



## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG CHILDREN

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**The closure of education centers has affected children's lives and disrupted their learning. It has also affected the wellbeing of their families as children are more likely to become depressed.**

This may be caused by parents having to bring their children to unsuitable working environments where they are left to play unsupervised by themselves. Other families are forced to leave their children at home with television or smartphones. This causes game addiction, aggressiveness, and lack of discipline as well as delayed language development skills.

Some schools have implemented online learning programs, the social aspect has yet to be considered.

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Online learning is not as effective as in-person learning because young children need social interaction with their teachers and peers. They strive for hands-on learning materials and interactive learning environments as well as active learning strategies which are impaired when learning online.

Khun Nattaya Boonpukdee (2021) said that children (0-6 years old) have been affected by COVID 19 in many ways as the following.

More than 85% of Thai children 2 years old and above are enrolled in ECD centers. The COVID-19 crisis caused all ECD centers to close following the state's -

orders affecting children's learning and wellbeing nationwide. Families have echoed they don't know how to raise their children and promote development skills or how to interact or 'play with them'. Children also aren't learning life and social skills. Moreover, most families don't know how to properly nourish their children. Statistics show both undernutrition and overnutrition cases in Thai children of all ages.



A pre-service teacher encouraging this little girl to present her work and ideas at the SRRU demonstration school.

Families are suffering from financial burdens as well as educational and wellbeing difficulties. According to a survey run by the Department of Women's Affairs and Family, there is also an increase in domestic violence. The study also found that young children are most likely to be raised with forms of physical punishment causing them to be highly sensitive. Experiencing violence at a young age cuts lifelong scars and can cause physical and mental issues leading to risky/addictive behaviors from unconsciously trying to escape and heal the trauma (adverse childhood experiences-ACEs). The lingering effects are widespread and affect the child as they grow older.

There are too many factors involved to determine

how a child will be affected in the future. The effects each child has will vary depending on their family's original capital. The country's inequality also plays a role in the diverse experiences children receive. This crisis has caused the country's gap of inequality to widen.

Key agencies that need to step up and urgently discuss these issues include the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. These 4 key ministries have jointly signed an MOU to protect and promote early childhood development. Another national agency responsible for hosting early childhood events is the National Early Childhood Development Board must be the voice for all young children across the nation. Other organizations should also consider giving as much support as possible. **It is crucial that this is done quickly as child development happens every day and stumping the children's developmental growth or traumatizing young children will not only affect the child themselves but Thailand will suffer from a lost generation.**

Children from birth to 6 years old are the least likely to speak up for themselves in all age groups regardless of their income and social status. This is why these issues are nonexistent in present mainstream media. Most importantly, the ecosystem consisting of families, early childhood education/child development institutions, communities, public health services, and social services that support early childhood development have shut down without a replacement.

In this regard, Khun Nattaya Boonpukdee, Director of the Division for Children, Youth and Families has proposed the following solutions.

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**1. Professionals who work with children and families (touchpoints), should be supported and adjust to the 'new normal' way of performing their original duties.** Their workload and child outcome should stay the same. They must also receive welfare protection, such as receiving effective vaccines as well as receiving additional compensation. In times of crisis, it may require them to work more hours per day/week. Their extra efforts must be valued and rewarded appropriately.

**2. Local agencies should be given the budget to hire the locals (people who are unemployed but have potential) to become the support team for children and families.** These people will proactively work with homes and will be trained to effectively support child development, give advice to family and organize necessary services such as providing lunch programs, opening playgrounds in intervals with safety measures to reduce risk, distributing toys, storybooks to individual children, etc. In this regard, the health and education agencies should step up and provide the needed support such as providing training programs and assigning management teams. CSOs and NGOs should have channels to join and provide support.

**3. Urgent mid-term and long-term policy proposals to address the impact of COVID-19 affecting early childhood development should include proficient policies on equality in education and social safety.** It should also include welfare policies to protect the welfare of children and families and set funds to support troubled families in need as well as a counseling center to give advice regarding young children, youth, and family issues.

The state must invest in the health and nutrition of all children and ensure they are provided milk and nutritious food.



Team meeting on School Partnership project, Slakdai sub-district to improve the quality of education.

Utilize the merging of the social capital system in setting up education systems for children in the community and support the budget for monitoring/evaluation systems to ensure guidelines on how to help support early child development are shared. Enforce flexible time structures and various learning styles as well as personalized learning and active learning methods.

Additionally, working in-depth to educate children, families, and communities to minimize potential negative effects. Put in place a system to engage with partners related to early childhood development for monitoring the wellbeing of children and families in the area. Develop a system to prevent COVID and a volunteer system to help take care of the children in the community. Set standards to look over the mental wellbeing of children and families that are appropriate for their age. Set measures to maintain the relationships between children and their families. Set violence prevention measures for children and coordinate with the local authorities in charge of early childhood development centers to support children and families.



## DNPF TEAM APPOINTED AS MEMBER OF THE ECD IMPLEMENTATION WORKING GROUP

The Department of Local Administration (DLA) has recently appointed a working group to oversee the ECD implementation in ECD centers under DLA.



Ajarn Tida Pitaksinsuk, Early Childhood Expert and DNPF Advisor, one of the working group member.

The working group will put in place standards, guidelines and procedures to drive the ECD implementation in ECD centers under DLA.

The appointment of this working group was a result of a series of consultation meetings between DLA, Dek Noi Pattana Foundation (DNPF), RLG institute, NESDC and other stakeholders on a roadmap for a sustainable development for the nationwide 19,000 ECD centers under the DLA. The working group comprises of representatives from DLA, DNPF, NESDC, RLG Institute, Thepsatri Rajabhat University, Mahidol University and 101 Educare center.

## INTRODUCING DNPF'S TEACHER GUIDE AND TOOLKIT FOR OBSERVING AND MONITORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN SKILLS

DNPF has developed a teacher guide and toolkit for observing and monitoring the development of children skills for 2- and 3-year old. In order to assist teachers at the ECD centers in effectively monitoring children's skills, DNPF team extracted relevant competency domains and indicators for 2-year-old and 3- year- old from the national guideline (the national guideline was introduced in 2019 by the Education Council and DLA and the roll out of national guideline was in 2020).

DNPF teacher guide aims to allow teachers and caretakers to support competency development conveniently and accurately to the best of their ability.

In addition to the guideline, DNPF in collaboration with the Education Faculty of Surin Rajabhat University (SRRU) also hold a bi-annual training for teachers and caretakers to support teachers in using the toolkit to monitor the development of children skills.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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