the skills and abilities that will enable them to succeed upon entering primary school. They are able to recognize and write numbers and letters as well as do basic mathematics and phonetically read words in Kiswahili. They enter primary school significantly more prepared as a result of their ECD experience and are able to learn easier and advance in their classes immediately. The skills they have before entering primary school give them a head start that will carry them far throughout the course of their education. However, the benefits of the ECOLICU centers are not limited only to further education.

The ECOLICU centers serve as a place for young children to gather to learn and grow together. Leaving home and entering the wider community is an important step in the development of a child as is entering an environment with other children of the same age where they can play together and learn from each other. They are given a chance to interact with several children who are at their same level as development and the division into three separate classes depending on the development of the child allows children at every level to see simultaneously either what they are working towards becoming or where they have come from. The advancement that occurs in these three years is remarkable as the children enter almost as a blank slate and then leave as confident and mature young students that are capable of progressing much further in their lives than without this service, enabled to move on and do great things throughout life.

The original goal that led to the creation of ECOLI and the creation of the first ECOLICU center was to lower the rates of future crime in the community by giving children a more viable option. With more than a decade of experience, one can now see that this goal is well on the way towards being achieved with some targets already being reached. There are less children loitering on the streets and being exposed to dangerous behaviors because now they have a place to go and activities to participate in. Furthermore, less of them are failing in primary school as a result of their preparation at ECOLICU centers so they are not ending up on the streets where they have no other alternatives than crime because they did not succeed academically. ECOLI is an organization which aims more towards attaining long-term outcomes which are not always obvious and do not always produce immediate visible impacts. However, it is these goals that produce real positive lasting change and lead to large social improvement although they are thankless tasks which produce grand results even though people will often fail to remember how poor the situation was before.

Future Goals

ECOLI has many ambitious goals and projects which it would like to pursue in accordance with its vision of a developed society with quality education. There are many ways in which ECOLI could expand its services and improve its existing services for the benefit of the children and communities it serves. One way to improve would be to conduct a research project that would provide more tangible evidence on the challenges faced by local communities in the Arusha Municipality and help to identify which areas are most in need so that ECOLI can extend into those areas in the future. Research would also demonstrate the value of the ECOLI approach to ECD by following up with former students for the sake of showing how they benefitted from their early childhood care and development as well as teaching ECOLI ways that it could improve. Establishing a method for monitoring and evaluating current students could also serve a similar purpose in the long run. This research is only one such goal that the organization would like to see materialize.

The major project that ECOLI wants to accomplish is to establish an ECD model center near a local public primary school that will serve countless purposes for the organization and community. First, it will provide the same ECD services that are available at other ECOLI centers. Second, it will be a well-equipped building with proper materials and spaces in a public location where quality ECD is available so that everyone will be able to see just how ECD should be conducted and in what type of environment. As a model center, it will serve as a place for others to learn more about ECD and how it can be ideally provided while also promoting ECD in general. The model center will possess a library of resources on the needs of children and also host seminars, dialogues, workshops, etc. to educate parents and the community on child issues. It can also serve other community interests by serving as a space for gathering or coming to for guidance. Lastly, if ECOLI is able to own the property and not pay rent to another landlord, it will allow the organization to support itself and some of its other projects via use of the space.

The dream of ECOLI is to one day establish one of these model centers where children can receive quality ECD in all 17 wards of the Arusha Municipality and eventually maybe move beyond that. If the need for developing young children could be better understood by all and ECD would be invested in, then ECOLI would be able to rest. However, this is not yet the reality and ECOLI would like to grow in its influence to advocate for young children and lobby for provision of quality ECD that is available and accessible to all. This is all just a means, of course, for developing Tanzanian society as a whole and ensuring future success by putting forth the effort to take care of the upcoming generation of Tanzanian citizens.

Conclusion

It may be cliché to write that children are the future but this does not make the statement any less true. Tanzania as a developing nation must deal with many pressing issues that need to be addressed at once so it is easy to understand how difficult it must be to deal with countless challenges at once while also coping with a budget that is never sufficient. It can be easy to lose sight of the long term outcomes which a nation would like to see achieved when it must focus on other urgent matters. However, just because the outcomes of education and investment in children are not immediately obvious does not mean that they are any less important. In fact, making the mistake of inadequately addressing children's needs is likely to result in further problems in the future that are more expensive to fix and can have horrible consequences. Anyway that it can be

viewed, it just makes sense to invest in children for the sake of improving the future. There is no better place to start than with the very beginning by strengthening the foundation of a child's education which is essential to the foundation of his or her character. This foundation is found in early childhood care and development.

ECD is slowly being discovered as an important service that ought to be required for every child worldwide. The benefits of ECD are countless and the possibilities infinite for improving the lives of children. It cultivates their minds when they are at their maximum potential for absorbing new information and allows them to develop in a way that will ensure they can learn all of the skills that are necessary for entering the world and being successful. The period of life before age eight is a period of unlimited opportunities and this is a time when a child can either thrive or wither depending on how she or he is developed. The gap between the rich and the poor will never be closed if basic services continue to be just privileges of the wealthy and the elite. The knowledge of how to provide all of these opportunities and do what is best for children exists though it is being restrained by a lack of information and investment. It is in everyone's best interests to bring about this change and allow all children globally to receive the same opportunities that they all deserve.

Elimu Community Light is an organization that is working actively to educate and inform others on the power of investing in young children through advocating, lobbying, and providing services. ECOLI developed as a result of new awareness that breaking the cycle of poverty and developing the country starts with the children who are tomorrow's grown citizens. ECOLI serves communities by providing the services that it promotes while encouraging and assisting others to do the same when it serves as a model for how to bring about these changes. The challenges are immense but more people are beginning to see the value of young children and are joining with ECOLI in supporting its mission and vision of bringing about a developed society with quality education for all. The future is now and it is upon all of us to support each other so that we may all develop collectively as united likeminded people with a shared interest in the wellbeing of humanity.

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