



# **FINAL EVALUATION OF THE « TOGETHER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD IN SRI LANKA! » PROGRAMME**

**Final Report**  
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## Acronyms

Acronym	Full name
ACUT	All Ceylon Union of Teachers
ADE ECED	Assistant Director of Education Early childhood education development
AEA	Aide et Action
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
ALSDC	Asia Lanka Social Development Corporation
CEMEA	Centre d'entraînement aux méthodes d'éducation actives
CS	Children's Secretariat
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DO	Development Officer
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECED	Early Childhood Education Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EPPTA	Eastern Province Pre-school Teachers Association
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoE	Ministry of Education
NECY	Network for Education, Children and Youth
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMC(s)	Preschool Management Committee(s)
PTC(s)	Preschool Teacher Committee(s)
R1A1, R2A2, R3A1 ...	Result 1 Activity 1, Result 2 Activity 2, Result 3 Activity 1
RDF	Rural Development Foundation
SL	Solidarité Laïque
SO1, SO2, SO3	Specific-objective 1, 2, 3
SNUipp	Syndicat National Unitaire des Instituteurs, Professeurs des Écoles et PEGC
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations' Children Fund
ZEO	Zonal Education Office

**Terminology:** In this document,

- The term **partners** refer to the 7 partners engaged with Solidarité Laïque in this programme, namely: EPPTA, RDF, Aruthal, ACUT, ALSDC, Susara Foundation and NECY.
- The term **stakeholders** refer to the families, local authorities (districts, provinces) and Provincial ministry of education, other organisations involved in early childhood education.
- Solidarité Laïque's headquarters refers to the organisation based in Paris and Solidarité Laïque team office refers to the team based in Columbo. CEMEA and SNUiPP as well as Aide et Action are French partners of SL.

## Acknowledgements

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Solidarité Laïque, the partners and stakeholders as well as preschool teachers and parents provided valuable access to information and data throughout the evaluation and freely gave time and insights to help deepen our understanding of the programme and the context.

The analysis and recommendations of this report do not necessarily reflect the views of Solidarité Laïque.

## 1. Executive summary in English

This report presents the final evaluation of the "Together For Early Childhood In Sri Lanka!" programme conducted by Solidarité Laïque (SL), a French-based non-governmental organisation (NGO). Building on its considerable experience in the country since 2005, following the tsunami, and its expertise in early childhood education in Sri Lanka, Solidarité Laïque envisioned this programme as a logical continuation of FISONG (2009-2011), a field project (2012-2015), and two micro-projects (2016-2017) in the Eastern Province.

The programme aimed to improve the overall quality of early childhood education (ECE) by: promoting effective coordination and liaison among all ECE stakeholders; building the capacity of preschool teachers; and supporting the recognition and endorsement of ECE by provincial and central governments. The programme was conducted between April 2018 and June 2021, and was divided into two stages of 21 and 18 months in 5 provinces, namely: Eastern, Central, Southern, Northern and Western provinces.

### **Authorities involved in early childhood in Sri Lanka**

- ECCD – Early Childhood Care and Development – This sector is implemented by the Children Secretariat
- ECCD Officers or Coordinators – These officers are appointed by the Children Secretariat and attached in district secretariats and divisional secretariats
- ADE ECED – Assistant Director of Education Early Childhood Education Development – Appointed by the Ministry of Education attached in Zonal Education Officers
- Eastern Province Preschool Education Bureau is specially for only Eastern province under management of Ministry of Education Eastern Province
- Early Childhood Education Development Unit (ECED Unit) – There are units in all the provinces except Eastern Province
- The Provincial Ministry of Education is responsible for ECED and not ECCD.

The specificity of the programme lies in its structure, since Solidarité Laïque relies on implementing partners based in each province to relay and convey the activities. These local partners were therefore the key interface between the beneficiaries – preschool teachers, parents, the local community, Provincial Ministry of Education (MoE) officials – and the NGO. This key feature allowed for good penetration into the local community but was also a challenge because some local partners were less empowered, less well connected, and less prepared than others.

### ***Undeniable results in terms of quality of preschool training and parent/teacher engagement***

The "Together for Early Childhood in Sri Lanka" programme was born out of a request from the Sri Lankan public authorities, based on the achievements in the Eastern Province, where Solidarité Laïque was operating through a specific EGEP 1 and EGEP 2 programme.

The evaluation considers that Solidarité Laïque has taken into account the recommendations proposed in the previous evaluations of 2012 and 2016, notably to cooperate closely with local authorities by formalising framework agreements and to privilege cooperation with local partners. It also implemented a light structuring, as recommended. Taking these recommendations into account has undoubtedly allowed the programme to proceed with results, despite strong and unexpected constraints such as the pandemic.

The programme supported by Solidarité Laïque **can be credited with the robustness and acuity of the mapping of the actors involved**, the in-depth interaction with the partners prior to their selection, and the intervention methods based on the mobilisation of these partners who were familiar with the field and already recognised as competent by the public authorities.

Solidarité Laïque provided the means for the **local office** to intervene in the five provinces, with partners, and to initiate activities in the extremely unstable context of legislative and presidential elections, terrorist attacks and the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation underscores Solidarité Laïque's ability to adapt to maintain activities despite these events and to adapt to needs that arose during the course of the programme, such as the reorientation of certification training (which was no longer necessary) or the distribution of food aid to alleviate the dramatic situations experienced by some teachers.

The programme aimed both at mobilising actors for the implementation of the national early childhood policy, and at providing **direct assistance** (through the training offered to teachers, for example). This dual level of intervention is a trademark of Solidarité Laïque. It should make it possible to produce institutional change and at the same time to anchor the project in reality by involving teachers and parents, without whom no reform is possible.

The evaluation shows that:

- **Capacity building activities for teachers have taken place**, despite elections, attacks and the pandemic, they have allowed results in the quality of teaching, which are visible and appreciated by the beneficiaries. The training of trainers was particularly appreciated and have brought results at the level of the national education system, through a cascade effect of training.
- **The premises of an intercultural dialogue have been established**, and very much appreciated, despite the limited number of inter-province exchanges.
- **Dialogue platforms have been launched or remobilised at the level of PMCs** (dialogue and steering structures at school level) and PTCs (dialogue structures between preschool teachers at zonal and district levels).
- **The programme has been aligned with national priorities and government commitments**, which bodes well for the sustainability of the programme's effects.

**The positive impacts observed are the following:**

- The perception of preschool teachers and the importance of early childhood has generally improved, but they still lack recognition from some groups.
- The programme strengthened ownership of the preschool education sector by local authorities and stakeholders, including parents.

- The programme has provided opportunities for preschool teachers and trainers to increase their professional capacity, although there is still a long way to go to achieve the desired capacity for all teachers. The women interviewed generally felt empowered professionally, at school and in their relationships with authorities, and personally within their families and at home.
- The programme has contributed to the facilitation of PMCs and the strengthening of PTCs where exchanges between teachers have taken place, although support is still needed for all PTCs to be operational.
- The programme's alignment with national policy and the commitment of public authorities ensured the sustainability of actions to improve the quality of early childhood education.
- The programme has enabled stakeholders to intensify communication and implement activities to improve the ECE sector and address a common policy for the benefit of Sri Lanka's children. It did so with the overall intention of developing intercultural dialogue and reconciliation.

### Challenges faced by the programme

This programme **inherently had immense difficulties** that materialised and would have been encountered even without a pandemic or elections. Sri Lanka remains a country with fragmented governance, making it almost impossible to influence national policy, unless one considers a long-term programme involving many actors, whose legitimacy is stronger than that of a French NGO. The evaluation thus raises the question of the capacity of the small team at Solidarité Laïque's Sri Lanka office to implement a programme with such different partners operating in specific contexts in each province.

Scaling up the experience gained in the Eastern Province would have undoubtedly required a **strengthening of the programme's management**.

- **At the partner level**, the managers assigned to each partner were torn between meeting the requirements of their employer and being accountable to the Solidarité Laïque team in Sri Lanka for the implementation of the programme. Strengthening the management of the programme would undoubtedly have allowed **Solidarité Laïque to better adjust its support to the partners responsible for the concrete implementation of the programme**. These partners have very different capacities and means of action. These differences relate to their size, mandate, missions and resources. However, the programme gave them identical objectives. There was no doubt a lack of calibration of programme activities and an adjustment of Solidarité Laïque's support to partners according to their capacities.
- **At the level of Solidarité Laïque in Sri Lanka**, the team was not able to support the partners spread geographically over vast and sometimes landlocked territories. This team could not sufficiently accompany, advise, and guarantee the quality of the activities implemented by the partners. The team in Sri Lanka, however, did this to the extent of the resources allocated to it (which Solidarité Laïque reinforced by creating an ex-nihilo position in charge of partnerships). However, this model of intervention is not necessarily viable in the long term or on a larger scale if it is not accompanied by adequate human resources.

***A programme aiming at systemic change but insufficiently equipped with the means to intervene and the appropriate governance methods***

The evaluation raises the question of the validity of a logical framework model for this type of project, given that it aims to change mentalities and working methods and seeks to structure civil society actors so that they participate in a policy defined by elected political decision-makers.

**Component 3** focused specifically on advocacy and dialogue at the national level and was hampered by the lack of shared governance in which the NGO was to play a key role. The evaluation considers that this component remains essential for the ECE policy to be implemented in a harmonised way in the five provinces and beyond. It considers that **Component 3 is similar to a programme in itself**, which would have deserved resources commensurate with its objectives. The means allocated to this component were clearly undersized for it to generate a leverage effect. Finally, the lack of legitimacy of a small French NGO to intervene on the Sri Lankan political level did not favour the implementation of this component, which had a strong political dimension.

The programme lacked a **governance model** that would have involved the Sri Lankan authorities more in all of its components. While the Solidarité Laïque team in Sri Lanka was able to cooperate and make progress on the ground with partners, it was almost impossible to intervene directly at the strategic level in a unilateral manner. The NGO is too small to challenge and mobilise the national authorities to work with them on the implementation of early childhood education policy. The programme has sought to do this, with varying degrees of success, with provincial authorities, depending on their willingness to cooperate and their degree of structuring and maturity in ECE policy in their area of responsibility.

Below are listed the strategic recommendations for the continuation of the programme, the operational recommendations in the design and implementation of the programme and finally a list of questions and answers dealing with recommendations specifically requested by Solidarité Laïque on the functioning and possible expansion of its intervention model in Sri Lanka.

**Recommendations**

1. **Explore the possibility of working on the governance of the decentralisation of the national early childhood education policy.** The evaluation considers that there is an unexplored field for NGOs to support the government in identifying the right levers for policy to be adapted to local contexts and in line with national guidelines:
  - The programme would explore with public authorities, partners, and teachers and parents a collaborative approach (including method, process, and tools) that will be needed to implement the national policy. The NGO in charge could instead play the role of the moderator of the reflection.
  - The NGO would conduct a social and institutional diagnosis, conduct international benchmarking to inform the national policy, highlight local best practices, and discuss their transferability across the country.
  - The NGO would continue to provide capacity building activities to empower all actors in the early childhood education sector, to help them express their ideas, establish a constructive dialogue, respect divergent opinions, adopt an analytical approach, accept criticism, etc.



2. **Continue to support the PTCs**, which appear to be the place where teachers dialogue and learn to build a credible voice to be considered at the political level. It is a question of maintaining the approach of Solidarité Laïque aimed at structuring preschool teachers, without this support systematically leading to the creation of a union. The achievement of this goal is up to the teachers, and Solidarité Laïque should not arbitrate, nor should its partners.
3. **Refocus the project on activities that have been successful in the Sri Lankan education system**: Training of Trainers (ToT) should be continued, as Sri Lanka is beginning to build a pool of female teacher trainers capable of passing on their knowledge and practices. To ensure sustainability, ToT should not be a stand-alone activity and should be integrated into a larger programme.

#### **Operational recommendations in programme design**

4. **Adjust budgets allocated to planned activities and operational objectives**. The objectives of the planned activities and specific objectives should be well correlated first with the scale of the target (the provinces are all specific and require specific interventions); these adjustments should then be made according to the programme's capacity to create change - not just to implement the activity. If Solidarité Laïque intends to scale up and intervene in more provinces with the local partnership model, it will be necessary to:
  - Properly equip the team in Sri Lanka with the human and financial resources to support the partners.
  - Provide sufficient activities to bring about a change in attitudes or behaviours. The system of indicators should measure performance rather than progress of the activity.
  - Strengthen the monitoring of activities (preparation, quality control of activities conducted with partners and closer monitoring and evaluation to continuously improve and modify activities if necessary).

#### **Operational recommendations in the implementation of the programme**

5. **Strengthen the capacity of partners to manage a programme** in a given territory by providing strong support at the beginning of the programme, particularly with regard to Solidarité Laïque's expectations of the partner. This steering capacity must include:
  - Strengthening the partners' skills in monitoring and evaluation, which the organisations (Solidarité Laïque and AeA) should be able to support. The quality of the services offered, the measurement of results and the demonstration of the added value of this type of programme to public authorities are at stake.
  - Strengthening the capacity of partners in particularly difficult areas (such as in the isolated north, where populations are more vulnerable), which requires more resources.
  - Clarification of responsibilities between Solidarité Laïque and partners, based on an audit of organisational and project management capacities, adapted to the context of each province. A model of co-responsibility should be developed so that the person hired by the partner is truly responsible and accountable for the programme, knowing that the project is not carried out by the partner who employs him/her.
  - Strengthening the capacity to plan activities. This involves better anticipating blocking events, which are foreseeable risks such as national elections.

6. **Considering a convergence of the strengths of the organisations involved in early childhood education**, in this case Solidarité Laïque and Aide et Action (AeA), based on an analysis of the comparative advantages of each:

- AeA has greater budgetary strength than Solidarité Laïque, has less experience in the field of early childhood in Sri Lanka, but can learn from experiences in many other countries, particularly on the governance of education systems that include early childhood.
- Solidarité Laïque has 15 years of experience in this sector and plays the card of collective construction with local partners. Its PCPA approach, developed in France and elsewhere, seems to be an option to be studied for Sri Lanka in terms of the multi-actor approach and the empowerment of local actors. This approach would require continuous resources over a long period of time (8-10 years) but would bring about changes, co-constructed with the authorities and the beneficiaries of the national policy on early childhood. In addition, Solidarité Laïque has a network of members who can contribute their expertise as needed, both in the development of educational policy content and in the mobilisation of decision-makers, the structuring of teachers or the implementation of educational reforms.

The evaluation recommends a programme jointly piloted by AeA and Solidarité Laïque and does not recommend a direct and immediate transfer of the programme to AeA, should Solidarité Laïque withdraw from Sri Lanka. This requires that the Solidarité Laïque office in Sri Lanka be maintained, and that the link between the French and Sri Lankan teams remain active (particularly in terms of capacity building and programme governance and management).

## 2. Extensive summary in French

Ce rapport présente l'évaluation finale du programme "Ensemble pour la petite enfance au Sri Lanka !" mené par Solidarité Laïque (SL), une Organisation Non Gouvernementale basée en France. S'appuyant sur son expérience considérable dans le pays depuis 2005 suite au Tsunami et sur son expertise en matière d'éducation de la petite enfance au Sri Lanka, Solidarité Laïque a envisagé ce programme comme la suite logique de la FISONG (2009-2011), d'un projet de terrain (2012-2015) et de deux micro-projets (2016-2017) dans la province de l'Est.

Le programme visait à améliorer la qualité globale de l'éducation de la petite enfance (EPE) en : favorisant une coordination et une liaison efficaces entre toutes les parties prenantes de l'EPE ; renforçant les capacités des enseignants du préscolaire ; et soutenant la reconnaissance et l'approbation de l'EPE par les gouvernements provinciaux et centraux. Le programme a été mené entre avril 2018 et mars 2021, et a été divisé en deux phases de 21 et 18 mois dans 5 provinces, à savoir : Les provinces de l'Est, du Centre, du Sud, du Nord et de l'Ouest.

Cette spécificité du programme réside dans sa structure, puisque Solidarité Laïque s'appuie sur des partenaires d'exécution basés dans chaque province pour relayer et véhiculer les activités. Ces partenaires locaux étaient donc l'interface clé entre les bénéficiaires - enseignants du préscolaire, parents, communauté locale, fonctionnaires du Ministère de l'Éducation (MoE) - et l'ONG. Cette caractéristique essentielle a permis une bonne pénétration dans la communauté locale, mais a également constitué un défi car certains partenaires locaux étaient moins autonomes, moins bien connectés et moins préparés que d'autres.

### **Le secteur de la petite enfance au Sri Lanka**

- ECCD – Soins et développement de la petite enfance – Ce secteur est mis en œuvre par le Secrétariat à l'enfance
- Agents ou coordinateurs ECCD – Ces agents sont nommés par le Secrétariat à l'enfance et rattachés aux secrétariats de district et aux secrétariats de division
- ADE ECED – Directeur adjoint de l'éducation – Développement de l'éducation de la petite enfance – Nommé par le ministère de l'Éducation et rattaché aux responsables de l'éducation de la zone
- Le Bureau de l'éducation préscolaire de la province de l'Est est spécialement conçu pour la province de l'Est, sous la direction du ministère de l'Éducation de la province de l'Est.
- Unité de développement de l'éducation de la petite enfance (Unité ECED) – Il existe des unités dans toutes les provinces, sauf dans la province de l'Est
- Le ministère provincial de l'Éducation est responsable de l'ECED et non de l'ECCD.

### ***Des résultats incontestables sur le plan de la qualité des formations en éducation maternelle et de l’engagement des parents et enseignantes***

Le programme « Ensemble pour la petite enfance au Sri Lanka » est né d’une demande des autorités publiques du Sri Lanka, sur la base des acquis obtenus dans la province de l’Est, dans laquelle Solidarité Laïque opérait à travers un programme spécifique EGEP 1 et EGEP 2.

L’évaluation considère que Solidarité Laïque a tenu compte des recommandations proposées dans les évaluations précédentes de 2012 et de 2016<sup>1</sup>, notamment de coopérer étroitement avec les autorités locales en officialisant avec des accords-cadres et de privilégier la coopération avec des partenaires locaux. Elle a également mis en place une structuration légère, comme on le recommandait. La prise en compte de ces recommandations a sans doute permis au programme de se dérouler en produisant des résultats, malgré des contraintes fortes et inattendues comme la pandémie.

On peut mettre **au crédit du programme** soutenu par Solidarité Laïque la robustesse et l’acuité de la cartographie des acteurs en présence, l’interaction approfondie avec les partenaires préalable à leur sélection, les modalités d’intervention fondées sur la mobilisation de ces partenaires bons connaisseurs du terrain, et déjà reconnus compétents par les autorités publiques.

Solidarité Laïque a mis les moyens pour que **le bureau local** puisse intervenir sur les 5 provinces, auprès des partenaires, et engager les activités dans le contexte extrêmement instable des élections législatives et présidentielles, des attaques terroristes et de la pandémie de la COVID-19. L’évaluation souligne la capacité d’adaptation de Solidarité Laïque pour maintenir les activités malgré ces événements et d’adapter en fonction de besoins apparus durant le déroulement du programme, comme la réorientation des formations certifiantes (qui n’avaient plus lieu d’être) ou la distribution d’une aide alimentaire pour pallier les situations dramatiques vécues par de nombreuses enseignantes.

Le programme visait à la fois à la mobilisation des acteurs pour la mise en œuvre de la politique nationale de la petite enfance, et une **aide directe** (à travers les formations proposées aux enseignantes par exemple). Ce double niveau d’intervention est une marque de fabrique de Solidarité Laïque. Elle devait permettre de produire du changement institutionnel et en même temps d’ancrer le projet sur le réel en impliquant les enseignants et les parents, sans qu’une réforme n’est possible.

L’évaluation montre effectivement que :

- **Des activités de renforcement de capacités des enseignantes** se sont déroulées, malgré les élections, les attaques et la pandémie, elles ont permis des résultats dans la qualité de l’enseignement, qui sont visibles et appréciés des bénéficiaires. Les formations de formateurs ont été particulièrement appréciées et sont porteuses de résultats au niveau du système national d’éducation, à travers un effet de cascade de formations.
- **Les prémisses d’un dialogue interculturel** ont été posés, et très appréciés, malgré le nombre limité d’échanges inter-province.

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<sup>1</sup> Evaluation report EGEP2, April 2026

- **Des plateformes de dialogues** ont été lancées ou remobilisées, au niveau des Comités de gestion d’École Maternelle (CGEM) (structures de dialogue et de pilotage au niveau des écoles) et des Comités d’Enseignantes Maternelles (CEM) (structures de dialogue entre enseignantes maternelles aux niveaux des zones et des districts).
- **Le programme s’est calé sur les priorités nationales et les engagements des autorités**, augurant d’une bonne durabilité des effets du programme.

### **Les impacts positifs observés**

- La perception à l’égard des enseignants du préscolaire et de l’importance de la petite enfance s’est généralement améliorée, mais ils manquent encore de reconnaissance de la part de certains groupes.
- Le programme a renforcé l’appropriation du secteur de l’éducation préscolaire par les autorités locales et les parties prenantes, y compris les parents.
- Le programme a donné l’occasion aux enseignants et aux formateurs de l’enseignement préscolaire d’accroître leurs capacités professionnelles, même si le chemin à parcourir pour atteindre les capacités souhaitées pour tous les enseignants est encore long. Les femmes interrogées se sentent généralement responsabilisées sur le plan professionnel, à l’école et dans leurs relations avec les autorités, ainsi que sur le plan personnel au sein de leur famille et à la maison.
- Le programme a contribué à l’animation des CGEMs et au renforcement des CEMs où des échanges entre enseignantes ont eu lieu, même si un soutien reste nécessaire pour que les CEMs soient tous opérationnels.
- L’alignement du programme sur la politique nationale et l’engagement des autorités publiques garantissent la durabilité des actions relatives à l’amélioration de la qualité de l’éducation de la petite enfance.
- Le programme a permis aux parties prenantes d’intensifier la communication et de mettre en œuvre des activités afin d’améliorer le secteur du développement de la petite enfance et d’aborder une politique commune au profit des enfants du Sri Lanka. Il l’a fait en suivant une intention générale de développer le dialogue interculturel et la réconciliation.

### **Les difficultés rencontrées par le programme**

Ce programme **comportait intrinsèquement d’immenses difficultés** qui se sont matérialisées et qui auraient été rencontrées même sans pandémie ni élections. Le Sri Lanka reste un pays dont la gouvernance est fragmentée, rendant très difficile toute tentative d’influer sur la politique nationale, sauf à envisager un programme de long terme impliquant de nombreux acteurs, dont la légitimité est plus forte que celle d’une ONG française.

Le passage à l’échelle de l’expérience acquise dans la province de l’Est aurait sans doute nécessité un **renforcement du pilotage du programme** :

- **Au niveau des partenaires**, les responsables affectés au niveau de chacun d’entre eux étaient partagés entre répondre aux exigences de leur employeur et être redevable de la mise en œuvre du programme auprès de l’équipe de Solidarité Laïque au Sri Lanka. Le renforcement du pilotage aurait sans doute permis de **mieux ajuster l’appui de Solidarité Laïque aux partenaires chargés de la mise en œuvre concrète du programme**. Ceux-ci ont en effet des

capacités et des moyens d’action bien différents. Ces différences portent leur taille, mandat, missions, ressources. Or, le programme leur attribuait des objectifs identiques. Il a manqué sans doute d’un calibrage des activités du programme et un ajustement de l’appui de Solidarité Laïque aux partenaires en fonction de leurs capacités.

- **Au niveau de Solidarité Laïque au Sri Lanka**, l’équipe ne pouvait davantage soutenir les partenaires répartis géographiquement sur des territoires vastes et parfois enclavés. Cette équipe ne pouvait suffisamment accompagner, conseiller, et garantir la qualité des activités mises en œuvre par les partenaires. L’équipe au Sri Lanka a toutefois assuré cette tâche à la mesure des moyens qui lui étaient alloués (et que Solidarité Laïque a renforcé en créant un poste ex nihilo chargé des partenariats). Ce modèle d’intervention n’est cependant pas forcément viable sur le long terme ni à une échelle d’intervention plus large, s’il ne s’accompagne pas des moyens humains adéquats.

***Un programme visant un changement systémique mais insuffisamment doté en moyens d’intervention et en modalités de gouvernance adaptées***

**La composante 3** portait spécifiquement sur le plaidoyer et le dialogue au niveau national, et a buté sur l’écueil de l’absence de gouvernance partagée dans laquelle l’ONG devait jouer un rôle clef. L’évaluation considère que cette composante reste indispensable pour que la politique de petite enfance puisse être mise en œuvre de façon harmonisée dans les 5 provinces et au-delà. Elle considère que la composante 3 s’apparente à un **programme en tant que tel**, qui aurait mérité des moyens à la hauteur de ses objectifs. Les moyens alloués à cette composante étaient clairement sous-dimensionnés pour qu’elle génère un effet de levier. Enfin, le manque de légitimité d’une petite ONG française à intervenir sur le plan politique sri lankais n’a pas favorisé la mise en œuvre de cette composante dont la dimension politique était forte.

L’évaluation pose la question de la validité d’un **modèle de cadre logique** pour ce type de programme, et pas seulement sa composante 3, dès lors qu’il vise à des changements de mentalités, de modes de travail, et cherche à structurer des acteurs de la société civile pour qu’ils participent à une politique définie par des décideurs politiques élus. Il ne semble guère possible de générer de tels changements selon la logique connue « diagnostic-objectifs-actions-résultats-impacts ». La progression n’est en réalité pas aussi linéaire pour ce type de programme. Les facteurs externes sont par ailleurs si puissants, qu’une approche selon le cadre logique ne permet pas d’identifier les étapes des changements attendus, ni d’en apprécier les effets.

L’évaluation souligne également que ce type de programme aurait mérité un **modèle de gouvernance** plus adéquate, qui aurait impliqué davantage les autorités sri lankaises sur l’ensemble des composantes. Autant l’équipe de Solidarité Laïque au Sri Lanka pouvait coopérer et progresser sur le terrain avec les partenaires, autant il lui était quasiment impossible d’intervenir directement au niveau stratégique de manière unilatérale. L’ONG a une dimension trop limitée pour interpeller les autorités nationales et les mobiliser pour concevoir avec elles la mise en œuvre de la politique en éducation de la petite enfance. Le programme a cherché à le faire, avec plus ou moins de succès, avec les autorités provinciales, selon leur volonté de coopérer et leur degré de structuration et de maturité dans la politique petite enfance dans leur champ de compétences.

Ci-dessous sont présentées les recommandations stratégiques pour la suite du programme, les recommandations opérationnelles dans l’élaboration et la mise en œuvre du programme et enfin une liste de question-réponses traitant des recommandations spécifiquement souhaitées par Solidarité Laïque sur le fonctionnement et l’expansion possible de son modèle d’intervention au Sri Lanka.

## Recommandations stratégiques

1. **Explorer la possibilité de travailler sur la gouvernance de la décentralisation de la politique nationale de la petite enfance.** L'évaluation considère qu'il existe un champ inexploré pour que les ONG appuient les pouvoirs publics dans l'identification des bons leviers pour que la politique soit adaptée aux contextes locaux et conforme aux orientations nationales :
  - Le programme consisterait à explorer avec les autorités publiques, les partenaires et les enseignants ainsi que les parents, une **approche collaborative** (incluant la méthode, le processus et les outils) qui sera nécessaire pour mettre en œuvre la politique nationale. L'ONG en charge pourrait plutôt jouer le rôle de modérateur de la réflexion.
  - L'ONG réalisera un **diagnostic** social et institutionnel, effectuera un **benchmarking** international pour inspirer la politique nationale, mettra en lumière les **meilleures pratiques** locales et discutera de leur **transférabilité** à travers le pays.
  - L'ONG continuera à proposer des **activités de renforcement des capacités** afin de responsabiliser tous les acteurs du secteur de l'éducation de la petite enfance, de les aider à exprimer leurs idées, à établir un dialogue constructif, à respecter les opinions divergentes, à adopter une approche analytique, à accepter les critiques,...
2. **Poursuivre l'appui aux CEMs**, qui apparaissent comme le lieu de dialogue des enseignantes et d'apprentissage de la construction d'une parole crédible pour être considérée par les échelons politiques. Il s'agit de conserver l'approche de Solidarité Laïque visant à structurer les enseignantes, sans que cet appui débouche systématiquement sur la création d'un syndicat. La réalisation de cet objectif appartient aux enseignantes, et Solidarité Laïque n'a pas à arbitrer, ni ses partenaires.
3. **Recentrer le projet sur les activités qui ont été couronnées de succès dans le système éducatif sri-lankais** : les formations de formateurs (FdF) doivent être poursuivies, car le Sri Lanka commence à constituer un pool de formatrices d'enseignants capables de transmettre leurs connaissances et leurs pratiques. Pour garantir la durabilité, la FdF ne doit pas être une activité autonome et doit être intégrée dans un programme plus large.

## Recommandations opérationnelles dans l'élaboration du programme

4. **Ajuster les budgets affectés aux activités prévues et aux objectifs opérationnels.** Il convient de bien corréliser les objectifs des activités prévues et des objectifs spécifiques d'abord avec l'échelle visée (les provinces sont toutes spécifiques et exigent des interventions spécifiques) ; il convient ensuite de procéder à ces ajustements selon les capacités du programme à créer du changement – pas uniquement à mettre en œuvre l'activité. Si Solidarité Laïque entend changer d'échelle et intervenir sur davantage de provinces avec le modèle de partenariat local, il s'agira de :
  - Doter correctement l'équipe au Sri Lanka en moyens humains et financiers pour appuyer les partenaires ;
  - Proposer suffisamment d'activités pour qu'un changement ait lieu dans les mentalités ou les comportements. Le système d'indicateurs devrait être davantage mesurer la performance que le progrès de l'activité ;
  - Renforcer le suivi des activités (préparation, contrôle qualité des activités conduites avec les partenaires et suivi-évaluation plus étroit pour améliorer en continu et modifier les activités le cas échéant).

## Recommandations opérationnelles dans la mise en œuvre du programme

5. **Renforcer la capacité des partenaires à piloter un programme sur un territoire donné**, par un accompagnement fort en début de programme, notamment au regard des attentes de Solidarité Laïque vis-à-vis du partenaire. Cette capacité de pilotage doit notamment nécessiter :
  - **Le renforcement des compétences des partenaires en matière de suivi et d'évaluation**, que les organisations (Solidarité Laïque et AeA) devraient être en mesure d'appuyer. Il en va de la qualité des services offerts, de la mesure des résultats et de la démonstration de la valeur ajoutée de ce type de programme auprès des pouvoirs publics.
  - **Le renforcement des capacités des partenaires** dans les zones particulièrement difficiles (comme dans le nord isolé, où les populations sont plus vulnérables), ce qui nécessite davantage de ressources.
  - **La clarification des responsabilités entre Solidarité Laïque et les partenaires**, sur la base d'un audit des capacités d'organisation et de gestion de projet, adapté au contexte de chaque province. Un modèle de coresponsabilité devrait être développé, afin que la personne recrutée par le partenaire soit réellement responsable et redevable du programme, sachant que ce projet n'est pas porté par le partenaire qui l'emploie.
6. **Le renforcement de la capacité de planification des activités**. Il s'agit de mieux anticiper les événements bloquants, qui sont des risques prévisibles comme les élections nationales.
7. **Envisager une convergence des atouts des organisations impliquées dans l'éducation de la petite enfance**, dans ce cas Solidarité Laïque et Aide et Action (AeA), basée sur une analyse des avantages comparatifs de chacune :
  - AeA a une plus grande force budgétaire que Solidarité Laïque, elle a moins d'expérience dans le domaine de la petite enfance au Sri Lanka mais peut tirer des leçons des expériences dans de nombreux autres pays, notamment sur la gouvernance des systèmes éducatifs incluant la petite enfance.
  - Solidarité Laïque a 15 ans d'expérience dans ce secteur et joue la carte de la construction collective avec les partenaires locaux. Son approche PCPA développée en France et ailleurs, semble une option à étudier pour le Sri Lanka dans l'approche multi-acteurs et la responsabilisation des acteurs locaux. Cette approche nécessiterait des moyens continus sur une période longue (8-10 ans) mais serait porteuse de changements, co-construits avec les autorités et les bénéficiaires de la politique nationale en petite enfance. De plus, Solidarité Laïque dispose d'un réseau de membres qui peuvent apporter leur expertise en fonction des besoins, tant sur l'élaboration des contenus des politiques éducatives que de la mobilisation des décideurs, la structuration des enseignantes ou la mise en œuvre de réformes éducatives.

L'évaluation recommande plutôt un programme piloté conjointement entre AeA et Solidarité Laïque, et ne recommande donc pas un transfert direct et immédiat du programme à AeA, si Solidarité Laïque devait se retirer du Sri Lanka. Cela nécessite que le bureau de Solidarité Laïque au Sri Lanka soit maintenu, et que le lien entre l'équipe française et sri lankaise reste actif (notamment sur le renforcement de compétences et sur la gouvernance et le pilotage du programme).



### 3. Objectives of the evaluation

“Together for Early Childhood in Sri Lanka!” conducted by Solidarité Laïque in five provinces of Sri Lanka.

The evaluation spans the 3 years of the programme, building on the intermediary report of April 2020, as well as the recommendations made for the earlier programmes. As pointed out in the Terms of References, this report will pay attention to:

- Understanding the institutional environment for early childhood in Sri Lanka;
- The work of structuring the preschool teachers around the Preschool Teachers Committees (PTC) at the zone and district levels;
- The work of strengthening the capacities of preschool teachers;
- The actions seeking to facilitate coordination and consultation between actors and mainly between state and non-state actors;
- The crosscutting theme of education from an early age as a vehicle for peace-building and intercultural dialogue.

The evaluation included the 5 provinces of Sri Lanka targeted by the programme. It was conducted by Learning Avenue, an independent organisation, together with two in-country consultants to run the interviews. This report intends to depict an accurate and nuanced reflection of the positive impacts - or lack thereof - the activities and programme structure begot. It obviously took into account the manifold peculiar circumstances the programme had to face, including the COVID-19, which disrupted many objectives.

### 4. Methodology

This evaluation methodology was designed by Learning Avenue and approved by Solidarité Laïque in January 2021. It is based on diverse resources and a qualitative approach. The evaluation methodology was shared with Aide et Action, as a peer review experimentation, which has engaged further cooperation with Solidarité Laïque.

It draws on in-depth desk reviews based on previous reports as well as field or virtual interviews conducted by local experts Bianca and Malani, in Tamil, Sinhala or English in February 2021. It relies on focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews for high-end stakeholders (members of ministry, head of school) and life stories from parents and teachers.

109 people were interviewed (see appendices c and d.) in total, 104 local people in addition to 5 in-depth interviews with the Solidarité Laïque team, AFD, CEMEA, SNUiPP. Targeted groups included Solidarité Laïque, French partners and funders, local partners, national and provincial actors, teachers, trainers and parents. Life-stories are aimed at offering a more informal and less pressuring mode of sharing information for participants. Where possible, **in-presence meetings** were held but were rare. Remote virtual meetings were much more common. The evaluation covered the **5 provinces**, on average 2 districts per province and several zones per district. In addition, it paid attention to the geographical locations, and the interviewees were both from urban and rural areas to ensure the representativity of the sample.

The two early childhood experts (see appendix f.) conducted the data collection on the ground, according to their linguistic proficiency (English, Tamil and Sinhalese).

The evaluation comprises **a part that assesses the results obtained against the backdrop of those initially planned to take stock of the extent to which each activity was completed.**

Then, the evaluation analyses the entire programme based on the criteria presented in the evaluation matrix, and requested on the ToRs. These are: **relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.** The complete sub-criteria can be found in appendix b.

### ***Methodology limitation***

This evaluation extensively draws on the interviews’ summary, which was compiled in logbooks. This approach presents a couple of limitations:

- The number of interviewees varied from 4 (Western province) to 30 (Eastern province), which means that the representativity of the sample is not the same depending on the province. In addition, in the Western province, only members of the Ministry of Education were interviewed since parents could not be interviewed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The sample of interviewees is highly gendered, as most of the beneficiaries (mother, preschool teachers) were female.
- The interview summaries were translated from local languages to English, so the precision of information might have been lost in the process. In addition, the interviewers did not always take note during the interviews to display a sustained listening and maintain a visual contact with the respondents, which means that part of the information was not written on the spot, and might have been lost.

## 5. Rationale and scope of the programme

### A. History of the programme

The Programme “Together for Early Childhood in Sri Lanka!” follows two other initiatives (FISONG 2009-2011, field project 2012-2015) launched in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. The challenges and outcomes of those programmes led Solidarité Laïque to scale up its objectives and activities following the same type of methodology. After consulting different stakeholders, Solidarité Laïque proposed its programme to AFD in June 2017. Solidarité Laïque modified and discussed the first draft of the proposal with AFD in order to steer concrete and realistic objectives for the programme in the beginning of 2018.

In the beginning of 2018, Solidarité Laïque launched the first stage of the programme in order to refine the expected outcomes with the local partners leading to the signature of the agreement with AFD in December 2018.

## B. Objectives and modalities of the programme

This programme was an ambitious three-prong programme, whose overall goal was to improve the quality, the efficiency and the framework of early childhood education in Sri Lanka.

More precisely, this programme strives to:

### **Objective 1: Support and promote effective dialogue and coordination among all actors in the preschool sector to ensure quality, good governance and stakeholder ownership.**

- 1.1.1 Raise awareness for parents and local community about the importance of early childhood education (ECE), foster enrolment in preschool, improve ECE visibility and mobilise the broader community around the ECE issues.
- 1.1.2 Mobilise mixed committees comprising parents, teachers, school directors and local authorities. These committees will undergo training, and will be responsible for solving daily issues, mobilise their surrounding communities, organise workshops, liaise with the local government and establish the preschool development plan.
- 1.1.3 Create Preschool Teachers Committees (PTC) grouping some preschool teachers of the zone to increase their representation toward the local authorities and to convey their messages, expectations but also to share best practices, discuss the relations with the parents, their needs, etc. These committees will hold trimestral meetings to agree on what to advocate and demand to the provincial authorities.
- 1.2.1 Exchange of best practices among the provinces. The different delegations will be able to share their respective experiences, and to trade their lessons learned. It will also account for the diversity socio-economic situation of Sri Lanka’s provinces and enable to have a clearer picture of the national early childhood education context.
- 1.2.2 Foster concertation via exchange between Civil Society Organisations and the local authorities and revitalise the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) committees scheduled by the law to design guidelines for the provincial authorities in terms of early childhood education.
- 1.2.3 Create space for dialogue between preschool and elementary school teachers to enhance coordination in terms of pedagogy and division of tasks.

### **Objective 2: improve the quality of teaching**

- 2.1.1 Training at least 850 preschool teachers with a formation that will be recognised by the state.
- 2.2.1 Sensitisation of preschool teachers to specific topics such as children’s rights or the specific needs of disabled children, with training of trainers to foster an inclusive school environment.
- 2.2.2 The trainers trained by activity 2.2.1 will then spread their newly acquired knowledge through dissemination at the district level with preschool teachers.

**Objective 3: Promote and support the recognition of preschool education and preschool teachers at provincial and central government levels.**

- 3.1.1 Strengthen diverse representation of teachers, such as unions or associations at the provincial level.
- 3.1.2 Create provincial units of representation at the national level.
- 3.1.3 Create a national platform
- 3.2.1 Contribute to update ECCD policies with the new field data to ensure it matches the provincial realities and is effective
- 3.2.2 Create a monitoring system of the ECCD policy
- 3.3.1 Design and conduct a national advocacy campaign to improve the status of preschool teachers, raise the budget and awareness, among others.

The implementation of the programme relies on implementing partners, at the national, provincial and district level:

<b>French partners</b>
SNUipp: Syndicat National Unitaire des Instituteurs, Professeurs des Écoles et PEGC
CEMEA: Centre d'entraînement aux méthodes d'éducation actives
AEA: Aide et Action

<b>Province</b>	<b>Districts</b>	<b>Sri Lankan partners</b>
Eastern	Trincomalee (capital of the province)	EPPTA: Eastern Province Pre-school Teachers Association
	Batticaloa	EPPTA: Eastern Province Pre-school Teachers Association
	Ampara	EPPTA: Eastern Province Pre-school Teachers Association
Southern	Matara	Susara Foundation
	Hambantota	ALSDC: Asia Lanka Social Development Corporation
Northern	Jaffna	Aaruthal
	Vavuniya	Aaruthal
	Mannar	RDF: Rural Development Foundation
Central	Kandy	NECY: Network for Education, Children and Youth
Western	Colombo	ACUT: All Ceylon Union of Teachers

## 6. Implementation of the programme

This part explores how the programme was actually implemented, in contrast with the original predictions in terms of governance, partnership and financing, but it also presents the obstacles encountered to explain the differences between the previsions and the outcome.

### ➤ Governance

The governance and coordination were rather smooth and occurred as expected. The programme was under the direct supervision of Solidarité Laïque, with a two-person team based in Colombo (with an additional person from February 2020), and two French-based persons: the Sri Lanka responsible and the punctual support of the responsible for the Mediterranean, Europe and Asia. When the situation allowed it, numerous meetings took place in Sri Lanka or Paris, as well as field missions in some provinces. Solidarité Laïque was responsible for the overall programme, its administrative and financial good governance and coordination. The local associations worked under the aegis of Solidarité Laïque to conduct the activities with their local expertise.

In France, the responsible were in charge of general coordination, institutional representation and reporting. In Sri Lanka, the local personals were in charge of: managing teams, and activities; the administrative and financial personnel was in charge of following the budget and cash transactions; the 5 provincial coordinators were responsible for planning animating and monitoring the activities, supported by 3 assistants, one each in the Northern, Southern and Eastern provinces.

In addition, in February 2020, another person was recruited to support the SL director in Colombo, and fully dedicated to coordination. The missions included: relations with partners, following-up actions, searching funding, doing field missions, etc. This was decided to create more room for the national director to work for public partnerships and fundraising.

### ➤ Partnerships

Although the relationship with the local partners was harmonious most of the time, in the Western province, as indicated in the intermediary report, the relations with ACUT became sour. The union asked to elaborate the actions in its provinces, which was granted, but the implementation did not respect the overall agreement. Solidarité Laïque then proposed that ACUT to get involved in the advocacy actions and in the preschool teachers' structuration. This role fit with the objectives and mission of ACUT, as a national teachers union. However, this attempt did not work out due internal difficulties at ACUT.

Besides this problem, the relationship with other local partners were fruitful, as well as relations with the organisations providing the training (CEMEA, LEADS and CAMID), the AFD, etc. One other key issue lied in the relationship with the governmental authorities. Due to multiple events, they were less available, but also sometimes reluctant to cooperate. They did evolve positively between the onset of the programme and its termination, but at the beginning there were some issues to finalise partnership agreements.

## ➤ **Financing**

The project’s initial budget amounted to € 788 780 for the two stages: € 307.395 were spent by the end of stage 1 and € 463,024 after the revised budget for stage 2.

Differences between forecast and actual expenditure are explained du to:

- Belayed start of the programme due to late agreement with AFD (initially planned in April 2018, agreements were signed in January 2019).
- Changes in the context which have delayed the implementation of certain activities. As a result, several items of expenditure appear to be underspent.
- The pandemic has had a violent impact on the programme, the organisation, and the partners.

Important changes in the action plan and the budget had thus to be made. The provisional budget for period 2 was modified accordingly. The financing plan also varied between the forecast and the actual due to the under-consumption of the budget but also to the difficulties encountered in mobilising co-financing. In fact, the vast majority of the funding that can support are to be mobilised from Sri Lanka and by local structures only. As the declaration of Solidarity Laïque in Sri Lanka was only effective at the end of 2019, it was not possible to mobilise the co-financing planned. Finally, the funding avenues identified when the programme was written have not been successful.

## ➤ **Challenges encountered**

The national policy on Early Childhood Development was a major change in the context of the programme from the beginning of its conceptualisation and the signature of the agreement. Solidarité Laïque had to adapt its activities and expectations to the changing policy and has to be constantly updated on the new expectations from authorities. Solidarité Laïque met all the local authorities concerned by the early childhood education sector in every targeted province before launching the programme. Once the programme started, most of the people in charge changed and the Solidarité Laïque team had to explain the programme in order to keep the new authorities informed.

During the first stage of the programme, changes in the political and social context impacted Solidarité Laïque’s activity in the field. In fact, Sri Lanka faced a major political crisis in early 2019 and several terrorist attacks in April of the same year leading the government to declare a state of emergency for several months preventing any activity to continue during that period. The relations of Solidarité Laïque with authorities also changed during that period as several officers resigned or were transferred and a general distrust towards NGOs rose. Tensions and rivalries between communities also intensified which made Solidarité Laïque’s mission more difficult.

In November 2019, a new president was elected in Sri Lanka, lieutenant Gotapaya Rajapaksa. During the months of political campaigns, gatherings were forbidden under the risk of being considered as political meetings. The changing of government brought again new changes in the spectrum of authorities and officers. The new government strengthened its distrust against NGOs, especially actions on peace building.

Finally, the worldwide sanitary crisis of COVID-19 obliged Sri Lanka to stop all its activities in March 2020 as all schools closed, and had big impacts on the second stage of the programme. However, Solidarité Laïque reacted quickly to this challenge. EPPTA (Eastern province) highlighted that the teachers were in a dire situation, and therefore Solidarité Laïque released relief support in 5 targeted Provinces which was much appreciated. It covered the 43 zones and reached 1905 preschool teachers.

They were given a support allowance, with selection criteria being: very poor or single parents, children with disabilities, who are sick/ met with an accident, etc”. In the Southern province, a government official reported that the preschool teachers used the word “PIN” (Thank you from the bottom of heart) regarding this aid. With regards to the crisis, Solidarité Laïque decided to adjust its priorities for stage 2, first in March 2020 and a second time in December 2020, giving up on the advocacy (SO3), and focusing only on English training, relying more on Aide et Actions, etc. Many activities had to be delayed, or cancelled, leading to an overall partial implementation of the activities, as detailed in the following section.

## 7. Overview of the programme outcomes

### ➤ Level of achievement of the programme stage 1

The tables below feature the level of achievement of the activities, organised in 3 specific objectives. The level of achievement is scored in 5 colours. The level of achievement does not necessarily preclude the level of outcomes and impacts. The evaluation for instance will show that limited activities such as meetings inter-province have paved the way for intercultural dialogue amongst preschool teachers. The tables present the following sequence: the specific objective => their expected results => the expected activity => the implemented activity and => the level of achievement.

Below is the colour-code of the table, to show the level of achievement:

	Less than 25%
	25% or more
	50% or more
	75% or more
	All achieved

Specific Objectives	Expected results	Expected activity	Implemented activity	Level of achievement at activity level
<b>OBJECTIF 1: Support and promote effective dialogue and coordination among all actors in the pre-primary sector to ensure</b>	<b>R1:</b> The players in the pre-elementary sector are made aware and mobilised through the creation of management and	<b>R1.A1:</b> Campaign to raise awareness of the importance of pre-elementary education: <b>3 awareness</b> campaigns take place in each zone of the 5 provinces concerned by the programme.	R.1.1: 1 or 2 awareness campaigns took place in each zone of the 5 provinces concerned by the programme (28 in total). In the Eastern province, awareness campaigns took place in the previous stages of the programme.	<b>Partially achieved:</b> Only 1 or 2 awareness campaigns took place in each zone instead of 3.

<b>quality, good governance and stakeholder ownership.</b>	consultation committees.	<b>R1A2:</b> Mobilisation of communities around pre-school management committees (PMC):  <b>Assistance</b> in the creation of PMCs in each zone of the 5 provinces concerned by the programme.  <b>Organising</b> at least 4 meetings for each PMC.  <b>At least 1</b> meeting between PMCs and local authorities	<b>900 existing</b> and functional PMCs distributed in every zone of the 5 provinces concerned by the programme.  Participation in 29 PMC meetings.  <b>One public</b> official is a member or present at each PMC meeting.	<b>Achieved</b>
		<b>R1A3:</b> Mobilisation of school teachers around school teachers' committees (PTC):  <b>Assistance</b> in the creation of PTCs in each zone of the 5 provinces concerned by the programme.  <b>Organising</b> at least 4 meetings for each PTC.  <b>Organising</b> at least 2 training sessions in each district (organisation, leadership, representation, negotiation, etc.)  <b>Preschool teachers</b> expose their needs and problems to the authorities.  <b>Organising</b> elections for the preschool teachers' representative to form a PTC at a district level (1 election per district)	<b>37 existing PTC</b> - one in each zone, except in the Central zone (still under development).  <b>74 PTC meetings</b> were organised (1 to 5 meetings per PTC).  <b>5 training</b> sessions were launched (1 or 2 per district) only in the Northern and Western provinces.  <b>Preschool teachers</b> exposed their needs and problems to the authorities in charge of early childhood education  <b>Establishment</b> of 8 PTCs at district level, 2 are still in process.	<b>Partially achieved:</b> Training sessions did not take place in 3 out of 5 provinces and 2 districts still have not established a PTC
	<b>R2:</b> Exchanges between state and non-state actors promote consultation,	<b>R2A1:</b> Setting up inter-province practice exchange:  <b>Organising</b> 3 meetings between preschool teachers of different provinces and between local authorities of different provinces.	Still preparing 1 exchange meeting in the Northern province between preschool teachers and local authorities of different provinces (to be held during stage 2)	<b>Not achieved:</b> exchange meetings still have not taken place.



	strengthening and synergies.	<p><b>R2A2:</b> Multi-stakeholder consultation space (ECCD committees):</p> <p>Organising 3 meetings:</p> <p><b>Organising 3 meetings</b> between operational and decisional entities of local authorities and PTCs at district level in each district.</p> <p><b>Organising 3 meetings</b> between civil society organisations and local authorities through “ECCD committees” at district level in each district.</p> <p><b>Organising 1 meeting</b> between civil society organisations and local authorities through “ECCD committees” at province level in each province.</p>	<p>Cancelled activity to be merged with “ECCD committees” at district level.</p> <p>1 meeting took place at district level “ECCD committee” of the Hambantota district in the Southern province.</p> <p>1 meeting took place at province level “ECCD committee” in Northern, Southern, and East provinces.</p>	<b>Partially achieved:</b> Most of the meetings at district level were not launched and only 3 out of 5 at province level.
		<p><b>R1A3:</b> Dialogue between elementary and pre-elementary actors:</p> <p><b>Organising 3 meetings</b> at district level</p>	<p>6 meetings took place in the 6 districts of the Centre province (1 per district)</p>	<b>Partially achieved:</b> meetings only took place in 1 province out of 5
<b>OBJECTIVE 2:</b> <b>Strengthening the quality of pre-primary education</b>	<b>A1:</b> Teachers are trained according to national standards.	<p><b>R1A1:</b> Training of preschool teachers:</p> <p><b>Registration</b> of at least 850 preschool teachers in training programmes organised by certified institutions, based on new national curricula</p>	Inscription of 170 preschool teachers in training programmes organised by certified institutions by the Children Secretariat in the Central and Western province (85 per province).	<b>Partially achieved:</b> Only 170 out of 850 were registered for the training in 2 out of 5 provinces.
	<b>A2:</b> Teachers are trained to take account of disability and the rights of the child.	<p><b>R2A1:</b> Training of trainers on thematic issues:</p> <p>Training of at least 43 preschool teachers on 3 different thematic issues in each zone.</p>	Training of 29, 42 and 31 preschool teachers on 3 different thematic issues.	<b>Partially achieved:</b> not as many preschool teachers as expected were trained.

		<p>R2A2: Increasing the number of training courses (thematic issues):</p> <p>At least 43 trainings launched by the trained preschool teachers on 3 different thematic issues in each zone.</p>	<p>40, 30 and 8 trainings were launched by the trained Preschool teachers on 3 different thematic issues.</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved:</b> not as many trainings as expected</p>
<p><b>OBJECTIVE 3: Promote and support the recognition of pre-elementary education and kindergarten teachers at the provincial and central government levels.</b></p>	<p><b>A1:</b> Representative organisations of pre-school teachers are strengthened and work together at national level.</p>	<p>R1A1: Capacity building of representative organisations of pre-school teachers at the provincial level:</p> <p><b>Assistance will be held</b> allowing to 1) strengthen the social basis: incitation on holding executive offices, general assemblies, managing members, etc. 2) reinforce internal and external communication; 3) define an economic model.</p> <p><b>Organising 3 trainings</b> for the direction board (language, management, leadership, project management, advocacy, administrative management)</p>	<p>Assistance was engaged by hiring a full-time professional.</p> <p>One meeting of the direction board was held.</p> <p>One training on leadership for the EPPTA direction board was held.</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved:</b> Meetings and training did not reach all the targeted population or themes.</p>
		<p>R1A2: Support for the creation of provincial entities at the national level.</p>	<p>To be carried out in stage 2</p>	
		<p>R1A3: Creation of a national platform.</p>	<p>To be carried out in stage 2</p>	
	<p><b>R2:</b> Civil societies are consulted in political decisions and provide support with local</p>	<p>R2A1: Contribute to the updating of the ECCD policy:</p> <p>Sharing of information collected in the field (PTCs and PMCs) with national authorities and proposition of amendments for the ECCD policy.</p>	<p>This activity became an advocacy plan at province level (and not national). Several meetings took place with Provincial authorities</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p>

	authorities in the implementation of decisions.	R2A2: Development of an ECCD policy monitoring system:  Organising yearly meetings in each province with “ECCD committees” to share observations and keep the setting up of the ECCD policy and public authorities' action plans.	3 meetings were held with local authorities at province level (Southern, Eastern and Northern provinces)	Partially achieved: Not all provinces were included
	R3: Kindergarten teachers move towards status and recognition	R3A1: Carrying out advocacy Campaigns.	To be carried out in stage 2	

### ➤ Narrative on the level of achievement of the stage 1

This section presents the reasons underpinning the level of achievement. The information stems from the analysis of the progress reports between Solidarité Laïque and the evaluation team.

#### **Objectif 1:**

##### **R1.A1: Campaign to raise awareness of the importance of pre-elementary education:**

The number of awareness campaigns had been very ambitious, with 2 or 3 meetings per province, knowing that the programme covered 43 zones. It was hardly possible to have so many meetings, and the constraints were numerous (pandemic, refusal of the authorities, transport problems). Nevertheless, the programme made sure that at least one or two meetings take place in the zones.

##### **R1.2 Mobilisation of communities around pre-school management committees (PMC):**

PMCs were set up as part of the previous programme. The results are quite positive, they are recognised by the government as official bodies, which are useful. Some are more or less active than others, depending on the availability of parents and teachers, but overall, the schools have relatively functional PMCs. Today, therefore, there is a place for discussion between parents, teachers, school administrators and most often local authorities. This is significant progress, to which this programme has contributed (taking over from the previous programme). Numerous testimonies indicate the participation of parents, mothers and also fathers.

##### **R1.3 Mobilisation of school teachers around school teachers' committees (PTC):**

The activities related to the creation or reactivation of PTCs were intended to be structuring, at the level of the zones, then of the districts and finally at the Provincial level. This activity suffered from the vagaries of local politics, which explains the mixed results. Solidarité Laïque had already supported the structuring through the partner EPPTA in the Eastern province. The North and South provinces had just started and the Center province had not started structuring at all. The activities aimed first of all at bringing preschool teachers together, making them aware of their rights and strengthening their

capacity to express themselves on matters related to early childhood education. These activities suffered from the late start of the programme, which was to start in April 2018, but the agreement with AFD was concluded in December 2018 which led to the conclusion of MoU with the partners in January 2019. Not all training could be provided. It is worth reminding that in 2018, the political setting was extremely unstable, with lots of turn over from decision-makers, tensions and reluctance to engage in activities they might not master. Lots of activities were not permitted due to political reasons or just ignorance. Ensuring the continuity of activities was quite impossible within each province, and even more amongst the provinces. For instance, attending a PTC meeting for a teacher requires authorisation from local authority, which contradicts the right of association and advocating for a professional union. In some districts, permissions took 6 months to be granted, slowing down the possibility to meet and hence to implement the scheduled activities.

The programmes aimed at setting 43 PTC, and 37 were set up. The Central province did work out, but very late (December 2020). 5 meetings were initially scheduled but delays occurred in the implementation of the programme. The activities should have started in April 2018 and the agreement with the partners were signed in January 2019. As a consequence, a certain number of activities could not take place and few meetings occurred. The number of meetings depended on each province, some had 5, others only one. In the Western province, ACUT (union) struggled to hold meetings and was not familiar with project management, which was not their priority. The training for preschools teachers, meant to improve their leadership, take responsibilities and improve expression on early childhood education, took place but at a very limited scale.

#### **R2A1 Setting up inter-province practice exchange**

This activity is considered a flagship action. It was unique, but was a first step towards intercultural dialogue. It was unanimously appreciated. However, this unique meeting was judged by many informants as key in terms of peace-building, mutual understanding of various communities, sharing practices and discovering the value of cross-fertilising knowledge and practice, irrespective of the language and religion. This event paved the way for further dialogue that many preschool teachers and partners value, and started the path to the rising engagement of stakeholders in the sector and in the PMCs.

However, it came up against the political calendar. The activity was to be held in the Northern province, which hesitated for a long time during the election period and rescheduled the meeting several times. It seemed too political and therefore dangerous to bring together actors from different provinces in these electoral times. The meeting, therefore, took place in January 2020, two months after the presidential elections of November 2019.

#### **R2A2: Multi-stakeholder consultation space (ECCD committees):**

The objective of the programme was to diversify the composition of these ECCD committees, which had been set up by the government but which did not include preschool teachers. Solidarité Laïque saw this programme as an opportunity to involve teachers in functional and active ECCD committees, and re-activate the ones that were not well structured or not active. These bodies turned out to be extremely politicised, and it seemed impossible to send preschool teachers there without being structured beforehand. However, the structuring encountered significant problems, mainly due to insufficient support and interest from authorities which were the main managers and organisers of the committees. The activities were therefore overhauled, with the cancellation of certain meetings at the district level (it turned out that the meetings were easier to organise at the provincial level than at the district level).

In the Central and the Western province, setting the union are starting, with some challenges in the Central province. Since any meeting requires permission from local authorities, teachers were not incentivised to meet, or did not dare to ask permission to meet with the objective of exchanging practices and discussing status, with the ultimate goal of establishing a union. There have been many blockages from district level, which were hesitant if not reluctant to gather teachers and see a counterpower.

The aim is to create committees where they did not exist or to strengthen those which did not function optimally and, at the same time, increase the involvement of authorities and other development partners. The programme would also give the chance to the various stakeholders to be represented at Provincial level through ECCD committees. Workshops, training and dialogues were created in these committees, to ensure the widest and most effective coverage possible in the 5 provinces. In the province, consultations meetings occurred to identify partners who could facilitate the groups of preschool teachers, based on earlier experience gained with EPPTA.

One activity on ECCD committees took place at the provincial level, easier than a district level. There were delays to organise meetings at zone level, that impacted at the district level, then at the provincial level. A **chain reaction** resulted in a very limited number of activities at the level of ECCD committees. The bottom-up approach was not so efficient. However, some successes are observed: 60 contributions on needs identified by the teacher in the South, like 2 action plans were set up in the East and South. So, many inequalities. Then, setting the action plan does not entail the tangible enforcement of the action plan.

**R2A3: Dialogue meeting between preschool and primary school:** 3 meetings per district were planned and only one meeting for 6 districts and only in the Central province were actually held. The other provinces have not organised. According to the partners’ capacity and the context, some have not scheduled this activity, and preferred to focus on other activities of the programme, more implementable.

## **Objectif 2**

### **R1A1 Training of preschool teachers**

Initially, the programmes aimed at training teachers so they could get a certification. But as the national policy was updated and required the certification to teach, it became mandatory. Some other OSC provided support and scholarships were granted to get certification. As a result, when Solidarité Laïque started the certification training, the public authorities explained that the needs were no longer on this graduating course in the North, South and East, as it was no longer relevant. In the North, they asked for a higher diploma (i.e. second degree diploma), in the East and South, they asked for linguistic training (English and Tamil or Sinhala) so that teachers and children could talk amongst each other and open up more opportunities for their professional future. So Solidarité Laïque adapted the training for each special request, and kept the certification in the Central and the Western province, which was required to maintain as initially planned. But in the West, ACUT was unable to perform and the public authorities. Central province asked to defer the training, waiting for the updating of the curriculum. Training were launched in January 2020 and resulted in 143 teachers graduating out of 168. In the North, East and South, Solidarité Laïque was ready to customise the training programmes but the pandemic compromised the activity. The NGO then decided to offer English courses, mobilising Aide et Action which has training platforms and trainers. This was validated by the local authorities, the teachers and partners.

**R2A1 and R2A2: Training of trainers on thematic issues and training dissemination.** The need was high since many teachers needed refreshed courses, others had specific needs due to the advent of the new curriculum, then some requested to better address new topics of interest for the children, such as health. The programme focused thus on teacher training to allow cascade across the territory, instead of training teachers individually. 6 themes were selected: 1<sup>st</sup> aid, children protection and inclusive education of the 1<sup>st</sup> year and innovative pedagogy, nutrition and creativity as pedagogical means for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. The programme wanted to focus on 43 teachers (1 per zone), to be trained during 3 days on content, on pedagogical transfer and on intercultural dialogue. This teacher training was a 1<sup>st</sup> attempt to trigger exchange amongst teachers from various communities. The satisfaction from participants was really high, due to extremely qualified trainers (Sri Lankan Red Cross Society on 1<sup>st</sup> aid, LEADS on child protection, CAMID on inclusive education). Some officials, such as the director of early childhood in the Western province, asked to join, which is a good signal of the reputation of the training. In addition, CEMEA (member of Solidarité Laïque) organised exchanges with LEADS and CAMID to enrich the discussions and exchange on practices and content of the teacher training. In the second year, the pandemic compromised the training across provinces (with participants and trainers crossing the country). At the end, only 3 teacher training sessions were implemented and disseminated, for some 1.000 teachers who have been trained on the 3 thematics and on teacher training-specific pedagogy.

### **Objectif 3:**

Though the last objective was not meant to be approached during the first stage of the programme, delays, conditionality of other components and the crises faced during that period, did not allow to start impacting the ECE sector in terms of advocacy.

This objective focuses on the advocacy. It was meant to set up a network of reliable, qualified partners, and a discussion platform in the public domain, that could in a second time, result in action plans to boost the national policy on early childhood. There is a consensus that the component 3 would have required much favourable political conditions and tangible achievements from components 1 and 2. There was little chance it could occur. Not enough exchanges with teachers with local authorities, amongst provinces, lack of public willingness and buy-in from public authorities who had other preoccupations.

The evaluator points out that such a component would require a mid-term project in itself (e.g. 3 to 5 years), grounded on solid bases that are not yet established. This basis would include for instance: constructive dialogue amongst various actors at zone, district and provincial levels, structured teachers voice, local authorities demonstrating a will and a possibility to engage in early childhood in a sustainable way. The evaluation report will explore further the inherent challenges to implement the objective 3 of this programme.

## ➤ Level of achievement of the programme stage 2

Similarly to stage 1, the level of completion is assessed based on the following colour-code

	Less than 25%
	25% or more
	50% or more
	75% or more
	All achieved

Specific Objectives	Expected results	Expected activity	Implemented activity	Level of achievement at activity level
<b>OBJECTIF 1: Support and promote effective dialogue and coordination among all actors in the pre-primary sector to ensure quality, good governance and stakeholder ownership.</b>	<b>R1:</b> The players in the pre-elementary sector are made aware and mobilised through the creation of management and consultation committees.	<b>R1.A1:</b> Campaign to raise awareness of the importance of pre-elementary education.	13 awareness campaigns took place. 8 in the Central province and 5 in the Southern province	<b>Completely achieved:</b> 13 campaigns were put in place before the COVID-19 crisis.
		<b>R1A2:</b> Mobilisation of communities around pre-school management committees (PMC).  At least 2 meetings are expected to be launched in each zone: 54 meetings in total. At least one meeting with local authorities.	49 meetings took place. Some PMC meetings were not possible in the Central and Eastern provinces because of the covid situation – the public authorities didn't approve the organisation of these meetings.  Local authorities were present to these PMC meetings	<b>Almost fully achieved:</b> some zones did not have PMC meetings.
		<b>R1A3:</b> Mobilisation of nursery school teachers around nursery school teachers' committees (PTC).	Existence of 43 PTC – 1 in each zone  61 PTC meetings were held  Existence of 10 PTC at the district level (1 in each district)	<b>Fully achieved:</b> some zones did not have PTC meetings. Except for DPTC meetings, more activities were implemented than scheduled

		<p>Support in the creation of PTCs in each targeted zone: at least <b>43 PTCs</b>.</p> <p>2 PTC meetings are expected to take place in each zone: <b>54 meetings</b>.</p> <p>Support in the establishment of <b>district PTCs</b>.</p> <p>Launch of <b>one PTC meeting per district</b>: 7 meetings</p>	<p>6 DPTC meetings were held – the one in Trincomalee couldn't be held because of covid</p>	
	<p><b>R2:</b> Exchanges between state and non-state actors promote consultation, strengthening and synergies.</p>	<p><b>R2A1:</b> Setting up inter-province practice exchange.</p>	<p>1 Exchange meeting was launched between preschool teachers of different provinces and local authorities of several provinces.</p>	<b>Achieved.</b>
		<p><b>R2A2:</b> Multi-stakeholder consultation space (ECCD committees):</p>	<p>Not possible to be carried during stage 2 because of the context.</p>	
		<p><b>R1A3:</b> Dialogue between elementary and pre-elementary actors.</p>	<p>1 meeting between preschool and primary teachers was organised in the Eastern province.</p>	<b>Achieved</b>
<p><b>Objective 2:</b> <b>Strengthening the quality of pre-primary education</b></p>	<p><b>A1:</b> Teachers are trained according to national standards.</p>	<p><b>R1A1:</b> Training of preschool teachers, at least 150 graduated.</p>	<p>168 teachers attended the diploma courses; 143 teachers graduated</p> <p>In the Southern province, 80 teachers attended the English lessons on which 70 passed the tests – we planned 90 teachers attended but as we cannot do trainings groups higher than 30 people because of the COVID-19, we decreased the number of enrolled teachers</p> <p>In the Eastern and Northern provinces, lessons in Ampara had to be cancelled due to covid: 227 teachers attended the English lessons and 193 passed the test</p> <p>86% of the teachers have passed the test</p>	<p><b>Almost fully achieved:</b> 143 out of 150 planned graduated.</p>



	<b>A2:</b> Teachers are trained to take account of disability and the rights of the child.	<b>R2A1:</b> Training of trainers on thematic issues.	Not possible to be carried during stage 2 because of the context.	
		<b>R2A2:</b> Increasing the number of training courses (thematic issues).	32 training sessions were launched on thematic issues.	<b>Achieved.</b>
		<b>R2A3:</b> One time support to preschool teachers during the 2 first COVID-19 waves.	Support to 1095 preschool teachers PTC members and their families in the 5 provinces.	<b>Achieved.</b>
<b>Objective 3: Promote and support the recognition of pre-elementary education and kindergarten teachers at the provincial and central government levels.</b>	<b>A1:</b> Representative organisations of pre-school teachers are strengthened and work together at national level.	<b>R1A1:</b> Capacity building of representative organisations of pre-school teachers at the provincial level.	Not possible to be carried during stage 2 because of the context.	
		<b>R1A2:</b> Support for the creation of provincial entities at the national level.	Not possible to be carried during stage 2 because of the context.	
		<b>R1A3:</b> Creation of a national platform.	Not possible to be carried during stage 2 because of the context.	
	<b>R2:</b> Civil societies are consulted in political decisions and provide support with local authorities in the implementation of decisions.	<b>R2A1:</b> Contribute to the updating of the ECCD policy.	Not possible to be carried during stage 2 because of the context.	
		<b>R2A2:</b> Development of an ECCD policy monitoring system.	Not possible to be carried during stage 2 because of the context.	
	<b>R3:</b> Kindergarten teachers move towards status and recognition	<b>R3A1:</b> Carrying out advocacy campaigns	Not possible to be carried during stage 2 because of the context.	

## ➤ Narrative on the level of achievement of the stage 2

As the stage 2 was not fully completed at the time of the evaluation interviews, there was less time to collect information and to understand the true impacts of stage 2. This report was established through the analysis of activity reports and interviews which is why there is less description of the achievement than for stage 1.

- The awareness campaigns had to be prioritised due to the pandemic.
- On the PMCs, Solidarité Laïque kept two meetings per zone but removed three districts that were very affected by one-off lockdowns where meetings were impossible. The NGO has kept a time for exchange with the local authorities, but without any stakes.
- For PTCs, the programme retained 2 meetings per zone except for 3 districts, for the same health reasons. The programme tries to maintain activity with some PTCs. The focus is on an exchange dynamic in some districts and not others.
- The inter-provincial exchange was held in January 2020 and it was decided that with the pandemic, it would not be organised again.
- The consultation spaces with ECCD committees had already been cancelled.
- For the activity on the elementary and primary dialogue, the programme kept what had already been planned (a meeting in the East).
- For the training part, the programme kept the diploma training for 85 people in the Centre and 85 people in the West.
- The Training of trainer courses on thematic issues have been cancelled, but in January to March 2020, there was a continuity of multiplication on the <sup>1st</sup> period, on child protection and inclusive education. Between March and December 2020, Solidarité Laïque tried to maintain its activities in light of the pandemic. It added an activity, since the training of trainers had been cancelled and Aide et Action was involved in English language training (360 teachers targeted: 270 in the North and 90 in the South), the food and financial support programme to teachers, because of the huge economic crisis and some of them found themselves in very precarious situations. 1905 teachers were supported directly with food bags or money or in partnership with the provinces in the form of food vouchers in state shops.
- For the Objective 3, all activities had already been cancelled in agreement with the AFD

## 8. Evaluation findings and analyses

1. The following evaluation findings and analyses are based on the structure of the evaluation matrix proposed in the inception report (see appendix b). It assesses the six following points: relevance and coherence (how the programme was designed according to the context and the partners); efficiency, effectiveness and impact (the concrete consequences, both material and perceived by the stakeholders, of the programme); and sustainability (the protracted effects of the programme in the long-run and the likelihood of the activities not to collapse once the project is over). The following analysis is based on desk review, logbooks and interviews and pay specific attention to each province’s specificities.

### A. Relevance

#### ***A programme which is part of a process controlled by Solidarité Laïque of collaborative development around early childhood***

2. The programme is a continuation of Solidarité Laïque's actions in Sri Lanka, which began in 2005 following the Tsunami in 2004. After maturing in the years 2004-2008, which saw humanitarian aid turn into development aid, the NGO committed to projects supporting the early childhood sector from 2009 to 2011. The aim was to mobilise and energise communities while supporting a dialogue between civil society and local authorities on the pre-schooling of children. As of 2015, the NGO seeks to strengthen the capacities of local actors, to sustain their relations with local authorities and to have the status of preschool teacher recognised.
3. The programme “Together for early childhood in Sri Lanka” is therefore a continuation of the NGO's long experience in supporting the early childhood education sector. It is fully in line with the organisation's collective approach of working with local actors, with the aim of strengthening their capacities and autonomy. The programme logically crowns the sequencing of Solidarité Laïque's actions in Sri Lanka as presented graphically below.



Source: Solidarité Laïque brochure, 2018.

4. It should be noted that the programme “Together for early childhood in Sri Lanka” was largely enriched by taking into account the orientations of AFD through the FISONG (Sectoral Innovation Facility for NGOs, 2009-2011) "How to strengthen the participation of civil society for the success of Education for All strategies", as well as by some lessons learned from evaluations of the previous programmes (EGEP 1 and 2) in 2012 and 2016 in the Eastern province. The programme has been furthermore built on the dynamics of micro-projects aimed at strengthening the work of the partner EPPTA, the association of preschool teachers in the Eastern province.

5. At the time of launching the "Together for Early Childhood in Sri Lanka" programme, Solidarité Laïque's action was recognised as relevant by the local actors (Eastern province and national authorities). The NGO has a French status and is therefore little known in the field of Sri Lankan civil society. It has however been able to build a network of actors in the field over the past 15 years, whether they be partners who will be mobilised in the programme under evaluation, local authorities in the East, or national bodies such as the Children Secretariat in charge of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). This is the result of a successful approach of patiently building up relationships, based on mutual respect, and also of perseverance in a tense political context. In spite of a series of events (attacks, elections, pandemic), Solidarité Laïque has continued its action, respecting its proven principles of intervention, which can be summed up as follows: *"Solidarité Laïque plays the role of incubator and coordinator of the collective approach. Its role is to correlate the know-how, skills and experience of its members and local partners in the service of a common cause and on the basis of expressed needs and expectations"*.
6. Solidarité Laïque, on the hindsight of this experience, its cooperative approach, and its own membership (50 organisations from the teaching world, made up of five families of actors: foundations, associations, mutual societies, cooperatives and trade unions) had the capacity to envisage a scaling up, which was the object of the "Together for Early Childhood in Sri Lanka" programme.

***A request for scaling up from Sri Lankan actors, which Solidarité Laïque has carefully analysed***

7. The good results of the previous programmes in the Eastern province were one of the factors that led the national and provincial authorities to ask Solidarité Laïque to continue its action in favour of early childhood. It is worth noting that the action requested was to extend the national early childhood policy to the other provinces, where the strategies and decisions are actually taken. It was necessary to optimise the experience gained in the Eastern province in order to adapt it in the other provinces, while respecting their specificities and continuing to consolidate the national policy. It was a difficult challenge for Solidarité Laïque to ensure the implementation of a national policy on early childhood and to address the specific needs of the provinces, with their cultural, linguistic and political characteristics.
8. Hence, the NGO took the time to **consult with** partners in the provinces identified for extension, in order to identify needs and finetune activities. The evaluation notes that the consultation was not limited to simply providing information about the experience in the Eastern province to other actors in the country. It consisted of an **in-depth diagnosis** of children's needs, family attitudes towards early childhood, the state of the teaching force (number, status), and relations between the provincial authorities and local actors (partners and teachers, sometimes grouped in unions). The national study on the situation of the early childhood system that Solidarité Laïque conducted was essential to identify the partners and to ensure their involvement in the future programme in provinces that Solidarité Laïque did not know. The **selection of partners was based on the criteria of competence** in terms of early childhood and other cross-cutting themes (such as child protection or disability), geographical distribution in the province, in order to ensure good coverage of needs.

9. This consultation allowed the **strategy** initially proposed by Solidarité Laïque to be questioned, and even **recast**, to better take into account the specificities of the provinces, during workshops such as the one in March 2017. In addition, these consultations laid the groundwork for an intercultural dialogue, which was one of the underlying objectives of the programme. As the programme took on a national dimension, it had to take into account the effects of the civil war and ensure that relations were built between communities that had not been in contact with each other, or even continued to shout at each other.

***A programme aligned with the national early childhood policy***

10. The programme is really aligned with the national early childhood policy that emerged in the late 2000s, and to which Solidarité Laïque has undoubtedly contributed. The policy exists, it was first validated by the Sri Lankan government in the National Development Policy Strategy (2011-2016) as an important component for human capital development and equitable growth of the country. A Children's Secretariat has been established (for ECCD) and more recently a Secretary of State in charge of early childhood. The early childhood sector has progressively moved from the social affairs sector to the education sector, demonstrating the national authorities' awareness of the key role of early childhood education in the educational continuum. Solidarité Laïque has thus built a programme on an institutional soil conducive to early childhood education, albeit one that has been severely hampered by a political context that hinders a common approach to national policy. These institutional advances continued during the implementation of the programme, necessitating readjustments (introduction of a national curriculum for the ECCD Diploma; introduction of a national examination for preschool teachers).
11. It is therefore clear that through this programme, Solidarité Laïque is not providing expertise to improve the knowledge and practices of local actors in the field of early childhood. It sought to bring together the actors and strengthen their capacity to implement a policy that corresponds to the needs of the provinces and respects the major national strategic orientations.

***A programme that provides support on the ground, and gets the preschool teachers buy-in and commitment to the national policy***

12. The risk of an approach aimed solely at the provincial governance of early childhood education policy was to remain on the advocacy and connection of institutional actors (provincial authorities, early childhood education coordinator, partners). It was necessary to anchor this approach in reality, as experienced by the teachers, so that they would adhere to the programme and benefit from it directly.
13. The axes chosen by Solidarité Laïque were, on the one hand, the improvement of the quality of early childhood education, by reinforcing the **pedagogical skills** of the teachers. On the other hand, the NGO considered that teachers could only improve quality if they were supported by families, who understand the purpose of early childhood education. In Sri Lanka, however, most preschool teachers are paid directly by the communities, which often require them to lead children to pass the selective primary school entrance exam. As a result, some teachers were forced to prepare pupils for the exams, regardless of the pedagogies and national standards of pre-school education. Another group of teachers are limited to the basic teaching that is more occupational than pedagogical. The early childhood education is rather similar to kindergarten. For these reasons, the programme wanted to upgrade the

preschool teachers, while informing the parents about the reality of an early childhood education. At the same time, the programme considered that it was necessary to involve all the actors in the educational chain so that a **dialogue** could be established on early childhood education. The programme provided support to trigger this dialogue on two levels: PMCs and PTCs. Hence, through PMCs, teachers, parents and school management could engage at the school level. Through PTCs, teachers could cross-share their thoughts, experiences and perspectives on early childhood education amongst themselves and build common ground to better enrich the national policy and facilitate its implementation.

***The over-ambitious objective to strengthen and legitimise the status of preschool teachers***

14. The programme also aimed to strengthen the status of preschool teachers, who remained precarious, mostly at the mercy of the parent communities. Numerous testimonies also indicate the difficulty for teachers to coordinate among themselves, to exchange, and to assert their rights. The programme has learned from the experience in the Eastern province, where zonal committees of preschool teachers were grouped together at the level of the 3 districts, leading to a provincial entity (EPPTA). The teachers wanted to register as an association in order to start a dialogue and advocacy process and thus assert their rights. EPPTA was officially recognised in 2015 and has today a membership base of about 2,500 preschool teachers. This approach inspired the programme for the other provinces, using in particular the capitalisation tool that had been developed at the end of the previous programme.
15. Conceptually, the programme was designed to generate collective awareness among preschool teachers of their rights and status. The first step was meant to make teachers aware of the importance of structuring and representation, to mobilise them and to establish a diagnosis of the situation in each zone: teachers’ expectations, needs, potential roles, infrastructure, relations with parents and local authorities e.g. with the ADE ECED – Assistant Director of Education Early childhood education development attached to Zonal education officers), pedagogical and methodological tools, practices, etc. This structuration was meant to trigger the teachers’ commitment in order to make a decent living from their profession. Once these zonal committees had been mobilised and structured at the zonal level, the next step would be to elect representatives of preschool teachers from the division who would form a committee at the district level. These would have played a key role in the ECCD committees set up by the government.
16. However, this constructive structuration was at odds with the **institutional and political reality of Sri Lanka** for several reasons:
  - ✓ **The all-powerful provincial authorities**, sometimes acting in parallel with the national power, do not necessarily welcome the formation of groups of elected preschool teachers, seen as a counter-power. It should be remembered (many testimonies converged during this evaluation) that some provinces instrumentalise educational actors. For example, some teachers receive a state allowance, which could be suspended if they attended a PTC meeting. These decisions depend on the goodwill of the authorities, which may differ even within each district. For example, EPPTA is spread over 3 districts, and their members have to apply for permission to meet, without it being possible to know the underpinning reasons for approval or refusal. EPPTA has been able to hold only one board meeting in 3 years.

- ✓ The **tensions** generated following the legislative and presidential elections, which complicated the implementation of the project by politicising any activity to the extreme.
  - ✓ The **bureaucratisation**, for example with requests for authorisation to attend a training workshop, does not facilitate the fluidity of relations, and hinders the progress of activities, not to mention the means of pressure used by the authorities with regard to teachers who are already weakened (political support in exchange for authorisation to take part in the training).
  - ✓ The **impossibility for the central government** to know the situation in the provinces and therefore to initiate actions or to unblock tense situations.
  - ✓ The **ECCD committees** function more or less effectively. They are intended to be platforms for discussion of the sector with early childhood actors, and also for discussion between provincial positions and central authorities on the implementation of early childhood education policy. The programme aimed to reactivate these committees and to involve teachers who were not serving on the committees. Here again, the political stakes were high, and almost destroyed the chances of success of the dedicated actions.
  - ✓ The **degree of political maturity of the preschool teachers**, which was almost non-existent, required a long time to envisage a structuring at the various levels. Despite the training and support provided by the partners, it seemed pointless to imagine that this institutional evolution would take shape in such a short time, in the unstable and politicised institutional context of the provinces. The voice of civil society is furthermore under control in Sri Lanka.
17. The evaluation understands that the framework agreement with the Sri Lankan provincial authorities did not imply the tangible implementation of the agreement, which remained at the discretion of authorities.

## B. Coherence

***The architecture of the project was conceptually relevant thanks to its holistic dimension.***

18. The programme integrated capacity building of educational actors, support and structuring of teachers, transition between preschool and primary school teachers, strengthening of dialogue between the actors of an educational system (parents, teachers, local authorities) and steering of activities by competent partners in the field, locally based in the provinces. From this point of view, the programme is remarkably well designed to bring about change in the pre-school education system in Sri Lanka. This programme architecture included a range of tools (workshops, training) and facilities in schools. Similarly, the advocacy processes were consistent in this perspective of acting on the system as a whole, particularly in the inter-actor and inter-province dialogue, the sharing of the implementation of the national strategy, and the exchange of both pedagogical and management practices in pre-school education.

### ***A requested simplification of the programme***

19. The programme was subject to requests for simplification from AFD, which considered it too ambitious and complex in view of the otherwise excellent risk analysis.
20. The turnover of programme managers at Solidarité Laïque and on the AFD side did not facilitate the implementation of this programme, whose local context is complex. Between the initial drafting of the programme and its validation by the AFD, there were four people (some turn-over occurred), and therefore a certain loss of information, of institutional memory, and even a lack of appreciation of the feasibility of the programme at the time of signing an agreement. However, as already indicated, the analysis of local capacities and partners' needs had been carried out and seemed to provide guarantees that the programme could function according to its planned design. It should be remembered that Sri Lanka is certainly a country of intervention known to Solidarité Laïque since 2005, but that the DNA of the NGO lies elsewhere, both geographically and thematically (in this case, early childhood education).
21. In addition, the office in Sri Lanka is still young, and the French team was unable to travel as much as planned to Sri Lanka because of the pandemic, although four field missions were conducted during the first two years. There have been four programme officers since the preparation of the FIONG. It was therefore difficult to understand the ins and outs of the programme in a context as complex and evolving as Sri Lanka. For example, it was necessary to understand, from France, how the programme could support teachers' engagement in dialogue with parents and schools and with local authorities (PMC) but also at the national policy level with the ECCD committee.

### ***The programme was not, however, in a position to change the operationalisation of Sri Lanka's national pre-school policy***

22. The programme was over-ambitious in a country that is so institutionally fragmented and faces a continuing series of political and economic crises. The range of activities was wide, reflecting the lack of prioritisation and instead showing a will to embrace every issue raised during the consultation process by the partners and the actors. The evaluation values the in-depth consultation, but points out the lack of selection of the issues to be tackled with a programme of limited budget, managed through a small team, and the supervision of a French NGO.
23. One assumption is that this programme does not fall within the **longstanding, incremental cooperation model** in which Solidarité Laïque is experienced and recognised in France and elsewhere, through multi-actor concerted programmes (PCPA). These programmes take place over 10 to 12 years and allow for in-depth action on collective change with different actors, in order to achieve a common objective. The long-time frame facilitates mutual knowledge and the building of trust in situations that are basically very complex, whether socio-economically or politically. The programme "Together for Early Childhood in Sri Lanka" was not part of this PCPA approach. It now seems that the issue of change is so complex in Sri Lanka that the ambition of the programme, with its multiple activities and 3 components, could not lead to a successful outcome, in such limited timespan and limited resources. It is assumed that the logical framework of this programme was not adapted to the expected change and the ultimate goal of the programme and that the resources were not adequate to foster change in the 5 provinces.



24. A series of other obstacles hindered the coherence of the programme:

- ✓ **The political and institutional obstacles were known**, and were well identified by the promoters of the programme at the outset. However, the proposed activities, particularly in the structuring of preschool teachers, could not reasonably function without a fluid dialogue between the authorities at the level of zones, districts and provinces, between the provinces and finally between the provinces and the central state. This required a strong governance of the programme that has not been adapted.
- ✓ The objective 3 “Promote and support the recognition of pre-elementary Education and preschool teachers at the provincial and central government levels” would have required a full-fledge programme, instead of a component of this programme. Working at the level of governance of a country in terms of public policy – in education or in any other field – calls for **more recognised and legitimate actors than Solidarité Laïque**. Only a reform of the governance of central and decentralised authorities could facilitate a change in the harmonious implementation of a national early childhood policy. Thus, it appears that component 3 was stillborn.
- ✓ The programme sought to respond to the immensity of early childhood needs, but **embedded in a fragmented and erratic context**, through a multitude of actions that required strong local relays to implement them. The success of the programme was based on a still recent Solidarité Laïque office in Sri Lanka, which received reinforcements, but belatedly. Not all the partners proved reliable, even those in the Eastern province on which the programme relied and provided support. It can be argued that the capacity of Solidarité Laïque in Sri Lanka was under-dimensioned in relation to the scope of such an ambitious programme, specifically on the component 3. It can also be argued that while the pandemic undermined many activities, it was not the only reason for the difficulties encountered in implementing the programme.

***A lack of political and institutional analysis?***

25. A **more detailed analysis of a political and institutional nature** was probably lacking in each province in the exercise of institutional power. Despite an in-depth preliminary consultation and keeping constant dialogue with authorities either national or local, the programme responded to needs through activities, but these were met with incomprehension, ignorance or rejection, depending on the case, by the provincial authorities, even though they continue to support the early childhood sector. Finally, the promoters were aware of the extreme political instability of the country, particularly during elections, and this major risk was revealed, compromising many activities. The evaluation assumes that the transfer of experience from the Eastern province was not sufficiently well prepared, either because of insufficient knowledge of the local contexts, by province, or because of insufficient consideration of the risks, which occurred at the start of the programme. These risks were not unexpected at all: they were pre-existing variables that Solidarité Laïque had known about since the beginning of its interventions in Sri Lanka in 2005.

### ***Structuring preschool teachers remains a challenge in the context of Sri Lanka today***

26. The increase in the power of preschool teachers' structuring, at the level of the PTCs and then at the provincial level, was a relevant objective. Teachers are inherent implementers of the national policy and must be not only certified, they also need to be rewarded, their knowledge should be upgraded and their pedagogy continuously improved, and above all to benefit from the parents and other stakeholders' buy-in. Solidarité Laïque was cautious enough to support teachers' efforts to exchange and unified their voice, without leading them to get a union or a political force. The implication of teachers is progressing in the decision-making process (e.g., in 2020, the State Ministry of education called teachers unions, including EPPTA for a meeting in order to collect their point of view for the updates of the curricula). The programme took the option to structure the teachers via the PTCs and the evaluation values its choice. PTCs are a dialogue platform thanks to which teachers may exchange and build up a common position that could serve the work of the ECCD committees – even though they are not part of these committees). The functioning model of PTCs depends highly on the support from the province and are subject to a range of constraints – such as a permit to travel. The programme aimed to setting and reinforcing PTCs are 3 levels (zone, district and province) before reaching out the national level through a national platform. Such conceptual building of PTCs faced the reality of each province, their specific political constraints and priority as well as means given to early childhood education.

### ***A challenge for Solidarité Laïque to work on policy implementation at national level***

27. The capacity of Solidarité Laïque to lead component 3 deserves to be questioned. The French NGO is not necessarily recognised in this field of expertise, compared to other organisations. It was difficult to imagine that Solidarité Laïque could intervene with the provincial and national authorities on the governance of early childhood policy on its own. It is recognised that Solidarité Laïque became aware very early on of its inability to act effectively on advocacy, and sought to link up with other actors in order to build up a force to be reckoned with, such as UNICEF or local actors. For instance, Solidarité Laïque sought to partner with CED, a national Sri Lankan network well known in the education and advocacy sector; unfortunately, it did not happen. Solidarité Laïque also continued to work closely with partners whose legitimacy is recognised at the national level (for example, the CEO of AARUTHAL used to be the Secretary to the Provincial Ministry of North and East, when the North and East were together). Agreements have indeed been concluded with partners at the operational level (with very precise ToRs for each activity) but without any guarantee that these partners could carry out all of these activities, depending on the specific context of each province. Clearly, some of them were not able to respond to everything, for a variety of reasons (too little operational capacity, despite excellent mastery of the content of early childhood activities), and it must be recognised that advocacy requires specific skills and can be risky for Sri Lankan actors who live with highly politicised local authorities on a daily basis.

28. The **local partners were not sufficiently equipped, in terms of advocacy**, to implement such an ambitious programme. They certainly had excellent skills in the field of early childhood, as confirmed by French partners such as CEMEA. However, despite the funds provided by the programme, the partners recruited rather junior profiles, who did not necessarily have the advocacy skills, nor the detailed knowledge of the interplay of actors, and even less the legitimacy to dialogue with authorities such as the early childhood education coordinator or the district or provincial authorities.

### ***Mixed perceptions of the consultation for the design of the programme***

29. The perceptions of being consulted for the design of the project's objectives varied across stakeholders and regions, and might differ from what was actually done. Solidarité Laïque did its best to upgrade the communication and display full transparency with state authorities, that unfortunately did not always acknowledge these efforts and reported gaps in communication. These perceptions are subjective. On the other hand, all teachers and implementing partners deemed that the project was well-conceived and that it reflected their insights.
30. All implementing partners declared that they held an orientation meeting with the relevant authorities to present the project, its objectives and take into account the government's inputs. They spent time explaining the project with the Ministry of Education secretary, and Directors of Preschool Units, among others, to sign a Memorandum of Understandings and obtain accreditation letters, which sometimes met difficulties. However, from the provincial authorities side, the perception and discourse regarding the consultation vary across regions and time creating mixed outcomes.
31. In the Southern and Northern provinces, the MoE officials declared to be happy with the coordination regarding the objectives. An early childhood education coordinator declared that “based on the requirements of the district, (Solidarité Laïque) adjusted”. Likewise, in Eastern Province, the authorities explained to Solidarité Laïque that they did not need a diploma course, which was changed for a language course, to better fit their needs.
32. However, in the Eastern, Central and Western provinces, some officials denied that the design of the objectives were discussed, or even presented with them, which triggered resentment in spite of Solidarité Laïque approaching them. This is largely imputable to the high turnover among officials transferring from one job to another without sharing information with their successors, lack of investment or hidden political agenda.

This seemed to be a misunderstanding or a mismatch in the Central province. Both the partner, NECY, and a director of a provincial ECED unit assured that SL shared the implementation plan with the early childhood education Coordinator. NECY members explained that the specific objectives of the programme were in line with the preschool development plan of the district. NECY members added that they took into account the request of the MoE to consider MoE guidelines and indicators to implement activities.

### ***High partners' support of the programme objectives***

33. All the implementing partners without exception did express their full understanding of the programme, the complementary between its components and how they tried their best to support it.
34. In the Southern province, in Hambantota district, ALSDC said that they “very clearly exchanged views and fully supported the implementation of the 2 Specific Objectives (SO) of the programme”. In the Central province, NECY stated that “Solidarité Laïque approach is suitable”. Finally, in the Eastern province, EPPTA was happy with the flexibility of Solidarité Laïque regarding the design. “Solidarité Laïque agreed to adjust according to the needs of the communities and based on the requirements of the preschool teachers”.

***The programme was set with a view to triggering interplay between actions across the 3 specific objectives and preventing silo-effect***

35. In summary, this programme **appears to be coherently constructed**, but with a system of **conditionalities** that carried risks of non-implementation. Thus, if components 1 and 2 did not achieve sufficient results, it was impossible for component 3 to be implemented. Similarly, within each component, the programme provided a logical sequence of actions that were interdependent. For example, providing training for teachers who work in the PTCs only made sense if the PTCs were up and running. However, this was not the case, and the training could not be provided. As a result, the programme did not achieve all the expected effects in the long term, on the one hand because several activities could not take place at the beginning of the programme, and on the other hand because activities that were essential to facilitate the operationalisation of the programme were not carried out. It thus appears that the support of partners (in addition to EPPTA) should have been reinforced, or even made a prerequisite before the implementation of activities.

36. In a nutshell, the coherence of the programme is summed up below:

- ✓ **Specific objective 1** was relevant, as it had worked in the Eastern province, and contributed to the steering of the sector and to stakeholder buy-in and ownership. Raising awareness, especially among parents, and supporting engagement in PMCs were achievable objectives. At the level of the PTCs, the activities worked out, with variations of implementation level due to the institutional context, not due the nature of the activities supported by the programme. The inter-provincial exchanges succeeded despite the limited number of activities.
- ✓ **For specific objective 2**, the needs had been well identified, and the activities were adapted to the evolutions of the government's training policy (certification having been generalised).
- ✓ **Specific objective 3** was conditional on the success of the first two objectives, and seemed the most difficult to implement. In the end, it was not. This component was premature, it needed to be able to build on the foundations, on the knowledge that the achievement of what the first two components could have produced.

## C. Efficiency

***Despite following the budget, the allocated human and financial resources were deemed insufficient by the implementing partners and authorities to accomplish the objectives.***

37. There were diverging opinions on whether Solidarité Laïque mobilised sufficient human and financial regarding the initial goals for Stage 1 and 2. The resources were generally adjusted to the budget with experts providing the implementation and management of the programme in the field. Partners were able to manage the funds and stick to the budget with the approval of SL. The training of trainers was particularly appreciated in terms of mobilised resources: the supplied material tools, equipment and training sessions were successfully used.

38. However, some partners interviewees declared that Solidarité Laïque provided necessary support” but very limited resources to implement a smooth programme, stage 1 and 2 were faced the same problems and the activities were launched with a very low cost”. In addition, some partners found that, because of different circumstances, they were not able to hire the most suitable human resources and adequate collaborators for the training programme. It was particularly the case of the Northern province.

***The Solidarité Laïque team in Sri Lanka was in the capacity of steering the programme with the partners and generally providing support to each where needed.***

39. Informants generally confirm that Solidarité Laïque’s approach is good and can support the Early Childhood sector in Sri Lanka with good coordination and communication with partners. In the case of EPPTA, for example, the partner’s team benefitted from capacity building support from Solidarité Laïque, improving their articulation with other partners and stakeholders. Zonal committees, preschool teachers and parents also benefited from the improvement of communication skills between Solidarité Laïque and the partners and their capacity to lead and provide activities. However, authorities showed little support and interest for the programme and the capacity building which made it more difficult for Solidarité Laïque to communicate and lead the programme.

***Solidarité Laïque struggled in adjusting resources according to the needs of each partner, prior to and during the implementation of the programme.***

40. The experience, capacities and resources of the different partners are very heterogeneous and each of them operate differently and thus, with different efficiency. The provincial policies and local authorities also impact the partners working capacity and responsiveness. This heterogeneity was certainly a challenge for Solidarité Laïque which may have to revise the implemented work plan on the progress and needs in each community. Despite lack of data collected during the evaluation, there are some partners who lack resources to implement the programme efficiently.
41. In the Eastern province, for example, trainers have witnessed a shortage of First Aid material and tools to conduct training sessions for other preschool teachers. They struggled to find specific material on the area and the partner organisation was not able to provide them either, nor were the local health authorities. Some informants suggested that Solidarité Laïque should provide more First Aid training materials and guides in the areas where the equipment is less accessible, as to continue with the training sessions.
42. **The relief support funds** for preschool teachers during the first lockdowns were very contributory and useful for the preschool teachers which had lost their income source and were in very critical situations. Solidarité Laïque was the only organisation adjusting its budget and providing that kind of support which was highly appreciated by partners, parents and preschool teachers. Solidarité Laïque cancelled some of its planned activities in order to allocate more than 17 000 euros to the support fund. The Western Province was the first to be in a lockdown due to the propagation of the virus and Solidarité Laïque supported 56 with a transfer of 3000 LKR (12,5 euros) for each teacher. However, some informants affirmed that the funds released were insufficient given the critical situation. In the Eastern province, for example, dry rations of the value of 2000LKR were given to 43 preschool teachers from each one of the 17 zones. This allowed 731 preschool teachers to reach the support fund out of 3,780 preschool teachers in the province. In total, 1849 teachers from 43 Zones were provided with aid.
43. The selection criteria to obtain the aid was quite restrictive: only very poor teachers, single parents, children with disabilities or sick could aim to receive fund aids. Public authorities took the responsibility to distribute the relief fund but found that a big number of preschool teachers could not have access to the relief fund due to resource shortage, even if they were in difficult situations. According to some teachers, the selection process failed and the guidelines were not followed or respected by the authorities. Although some of the voucher receivers were sometimes contested because of their linkage to the Civil Security Force, who have regular salaries, beneficiaries were believed to be part of the selection criteria because of the widow and single-parent status.

***The partners contributed to the planification of the programme according to the needs of the area of intervention and the capacity or level of involvement of local stakeholders.***

44. The implementation of the programme required adaptation to the provincial specificities as well as the institutional support which differed from one province to another. The local partners major contributors to steer and adapt the programme to each province. They supported the strengthening of networking between preschool teachers, partners and authorities according to their local specificities and coordinated and adapted to the local authorities.
45. The Rural Development Fund in the Northern province partner was established to assist victims of hurricanes and so are adapted to the local vulnerabilities and needs of the province. They were also able to provide dry essential packs for women-headed preschool teachers’ families according to their needs.

***Partners took responsibility in planning and programming and operated in cooperation with, and reported their activities to Solidarité Laïque team in Sri Lanka. They benefited from capacity building support prior and during the launch of the programme.***

46. Informants confirmed that the communication between partners and Solidarité Laïque was generally good, which was observed in all the provinces. Progress review meetings took place regularly where the partners would actively participate and report the development and the follow-up of the programme in their areas. Not only were partners able to share knowledge and experiences, but they also had the opportunity to discuss matters and find common or specific solutions together with a strong team work.
47. Nevertheless, local authorities of the Eastern province (i.e. the Eastern Province Preschool Education Bureau) state that coordination between Solidarité Laïque and its partners with the authorities could have been improved. EPPTA improved its coordination and communication within the partner organisation and with other stakeholders and between the zonal committees. The partner affirmed to have improved skills to communicate with preschool teachers, parents to implement activities. However, evidence shows that Solidarité Laïque and EPPTA did not conduct any programmes for parents in the last two years which would have been important to improve parents’ awareness and implication in their children development. Moreover, the provincial Early Childhood Education Development Unit (ECED Unit) <sup>2</sup> requested Solidarité Laïque to improve coordination with the local partner and stated that EPPTA involvement and efforts in the sector were not enough to satisfy the local needs.
48. The partners’ situation and capacity in the unfolding of the programme was very diverse and led the evaluation team to think about **six variables to analyse the partners’ situation**:
  - ✓ Although most of the partners had consolidated their **experience in the early childhood sector and in the respective Province before this programme**, there are differences regarding the kind of projects and ambitions they had carried before.

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<sup>2</sup> Early Childhood Education Development Units are present in all provinces except Eastern province. The Eastern Province Preschool Education Bureau is only for the Eastern Province under management of Ministry of Education Eastern Province.

- ✓ The partners had big differences in terms of **resources**. Although all of them were considered as capable of launching the programme, financial and human resources differed from one organisation to another.
- ✓ The partners had different types of **networking** in their respective Province depending on the time they were settled in the territory and the proximity they had with authorities, teachers and civil society in general.
- ✓ The partners differed in terms of **experience of their staff** and their programmes from junior to senior teams.
- ✓ Although Solidarité Laïque had good relations with most of the partners, some were closer to the NGO or more used to its way of functioning which set differences in terms of cooperation.
- ✓ Finally, the capacity and the **ways of implementing the activities** also had particularities from one partner to another.

***The selection of good partners by Solidarité Laïque did not prevent difficulties in implementing the activities for which they were responsible.***

49. Although the **partners were carefully selected**, it became apparent that their capacities varied widely:
  - ✓ Some had acquired good experience, such as EPPTA in the East, and benefited from specific support through this programme. However, EPPTA appears to be a fragile partner at the end of the programme, and there are doubts about its ability to continue activities without substantial support for the management of activities.
  - ✓ Some, such as the ACUT union, had not demonstrated its capacity to manage a project or placed people in charge who did not necessarily have the profile.
50. The programme allowed for the **provision of staff in charge of the programme implementation** in each partner to implement programme activities. The management of the partners did not necessarily have the capacity to supervise these staff efficiently for the sake of the programme. As a result, the staff strongly requested the Solidarité Laïque office in Sri Lanka to support them in the organisation and implementation of their activities. However, the hierarchical responsibility of these staff did not fall to the head of Solidarité Laïque. The partners were able to disengage from the steering of the project, leaving their dedicated staff in direct contact with Solidarité Laïque, which implicitly played a supervisory and support role. There is a problem here with the governance of the project locally.
51. The Solidarité Laïque team in Sri Lanka was **over-solicited to accompany them**, though they had no hierarchical link, nor could they substitute for them to compensate for the lack of advocacy skills, nor could they even supervise them on a day-to-day basis. This was the role of the partners, which they did not necessarily play. Solidarité Laïque responded by recruiting a programme coordinator, specifically to deal with partners. This meant that the Solidarité Laïque national director could focus on advocacy – without having to travel to the 5 provinces covered by the programme, as he had to do since the beginning of the programme.
52. This evaluation points out that **assigning the same objectives to the seven partners** was not necessarily relevant. The partners were not at the same level, did not have the same experience in the field of early childhood education and there was a risk that their implementation capacity would vary greatly, depending on their size and the skills of the project staff - not to mention the specific context in each province. This is what happened.

53. It can therefore be said that the programme should have refined its choice of partners to identify those with a good knowledge of the early childhood sector and a capacity to mobilise and steer actors. In addition, some of the partners could have had these qualities, but were hampered by a provincial administration that was not conducive to the implementation of this type of project, requiring numerous meetings and trips, and giving a host of authorisations subject to political will.

## D. Effectiveness

### ***Success of the awareness campaigns, increased commitment and interest of all stakeholders in early childhood education.***

54. All stakeholders, but especially the parents, expressed an acute awareness regarding the importance of early childhood education, and that this awareness directly stemmed from the programme. The preschool teachers were also more knowledgeable and willing to spread awareness, also thanks to the programme. The local authorities, whose jobs are related to early childhood education, stressed the importance of ECE, but it is hard to determine to what extent they were already sensitised before the onset of the programme, and to what extent this awareness is partly imputable to the programme. Awareness campaigns were conducted in all provinces except in the Eastern one, as this area already benefited from extensive awareness campaigns during the previous programmes. It represented at least 68 interventions (40 in stage 1, 28 in stage 2).
55. Concerning the **parents**, they constitute the group that showed the most enthusiasm when asked how important early childhood education is for them. They gave many arguments supporting how paramount this stage of education is. A parent from the Eastern province, Batticaloa district, said “It will become a good foundation to the child to learn and practice about the customs and traditions, get a practice about engaging with the society, prepare children to enter the primary schools without any fear or backwardness”. Another mother added: “Early childhood is the most important because it will decide the entire education of the pupil”. In Mannar district, Northern province, a mother made an interesting comparison: “Early childhood is like the foundation of a building. If the foundation is strong, the entire life will be strong”. Every parent interviewed highly rated the importance of early childhood education. They all unanimously enjoyed the awareness programme, and explained how they realised that they were making mistakes before being sensitised (scolding children, asking too much, etc). They reported that they appreciated the diversity of activities conducted for children by their teachers (outdoor activities, games, etc). They seemed aware of the daily life of their children, of the knowledge they learned, and engaged in activities with them at school (see next sections). Some mothers also explained that they now also try to sensitise other parents around them and push them to enrol their kids in preschool. There is also a numerical increase in parents’ awareness that translated in more enrolment. According to Eastern province teachers, every year, new parents join the preschool. Therefore, both parents and teachers requested to have at least two awareness campaigns per year.



56. **On the preschool teachers’ side**, they expressed further understanding, knowledge and passion about their occupation thanks to the various activities of the programme. Their capacities improved, their knowledge, both general and specific (digital impact, outdoor activities, health and nutrition), increased and their outreach aptitude to advocate multiplied tenfold. Their know-how diversified as they learned new techniques in activities, and one of them said “The preschool activities and behaviour change of children are crucial”. In the Northern province, a preschool teacher “early childhood education is the most important period of the child because at that age 85% of their brains are blooming.”
57. Although they might have thought the same before, what changed is that they have more technical knowledge and support from the parents now, which strengthens their own convictions. “Preschool teachers get the parents' support to develop preschool activities”, declared the president and district coordinator of NECY, in the Central province.
58. Finally, the local authorities also highly valued early childhood education, which might not be surprising since it is directly linked to their job. For example, in the district of Ampara, Eastern province, an Assistant director of the MoE stated: “Preschools are very important places for children”.
59. The awareness-raising, despite the reduced number of campaigns compared to the original plan, is a clear success. All the interviews seemed familiar with the importance, the stakes, the definition, the curriculum and the actors involved in early childhood education.

#### ***High parental engagement in the functioning and development of the preschools***

60. The preschool teachers of several districts of the Eastern province provided an activity calendar that they publish for parents, and they update this board every week.
61. In all provinces, all the parents take responsibilities in the preschool development activities and provide all necessary support to the preschool to organise activities for children. Parents also participate in preschool events and activities to enjoy spending time with children, such as sports gatherings, prizes giving, Teachers’ day, exhibitions, etc. They also manage preschool repairs, cleaning and other management responsibilities, which shows that their commitment goes beyond leisure and pleasant activities with their kids and that they contribute to manage common facilities and goods.
62. Parents displayed a high level of commitment in all provinces in their children’s school, which goes beyond their own children’s interest as they also committed to the shared building and PMCs.

#### ***Increased commitment in the PMCs and PTCs as participants and managerial roles, engineering a fruitful dialogue and positive energy***

63. One of the key priorities of the programme was to foster dialogue and engagement in structures that steer the national policies on early childhood. Today, there are more than 900 PMCs in the zones covered by the programme. Clearly, numerous parents members of PMCs and teachers members of PTCs indicated high engagement in these activities. Some attended meetings, but many of them had also taken up responsibilities, such as being the treasurer or secretary. The governmental officials interviewed also declared to regularly participate in meetings and visits, but their support, especially regarding monitoring and evaluation, was further needed according to teachers and implementing partners.

## **PMCs**

64. In the Eastern province, respondents said parents are members of the PMC, participate in meetings, support activities in the preschool which has triggered networking between preschool teachers, partners and authorities. In addition, in the Central province, a mother declared that their PMC usually held 2 or 3 meetings in Mada Mahanuwara, but it stopped due to COVID-19. In the same province, an early childhood education district coordinator explained that the ECE divisional officers joined the awareness programmes and PMC meetings. In the Central province, some PMC hold monthly meetings with parents, and some also created a WhatsApp group or a parents’ club, consisting of a few parents. Another example is a group of 4 mothers where a priest acted was the focal point and a mom the treasurer.
65. Parents can also play a role of mediation between the community and the school, are keen to support other parents and to mentor newcomers. A senior mom declared “Personally, 4 new children entered the preschool thanks to my mediation. Normally senior students’ parents are aware of the system of the preschool and guide newly joined parents.” In Trincomalee district, Eastern province, a group of mothers were proud to list a couple of activities they have conducted with the PMC: “Conducting Shramadana Campaigns, organising different events, creating handwashing facilities and hygienic packs”. Another woman said that she was “willing to be a positive member in the PMC to take leadership in early childhood education activities”.
66. The fruitful dialogue has begotten activities, but also a virtuous circle of learning. A parent stated “As parents, we learn from preschool teachers, and then read articles about early childhood education and improve knowledge to support children”. In Mannar district, Northern province, a mother also said that parents’ involvement in PMCs motivates the teachers to do better.
67. It also helped parents change perspectives. As parents are keen to support their child enrolment at primary school, they sometimes put pressure on preschool teachers, to whom they pay salary. However, several parents said they understood that preschool was not meant to teach them how to read and write.
68. In the Southern province, Hambantota district, a MoE early childhood education coordinator stated that ECCD divisional officers joined PMCs meetings. However, ALSDC also said that some officers of the MoE did not fulfil their responsibilities due to the ownership problem of the preschool management (between MoE and early childhood education).
69. In the Western province, some authorities reported a good cooperation with the PMCs - others did not mention it despite the questions - but due to the COVID health guidelines, they did not achieve the targets of planning at least 2 PMC for 1 zone. In addition, the lack of interviews of teachers and parents in Colombo makes it hard to balance these claims with other perspectives.
70. All actors perceived themselves as involved in the PMCs meetings and management, although these statements are sometimes contradicted by other participants’ views. In all provinces, all stakeholders knew the existence of the committees and their meetings. Parents and teachers were those who were the most involved, and the members of the MoE were the least involved. Hence, the creation or strengthening of PMCs were deemed successful overall, with minor local variations.

### **PTCs**

71. PTC is not a new concept introduced to preschool teachers. Solidarité Laïque supported strengthening PTCs and encouraged preschool teachers to be resourceful through the committee. As recognised PTCs are strong in most of the districts, the MoE, ECCD officers are supporting preschool teachers to conduct different trainings, awareness programmes. It is a very strong forum to discuss matters of member teachers and find solutions as a team.
72. PTCs have functioned at divisional, district, provincial level and those are strong to make a voice on behalf of the preschool community. Yet, the evaluation team gathered limited evidence of the regional patterns in the interviews, which makes it difficult to assess their performance and authorities’ support at the local level that underpin the rational, variable, testimonies rather satisfied. In Ampara, Eastern province, a group of teachers explained that as Solidarité Laïque promoted PTCs, they worked, respectively, as a deputy chairman of PTC and Chairman in Mahaoya Treasurer – preschool Society. The early childhood education officer and Zonal Assistant Director of MoE visited preschools for monitoring purposes in some districts, but the ECD Bureau and ECCD Officer at divisional level should improve their monitoring and participation in others.
73. Below are presented a range of standpoints of teachers and public authorities on the value and functioning of the PTCs.
74. In the Central province, teachers pointed out to the fact that early childhood education authorities participated in nutrition and health activities, but should support and coordinate better with PTCs. The Preschool Section of the MoE and ECCD officers should improve partnership at the divisional level and improve preschool monitoring. Their participation and monitoring efforts are very much needed to improve the quality of services of the preschool. The special attention should be provided to the unregistered preschools, run against the guidelines, that conduct activities that are harmful to children.
75. In the Northern province, Jaffna district, a government Preschool Assistant Director visited preschools every four months, which demonstrated a regular follow-up. The ME early childhood education director of the Northern province confirmed that “PTC are very effective, we conducted PTC meetings at zonal and district level. Through PTCs, we were able to discuss preschool teachers’ progress and management problems”. In Mannar district, teachers declared that “PTC members built very good relationships among teachers and with authorities, they respect and help each other and there is a good recognition by the society”. This is an encouraging sign of acknowledgement and coordination with the authorities.

### ***Action plans have been designed at provincial levels, and will soon be implemented***

76. The Action plan is valid for all provinces but might be customised and require adjusted modalities of intervention from the partners. Most of the action plans were in the final stages of their completion during the interview in February 2021, and will soon be implemented.
77. For example, in the Central province, an early childhood education district coordinator explained that the “Government ECE policy and Provincial Charter will be implemented to enhance the quality of preschools. The MoE has the Provincial Preschool Charter, a preschool training module to train preschool teachers and guidelines to maintain minimum standards in preschools”, which shows a satisfactory advancement.
78. The interviewees did not mention action plans at the district level.

***The networking and discussions between multiple teachers (preschool and primary school teachers, teachers and their trainers) have stimulated exchanges of experience and intercultural dialogue***

79. All teachers reported a fair amount of exchange of best practices and tips from the discussions they had with primary school teachers, their trainers or their peers during training and meetings. Only one interprovincial visit was organised in stage 2, meaning that they did not meet extensively with extra-provincial teachers. In the Central province, a preschool officer and Deputy Secretary/Director ECCD said that the exchange programme was successful, with a multi ethnic programme conducted, that was particularly relevant for the multi-cultural environment of this province.
80. During the training of trainers, teachers improved their pedagogical skills and learned from other preschool teachers to conduct early childhood education activities including outdoor and recreational activities. One person explained that the First Aid training was a very good opportunity to share experience with teachers who came from other districts.
81. The exchange visit to the Northern province for the training constituted an occasion to exchange methods and tips. For instance, a trainer from the Eastern province realised the existing disparities as she declared “During the exchange visit to Jaffna, we identified very vast differences of preschool functioning in Jaffna compared to other districts, for example in writing skills introduced in Jaffna but not in other districts”.
82. Once the training completed, the teachers were able to share their knowledge with others, perpetuating the sharing of information, and starting a cascading effect. A teacher from Ampara said: “I received training in mathematical concepts, Language skill developments, child development and child psychology etc. I used this knowledge to create learning corners, improve awareness of parents and engage with children and I shared all of that knowledge with other preschool teachers too.”

***A lower number of preschool teachers who passed the certification thanks to the programme than expected due to the COVID-19, and 143 out of 168 graduated***

83. Many interviewees already had their certification before the onset of the programme, or acquired it during an earlier stage, therefore the numbers obtained were gathered via Solidarité Laïque, and not the evaluation team. 170 teachers were expected to complete the certification, but less enrolled due to the ongoing sanitary crisis. The programme also had to shift to an online version and to adapt to the new national curriculum for the Western and Central provinces. 82 out of the total 83 registered teachers will be eligible for graduation from Central Province whereas 61 out of the total of 85 registered teachers from the Western province will be eligible for graduation of the Diploma course. A total of 143 teachers graduated.

***Teachers’ confidence and fluency English improved a bit, and despite the delays due to the pandemic, 85% of the teachers passed the test in English***

84. In the South, training was supposed to be for Tamil or English, whereas in the North and the East, it was for English only. The Stage 2 updated action plan focused only on English lessons. The district of Ampara (Eastern province) had to put a hold on the training, but some managed to start the language course in 3 provinces. 80 preschool teachers are taking an English language course in the Southern province and 227 preschool teachers are taking an English language course in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

85. In the Eastern province, most teachers said that they were more fluent in Sinhala, secondly Tamil and thirdly English, which always very last. But the MoE Assistant director in Ampara explained that the English Course training, due to the situation of COVID- 19, did not start yet. In Trincomalee district, the language courses were meant to be in English and Tamil and to last 3 months. A teacher described her proficiency as “primitive knowledge on English language. I’m willing to learn English language more.”
86. In the Central province, teachers are fluent in Sinhala, secondly English thirdly Tamil, and implemented a programme where for two hours, the teacher speaks with children in Tamil, and the one hour remaining she teaches in English. A trainer declared, regarding her ability to speak Tamil “I can manage to speak now”. In the Northern, in Vavuniya district, a preschool teacher interviewed was currently participating in a 52-hour course English training.
87. The teachers’ perception of their own improvement and confidence in speaking another language was hard to evaluate, as most trainings were delayed, halted or cancelled. However, their level was evaluated by a writing and oral test that gives a better picture of their actual improvement.

Mannar	48 pass out of the 50
Vavuniya	60 out of 62
Jaffna	25 out of 25
Trinco	35 out of 50
Batticaloa	25 out of 40
Hambantota	29 out of 30
Mathara	41 out of 50

88. Hence, **most teachers reached a satisfying level of English, but with various regional successes.** For example, in the Eastern province, the district of Batticaloa showed lower performance than other districts. Overall, out of 307 enrolees, 263 succeeded, which means 85% of those who attended the training reached the desired level, and the others must have improved as well but not up to the required threshold.

***Preschool teachers were trained on specific themes (disabilities, first aid, child protection)***

89. One teacher training per zone was expected, and then these women were supposed to spread their knowledge by training themselves another group of teachers. During this earlier stage at the end of 2019, 448 were trained: 240 on first aid, 155 on inclusive education and 53 on child protection. At the end of the programme, the final numbers are 981 teachers trained in total, with: 393 on 1st Aid; 341 on inclusive education; and 247 on child protection.

90. Inclusive education, which was one specific theme, is now part of the national policy. Some teachers also declared that they trained on nutrition and diet, leadership, or training organised by Sarvodaya, Save the Children or Concern.
91. The trainers have been trained on the three thematics, and the trainers were able to disseminate their knowledge on child protection and inclusive education to another round of teachers (stage 2). Although the numbers are below the target, the quality was matched and both teachers and parents were very satisfied with the quality of the content. For example, in the Central province, Kandy district, a trainer got the First Aid training of trainers and she trained one preschool teacher from each zone.
92. In the Northern province, in Vavuniya district, a preschool teacher participated in the training on child protection in 2020 and shared her knowledge with another 40 early childhood education teachers in Vavuniya district. In the Southern province, 12 preschool teachers participated in trainers training and they trained 120 preschool teachers, but the participants did not precise which training it was.

## E. Impact

93. The programme produced observable impacts on the ECE sector in all the targeted Provinces which are summarised in the table below.

High engagement of stakeholders in PMC was generally observed.
High engagement of stakeholders in PTC was generally observed.
Parents showed a big interest and engagement in ECE sector
Preschool teachers were generally satisfied in terms of training and teaching level. Language training was sometimes not sufficient to achieve the desirable level.
Intercultural dialogue took place in all the concerned Provinces.
Dialogue between stakeholders generally improved, although some efforts still need to be done to improve communication with authorities.

### ***The programme enhanced the ownership of the pre-school education sector, by local authorities and stakeholders.***

94. Stakeholders took increasingly part in the management of infrastructures and resources of the pre-school sector. Parents are more aware of the importance of ownership of their children’s education. In Batticaloa district (Eastern Province), for example, the parent’s club helps them bring common solutions to the issues of the preschools and represent parents as an organised stakeholder. Parents and PMC members are involved in childhood development activities and programmes at community level and are generally supported by local authorities.
95. The partner organisations and preschool teachers also increased their ownership by applying the national standards and curriculums provided by the early childhood education authorities and adapting them to the specificities of their community. Update on learning techniques allow teachers to increase their ownership of the sector.

***The programme gave the opportunity for preschool teachers and trainers to increase their professional capacities even if there is still a long way to the achievement of desirable capacities for all teachers.***

96. Solidarité Laïque's actions show that they supported the implementation of training sessions for preschool teachers and are seen as effective when it comes to improving the quality of preschools. Teachers are generally believed to have improved their knowledge on the educational and development sectors through training programmes and they are now able to share that knowledge with parents and other pre-school teachers. Teachers use new techniques in activities and have been changing their approach in terms of education methods.
97. Informants believe that teachers improved their teaching skills and learned from other preschool teachers to conduct early childhood education activities, including outdoor and recreational activities. Training of trainers was generally appreciated thanks to the support it gave to capacity and relationship building within the teacher community. In the Central province, for example, training sessions were well perceived and increased teachers' recognition among other stakeholders thanks to their increasing capacities and knowledge. However, most informants admit that much work still needs to be done as the majority of preschool teachers in the country do not have access to training sessions following the general national guidelines.

***The expansion of PMCs and PTCs to the provincial and national levels are differently supported by authorities depending on the areas and commitment of the authorities.***

98. All the preschools in the targeted provinces have a PMC and organise provincial meetings every year and one yearly PMC meeting for parents at divisional level. The support given to PMCs and PTCs at provincial and national levels varies depending on the areas. In the Southern zone, for example, informants confirmed that ECCD officers support parents and preschool teachers, conduct awareness programmes and other related activities. In fact, ECCD officers and Preschool officers of the MoE visit preschools regularly and work as a team to support preschools, PMCs and PTCs at the divisional level, even if they admit that early childhood education projects are limited and fragile.
99. In other areas such as the Central and Eastern provinces, preschool teachers highlighted that they lack appreciation and support from authorities, especially when it comes to PTCs and PMCs. Support and coordination of early childhood education authorities need to be improved for the preschool development sector.

***The interviewed women feel generally empowered professionally, at school and in their relationship with authorities, as well as personally within their families and at home.***

100. Female respondents affirmed that they take leadership in community events, provide support to organise events at the preschool and they are capable and strong enough to build relationships with relevant early childhood education authorities. In Kandy (Central province), pre-school teachers highlighted that PTC members are independent and engage in social work in the community and support other PTC members of the district and provincial teacher committees. Mothers highlighted that, as parents, they are in a position to communicate with government officers to improve early childhood education services at the community level.

101. In the Eastern province, a mother stressed on the importance of decision making: “As women, we have to increase our decision-making capacity indeed. Because it will help to take good decisions to our children’s future too”. Another woman, also from Batticaloa district, explained how she runs consultation with others: “I, as a woman, mainly work closely with our divisional CRPO and discuss the things that we should adjust in our environment. For example, to design a playground area for our preschool, to get electricity, or when parents discuss with the teachers about giving a balanced diet to children. And I always used to discuss with it my husband and I hope it will make me more comfortable working as a mother.” Still in the Eastern province, in Ampara, a mother stated “Through the PMC, I developed skills and I am in a position to talk on the behalf of children with authorities. As a woman, I can develop positive relationships with relevant officers”, which means that she felt empowered and entitled to represent the kids in front of the authorities. Finally, several mothers explained how they were now able to increase their leadership skills, decision making skills and self-confidence level.

***The programme enhanced the perception and embedment that stakeholder had on thematic issues at school and wider in the areas of interventions.***

102. Some preschool teachers attended ToT training sessions in inclusive education and First Aid training which they were able to share to other teachers at local level. Teachers improved their knowledge through training programmes and they shared that knowledge with parents and teachers in order to use new techniques in activities. Teachers are aware and informed of the importance of running the preschools as a child friendly and maintain a nature friendly environment. The lack of support and assistance from ECCD officers was often seen as an obstacle to the ToT and the teachers' training and improved knowledge.
103. The participation and monitoring of local authorities and ECCD officers is very much needed to improve the quality of services of the preschool and the proper qualification of preschool teachers. The special attention should be provided to the unregistered preschools that run against the preschool guidelines and conduct activities that are harmful or not adapted to the children.

***The perception towards pre-school teachers and the importance of early childhood has generally improved but they still lack recognition from some groups.***

104. The preschool activities and behaviour change of children's education are crucial. Preschool teachers have increased their recognition from parents as they become more and more qualified. Parents generally support the development of preschool activities and participate in the strengthening of PTC and PMCs which become strong enough to support each other.
105. Teachers in the Eastern province state that the general public (families, local stakeholders) is not a problem to implement the early childhood education policy and engage a very successful relationship with parents among all the ethnic groups.
106. Parents are generally involved in their children’s education and growth. Evidence proves that they get to learn from preschool teachers and read articles about early childhood education and improve their knowledge in order to support children. Parent respondents in the Eastern province for example, confirmed that they are keen on supporting other parents and willing to be positive members in the PMC to take leadership and partnership in community early childhood education activities.



107. Nevertheless, parents interviewed in the Northern province highlighted that there is an issue that arises while engaging children to playing activities. Most parents are persuaded to do more educational rather than leisure activities. If a child is wounded, parents tend to point the fault to teachers.
108. Preschool teachers in the Eastern province state that there is a big lack of appreciation from the authorities. In the Panama Division some preschool teachers are suffering without food scarcity and faced severe difficulties during the COVID-19 crisis.

***The programme enabled stakeholders to intensify communication and implement activities in order to improve the Early Childhood Development sector and address a common policy for the benefit of the children of Sri Lanka. It did so by following a general intention of developing intercultural dialogue and reconciliation.***

109. The relationship between preschool teachers and state-stakeholders improved considerably in the last decade early childhood education policy design and implementation, ECE Bureau and other authorities are more coordinated and participate in PTC meetings where teachers can raise their issues and get some advice, even if teachers’ salary and infrastructure development of preschools remain central issues.
110. The exchange visit to Jaffna allowed the sharing and identification of the vast differences of preschool functioning and methods around the country. Teachers shared knowledge and teaching skills with other teachers, and established good communication with primary school teachers.
111. Local authorities in the Southern province suggested that the partner organisations involved in the programme need proper partnerships with authorities to implement early childhood education programmes to enhance the quality of preschools and teaching.
112. The gender component appeared not to be an issue at all, as most early childhood education professionals (teachers, MoE officials) were women. In the interview, there was not a single mention of exclusion or reduction of legitimacy based on gender, religion, ethnicity or location.
113. Respondents believe that people from any ethnicity and religious community participate in the early childhood education activities and that parents send children to community-based preschools regardless of the ethic and cultural background of the teachers and other children. Relationships among different ethnic groups are usually good, some respondents affirm that there is no any discrimination within parents and communities.
114. The exchanging trip that took place in the Northern province was particularly appreciated since it gathered teachers and authorities, not only from different provinces but also from different ethnic communities, allowing them to exchange and communicate on common issues and cooperation.

***Coordination seems to have improved between State and non-State stakeholders on early childhood education policy design and implementation although some challenges still need to be overcome.***

115. Evidence shows that the partners and authorities get generally together to implement early childhood education plans to enhance the quality of preschools. As per the ECE policy and preschool charter, authorities are responsible and need to give attention to find solutions for ECE matters and issues. For example, some primary schools are not following early childhood education guidelines from national and provincial authorities and select children for Grade 1 through an enrolment test. The partner in the Eastern province (EPPTA) complained to the MoE and they immediately requested primary schools not to conduct enrolment tests for Grade 1 students. The other partners generally led several discussions with the MoE, Zonal Director of the provincial MoE and built a positive partnership with the state-stakeholders.
116. Preschool teachers work as a team and as long as the MoE and other authorities participate in PTC meetings, teachers are able to raise their issues and get some advice. At the Central province, for example, the provincial MoE has the authorisation to work with Preschools. As mothers take leadership and provide support to organise events at the preschool and build relationships with relevant early childhood education authorities, they increased their communication with government officers to improve ECE services at the community level.
117. However, preschool teachers in several provinces highlighted that the support and coordination of early childhood education authorities need to be improved for the preschool development sector. Responsibility and coordination of ECE policy and authorities needs to improve specially between MoE and Preschool Section of the MoE.

***Solidarité Laïque still struggles to be perceived as a legitimate and effective actor regarding the improvement of the quality of pre-school education, in Sri Lanka mainly due to the limited budget.***

118. Solidarité Laïque’s activities were seen as very helpful and relevant for ECCD officers and developed work plans with the support of the MoE and ECCD officers to minimise the duplication of activities. In the Southern province, interviewed authorities such as the ECCD officer in Matara District were satisfied by the collaboration with Solidarité Laïque and stated that they will be able to continue the programme in remote areas of Hambantota.
119. ToT training sessions were particularly appreciated by teachers, parents and authorities. They were seen as very effective and helpful to improve knowledge, provide opportunities to meet teachers from other districts, share knowledge and experience. Preschool teachers are specially satisfied by ToT. In the Eastern Province teachers felt that ToT “are helpful to improve practical knowledge which teachers can apply in their work”.
120. Some informants however stated that there is a lack of trust from Solidarité Laïque’s partners which should be improved. Partners mostly find that the limited budget was sufficient to fulfil the project targets, but do not answer all the early childhood education sector issues which are structural. Obviously, it was not Solidarité Laïque’s mandate to solve all issues in the ECE sector in Sri Lanka, but this example reveals how the lack of effective communication concerning the delimitation of the programme and Solidarité Laïque’s role can affect the stakeholders’ perception of Solidarité Laïque’s accountability.
121. Overall, the legitimacy of Solidarité Laïque, as an outsider, Western actor, was not questioned. Its intentions to improve early childhood education were well-understood, and the appreciation of the activities conducted led to higher acceptance as an NGO embedded in the sector.

## F. Sustainability

### ***The alignment of the programme with the national policy and the commitment of the public authorities ensures the sustainability of the actions regarding quality improvement of early childhood education***

122. The evaluation confirms the programme responded to needs of the sector. The development of the national policy on early childhood education, the engagement and action taken to improve and certify the quality of the education delivered by preschool teachers, the early childhood charters and strategies designed at province are signs of the quest for a steady expansion of quality early childhood education in Sri Lanka. This is the results of continuous efforts from the national and provincial authorities, with the support from civil society actors, among which Solidarité Laïque, play a key part (as confirmed in the EGEP programmes evaluation). The ToT and other activities meant to leverage the quality of the preschool teachers, and the dialogue and peer-exchanges amongst them with parents and local authorities constitute another robust factor to further expand early childhood education in the country.
123. The evaluation gives credit to Solidarité Laïque for having designed activities after in-depth consultations and to align and adapt them where necessary, to the province-specific context and teachers’ needs. Such flexibility paid off, in terms of satisfaction and buy-in from the preschool teachers and public authorities.

### ***Competent partners on early childhood education but not necessarily able to sustain the programme without support from an umbrella organisation***

124. The evaluation confirmed the good knowledge of the partners of the early childhood and early childhood education sector. Partners who are members of Solidarité Laïque, such as CEMEA, confirmed the excellent level of these partners in the way they approach early childhood education, both from a pedagogical and organisational point of view. Moreover, these partners are recognised by the public authorities and have a real legitimacy to intervene in this sector with the local actors. The teaching community also recognises their professionalism and their ability to listen to their concerns and needs.
125. On the other hand, the evaluation also confirms the great disparity in the partners' capacities to carry out the activity and comply with the quality standards required by the programme. Partners are more or less financially solid and don't operate on an equal foot (depending on their history, experience in capacity building and internal resources). Some are experiencing internal difficulties, such as ACUT, which has not been able to assume the responsibility assigned to it by the programme. Others remain inherently fragile, such as EPPTA, even though the programme had foreseen specific capacity building and EPPTA had been operating for a long time in the Eastern province.
126. The evaluation highlights the difficulties in terms of **governance of the programme**. The staff assigned to the partners who were responsible for its implementation, did not know whether they were accountable to the partner's management or to the Sri Lanka office of Solidarité Laïque. This resulted in a relative withdrawal of the partners, which left the people dedicated to the programme interacting directly with the Solidarité Laïque office, without necessarily taking full ownership of the programme.

127. For its part, the **Solidarité Laïque office supported the partners beyond what was expected at the beginning of the programme**. The diagnosis of needs and the audit of each partner, which was recognised as excellent (see section on relevance), was not sufficient to guarantee the feasibility of the programme in optimal conditions. The interviews with the partners revealed a **lack of common understanding of certain concepts** (e.g. inclusive education, involvement of parents in preschool education, teacher unionism...) and a **mode of intervention** which was not necessarily that advocated by Solidarité Laïque (e.g. the notion of consultation with the public authorities differed from one partner to another). It was not possible for the Solidarité Laïque office to manage the entire programme with such different partners, without a more advanced monitoring and evaluation system. It is at this level that **several partners have shown their weaknesses**: reporting to Solidarité Laïque on the reality of the activities remains a challenge. The partners were effective when they acted as service providers, delivering the activities, taking into account the contextual constraints. But **the programme “Together for early childhood in Sri Lanka” requires a more advanced, holistic, less linear approach, aiming to act on the change of mentality, to make agents from different backgrounds and responsibilities work together**.
128. Solidarité Laïque has strengthened the monitoring of partners by allocating a person specifically in charge of relations with the partners, which is a positive point, which should be brought together for the future. It seems therefore that the partners require to be federated at a certain level, by the organisation, in order to ensure:
- A common understanding of the objectives of the programme;
  - Quality control in the implementation of activities (e.g. quality of training);
  - Stronger networking, so that partners can exchange their practices;
  - Strengthening monitoring and evaluation so that the programme can be more closely monitored by the organisation.

***The dialogue within the PMCs and the PTCs seems to be growing in importance, but remains to be animated in the long term.***

129. The evaluation shows that the activities have strengthened interactions between teachers, local authorities and partners, at least in terms of awareness of the value of pre-school education, and in terms of teaching practices. However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the programme has produced change in the intensity and quality of dialogue within the PMCs and PTCs. Some were functioning very well before the programme, and others failed to really take off, despite the programme's activities.
130. It can be concluded that the circulation of people (teachers, public agents....) remains complicated, even more so during the COVID period, but also in normal times. The slightest event (and Sri Lanka has many: elections, terrorist attacks, etc.) puts a strain on meetings. The bureaucratic system does not facilitate the fluidity of exchanges in any case. Nevertheless, the evaluation shows that these meetings are extremely appreciated by the teachers, that the parents see an interest in them, and that dialogue is established with the public authorities, who see them as a concrete means of applying national policy more effectively. On the other hand, it seems that the dialogue is blocked as soon as the discussions become requests (certainly legitimate, to ensure the proper development of the teaching profession in particular). Political expression is not easy in this highly politicised country, and the partners are not necessarily equipped to accompany the teachers in formulating their demands or to discuss them in a calm and constructive manner with the public authorities. The evaluation expresses doubt about the continuation of dialogue under these conditions, especially at the level of the PTCs. Some of them can quickly become empty shells, without interest. The evaluation considers that the

problem lies in the governance of early childhood at the level of zones, districts and provinces, and recognises that the public authorities do not necessarily want to cooperate with a foreign organisation on these aspects, which are highly political for them.

131. **The challenge will undoubtedly be to approach governance from a technical policy perspective, rather than a political one: “how to successfully decentralise national ECCD policy in Sri Lanka without interfering in the domestic politics?”.** The challenge for the next programme will be to identify the right approach.

***The sustainability of the programme will depend on the recognition by public authorities of the need to strengthen coordination, harmonisation of actors, and steering of early childhood policy***

132. The evaluation confirms that public authorities are increasingly willing to cooperate with parents and teachers. It cannot be said that the policy is decreed by the provinces and applied in a top-down manner. Consultation forums exist and are recognised (mainly PMC and PTC), members are encouraged to mobilise, and there is ample evidence that changes are made by public decision-makers to ensure that the policy corresponds to people's needs.
133. The fact remains that the public authorities are reluctant to recognise the added value of the support of this type of programme in terms of structuring the actors from the civil society with a view to improving the effectiveness of national policy. However, the evaluation remains convinced that the national policy will only be able to take off fully if coordination at the level of each province and between provinces is strengthened. There is a consensus among all actors - including politicians - that the extreme fragmentation creates misunderstandings and hindrances to the national policy implementation, and that teachers and parents have difficulty understanding how early childhood policy works in the country. There are currently strong policy developments, such as the creation of the Secretariat of State in Early Childhood, showing the government's desire to give even more impetus to early childhood policy. This is an opportunity to pursue this agenda.

***The need to build up a strike force to intervene more effectively***

134. The evaluation notes that Solidarité Laïque sought, from the beginning of the programme, to **establish relations with other organisations**, such as UNICEF or Aide et Action. The course of the programme and the difficulties encountered led to the observation that Solidarité Laïque alone did not have the capacity to generate change as envisaged in the logical framework and the final objectives of the programme. It is true that Solidarité Laïque has been well established in the country since 2005, and has certainly contributed to the emergence of child policy and political structuring in the 2010s.
135. **The NGO remains small with limited visibility** (compared to other Anglo-Saxon organisations for example). The local team is small and its capacity to intervene throughout the country is limited. The relays provided by the partners have been a relevant intervention method, but they require better cooperation with the organisation and stronger monitoring of their activities. The legal constitution of the Sri Lankan branch of Solidarité Laïque is a first step towards strengthening institutional recognition. However, this will not be sufficient to continue the activities without strengthening the teams so that they can intervene more effectively with the partners.
136. The future seems to lie in bringing together the strengths of different organisations, to act more effectively, to pool resources and to make the most of the assets of each. Joining forces with Aide et Action seems to be a unique opportunity.

## Conclusions

### ***Undeniable results in terms of the quality of pre-school education training and the commitment of parents and teachers in early childhood education***

The programme “Together for early childhood in Sri Lanka” was designed as a response to correctly diagnosed problems, resulting in particular from in-depth consultations and optimising the results acquired in networking local partners during previous programmes (EGEP 1 and 2). This programme stems from a demand from the public authorities to expand the results gained in the sector of early childhood policy in the Eastern province (i.e. Eastern Province Preschool Education Bureau).

Solidarité Laïque has provided the means for the local offices to intervene in the 5 provinces, in close cooperation with local partners. The partners were in charge of the implementation of the activities at the grassroots levels, ensuring the relevance of the activities to the provincial context. The evaluation confirms Solidarité Laïque’s capacity to adapt the programming of the activities despite the extremely unstable context of the legislative and presidential elections, the terrorist attacks and the pandemic.

The programme aimed at mobilising local actors (parents, teachers, public authorities) under the responsibilities of the partners with a view to i) co-building a response to the needs in early childhood education and ii) providing direct support to teachers (through the training offered to teachers, for example). This double level of intervention is a trademark of Solidarité Laïque. It should make it possible to produce institutional change at system level and at the same time to anchor the project in reality by involving teachers and parents, without whom no reform is possible. The evaluation highlights the particular achievements:

- **Numerous activities have taken place**, despite the elections, the attacks and the pandemic, which have led to results in improved quality of education and child care, which are visible and appreciated by the beneficiaries who feel endowed to cascade down their experience and knowledge gained (thanks to ToT).
- Solidarité Laïque showed great capacity for **adaptation and flexibility**, reacting to the pandemic by supporting teachers, tailoring their programme to the needs detected during the consultation and adjusting its own workplan when it realised it might have been too ambitious or not adequate.
- The continuous efforts to **promote a quality ECE** translated directly in higher parents’ implication and teachers’ interest in their own field.
- **Teachers’ skills** improved in many fields: they trained in languages, specific themes, exchanged tips with their peers, gained confidence by taking up responsibilities in PMCs and PTCS. As teachers are women, this contributed to empowering females in the communities.
- **The premises for an intercultural dialogue** were laid, and much appreciated, despite the limited number of inter-province exchanges lower than expected.
- **Dialogue platforms** have been launched or remobilised, at the level of the PMCs and the PTCS.
- In all provinces, all the local partners were able to sign Memorandum of Understanding with the authorities

Sri Lanka remains a country with a highly fragmented governance in early childhood education, making it almost impossible for any NGO of the size of Solidarité Laïque to influence national policy. Scaling up the experience gained in the Eastern province would probably have required a **strengthening of the local governance of the programme and its steering**.

- **In terms of division of labour**, the staff in charge of the programme who is assigned to each partner were torn between being accountable to Solidarité Laïque and meeting the demands of their employers. The staff in charge who was financed by the programme had a good knowledge of the programme, but often felt isolated, despite the effort of the Solidarité Laïque team to support them.
- **In terms of monitoring**, the Solidarité Laïque team could not sufficiently accompany, advise and guarantee the quality of the activities implemented by the partners. It endeavoured to help them as much as possible (thanks to a new person specifically in charge of following partners), within the limits of its resources and under the constraints inherent in the country, in addition to the new pandemic-related restrictions.
- The partners engaged in the programme differ much in terms of size, mandate, missions, resources, while the programme assigned them to pursue identical objectives. There was probably a **default of calibration** of activities according to the partners' capacities.

#### ***A real but still unequal dialogue with public authorities***

Solidarité Laïque initially put a great emphasis on advocacy toward the public authorities, with whom the dialogue can be delicate. At some point, the NGO had to shift its priorities and focused less on advocacy. Solidarité Laïque Sri Lanka team engaged in time-consuming and energy-consuming efforts to improve the cooperation with local authorities in charge of ECE, displaying full transparency, availability, inviting them to their activities and trying to abide by the rules via the signature of agreements. Yet, these countless efforts were not always reflected by the perceptions the authorities had of the NGO. Some public authorities were **critical of** the organisation of some of the services, the coordination support, and the interaction with the partners in charge of the implementation. The highly uncertain climate at all levels of public intervention makes the work of the partners intricate.

This climate is a given, and it seems in these conditions that the responses proposed by the programme to advance the implementation of the national policy were not necessarily adequate. The reason is probably that **the programme was too ambitious to intervene in the education system on its own**. The resources allocated were too scarce, the partners were insufficiently armed to advocate and illegitimate to influence on the political system. The Solidarité Laïque office was not sufficiently visible to be considered as a change agent in the policy of early childhood – even though its success was officially recognised in the Eastern province.

#### ***A programme aimed at systemic change, but designed as solution-solver***

The programme aimed to change mentalities and working methods, and to structure civil society actors (parents and preschool teachers) so that they contribute in a policy defined by political decision-makers.

In fact, this programme complies with a logical framework, this is similar to any classic development aid programmes, meant to provide services to fulfil identified needs on the short period.

This evaluation presumes that the programme would have benefited from a collaboratively designed **theory of change**, i.e., a holistic approach that would have identified the **levers** that Solidarité Laïque could reasonably activate to take long-term action at the level of the education system. The programme faced **too many contextual variables** that lied out of the sphere of control and influence of Solidarité Laïque, and have obstructed the achievement of the specific objectives, specifically the specific objective 3.

The evaluation considers the responses to the functioning of the national early childhood sector are multiple, intricate and inter-connected. This programme “Together for early childhood in Sri Lanka” could not provide a systemic answer to such a vast range of issues. It succeeded in many ways to upgrade the involvement and awareness of various stakeholders; it improved the quality of teaching content, teachers’ skills and confidence in various fields; fostered a more efficient liaison between teachers and authorities; and it contributed to streamline the ECD sector across several provinces. However, massive challenges remained obstacles to the full implementation of this programme. For a future stage, in order to induce systemic changes, Solidarité Laïque might want to be prepared to tackle the issue of decentralised governance of the early childhood system, and the absolute need of cooperation with the central and local authorities.



## Lesson learned

Below are the lessons learned through this programme, which can be used for future programmes.

- **The capitalisation of past experiences**, based on the evaluations and orientations of the FISONG and the AFD, has made it possible to deepen the diagnoses with each partner and on each territory. The excellence of the diagnosis can lead to the establishment of a programme that is relevant to the needs but not calibrated to the capacities of the organisation and its partners.
- **The networking built with local partners and teachers** in the early childhood sector and project management is essential to ensure a fertilisation of practices between actors (preschool teachers, partners) who do not necessarily know each other and have little opportunity to exchange. The inter-provincial activities proved to be very useful, appreciated, and visibly continued the discovery of practices, leaving political and religious considerations aside.
- **An in-depth consultation with educational and political actors**, to gauge the capacity of potential partners to implement the programme, according to the principles defended by Solidarité Laïque (cooperative work, contextualisation at the local level, district and zone). The consultation was essential for the planned activities to be properly implemented despite the necessary adaptations and unexpected events.
- **Solidarité Laïque's ability to question its own practices** in order to adapt them to the needs of the context and to avoid normative or ready-made approaches has enabled the programme to implement activities in chaotic conditions. This flexibility was made possible by arbitration between partners, local actors, partners, the Solidarité Laïque office in Sri Lanka and in France, with systematic validation by AFD. It presupposes excellent trust between actors, linked to a good circulation of information and transparency in practices. This was the case in this programme.
- The quality of a diagnosis should not, however, lead the organisation to seek to **respond to all the problems identified**, even if each one is key for the Sri Lanka's education sector. A programme can contribute to a systemic approach (as in this case with early childhood policy) without necessarily seeking to activate all the levers that will enable this systemic approach to be implemented. It is rare that a single programme or organisation can influence the driving of change in an education system, especially over a period of time as short as 5 years.
- **Concluding agreements with new partners takes time**. Local administrative constraints to formalise agreements are numerous. Similarly, it takes time for partners to understand the objectives of the programme and the principles of action of Solidarité Laïque. Organisations need to understand and trust each other. Partners need to establish a realistic plan of action, and be staffed with the right people to implement it, and this takes time. Likewise, the conclusion of MOU does not guarantee the smooth implementation of activities is the MOU is not fully endorsed and understood by the public authority's staff.

- **The mobilisation of Solidarité Laïque inhouse members was an asset.** One of the strengths of Solidarité Laïque is the collective of associations, which includes teachers' unions. They provided inputs on the structuration of teachers. However, the evaluation found that it remains difficult to mobilise French members for a programme without a period of mutual acquaintance with the local actors. This happened with the CEMEA, which discovered the excellent level of EDC and non-formal education of the local partners, even though the structure had been mobilised to exchange for reciprocity and shared learning. Tapping into the inhouse expertise is a clear asset, but should be best prepared.
- **The success of structuring depends on the capacity of preschool teachers** to understand the purpose of structuring, and to adhere to its ultimate goal - which is their involvement in the definition and implementation of public policy, while demanding a decent status. At present in Sri Lanka, preschool teachers are poorly paid, subject to political influence and often under pressure from the parent community when they pay them. There is a risk that this type of programme will overstretch them, through their involvement in teacher training schemes, meetings with parents in PMCs and sometimes in PTCs. In addition, they are often mothers who are responsible for the education of their own children and the running of the household. They do not have time off work to engage in trade union activities. The programme operated cautiously and paid attention to the politically-sensitive context. It was perhaps too early, given the uneven political maturity of the preschool teachers and the fragility of their status.

## Recommendations

1. **Explore the possibility of working on the governance of the decentralisation of the national early childhood education policy.** The evaluation considers that there is an unexplored field for NGOs to support the government in identifying the right levers for policy to be adapted to local contexts and in line with national guidelines:
  - The programme would design with public authorities, partners, and teachers and parents a collaborative approach (including method, process, and tools) that will be needed to implement the national policy. The NGO in charge could play the role of moderator of the reflection. Today, it is not possible for the evaluators to provide ready-made recommendations.
    - First because the conditions of the evaluation did not allow to co-build the recommendations that would be actionable with Solidarité Laïque.
    - Secondly, because the modalities for a fruitful collaborative approach should be thought with the authorities, teachers, partners and parents. They cannot be stated through an evaluation report. What counts will be the capacity of the NGO to trigger and moderate the dialogue between the actors and find the right modality for interaction and hence implementation of the national policy. Getting such a dialogue is complex and might constitute a project on its own. For example, in accordance with the authorities, and maybe letting them take the lead, the NGO could support the organisation of a national forum based on large consultation to identify all stakeholders’ needs. Then, drawing from the list of demand, the NGO could jointly translate them with public authorities in public policies and explore with them how to address them properly.
  - The NGO would conduct a social and institutional diagnosis, conduct international benchmarking to inform the national policy, highlight local best practices, and discuss their transferability across the country.
  - The NGO would continue to provide capacity building activities to empower all actors in the early childhood education sector, to help them express their ideas, establish a constructive dialogue, respect divergent opinions, adopt an analytical approach, accept criticism, etc.
2. **Continue to support the PTCs via resources and technical support,** which appear to be the place where teachers dialogue and learn to build a credible voice to be considered at the political level. It is a question of maintaining the approach of Solidarité Laïque aimed at structuring preschool teachers, without this support systematically leading to the creation of a union. The achievement of this goal is up to the teachers, and Solidarité Laïque should not arbitrate, nor should its partners. In order to create autonomy and sustainability, SL should let the PTCs take the initiative regarding the frequency of their meetings, once they seem to be functioning and embedded in habits. However, PTCs require budget to allow meetings and exchanges. Without support, PTCs might not be able to implement their mission properly. Today, SL is the support and hub of such platforms.

**3. Refocus the project on activities that have been successful in the Sri Lankan education system:**

- Training of Trainers (ToT) should be continued, as Sri Lanka is beginning to build a pool of female teacher trainers capable of passing on their knowledge and practices. To ensure sustainability, ToT should not be a stand-alone activity and should be integrated into a larger programme. However, the evaluation team did not have sufficient data to assess the respective benefits of each of the 3 trainings, and is therefore unable to recommend one over the others.
- Awareness campaign also proved to be efficient and triggered parents’ involvement.

**Operational recommendations in programme design:**

**4. Adjust budgets allocated to planned activities and operational objectives.** The objectives of the planned activities and specific objectives should be well correlated first with the scale of the target (the provinces are all specific and require specific interventions); these adjustments should then be made according to the programme's capacity to create change - not just to implement the activity. If Solidarité Laïque intends to scale up and intervene in more provinces with the local partnership model, it will be necessary to:

- Properly equip the team in Sri Lanka with the human and financial resources to support the partners.
- Provide sufficient activities to bring about a change in attitudes or behaviours. The system of indicators should measure performance rather than progress of the activity. For example, the awareness campaigns (R1A1) are designed to upgrade the degree of parental concern about preschool education, but were measured in number of awareness campaigns carried out, and not as assessment of parents’ awareness (no data on impact). Therefore, surveys could be distributed twice a year, before and after awareness campaigns for a given sample, and grade the degree of awareness with simple questions (“Out of 10, how would you rate the importance of preschool?”, “What do children learn in preschool”, etc). Another example is found with the various objectives to increase the dialogue between several stakeholders (preschool and elementary school teachers, with public authorities, etc). The degree of dialogue was measured by the number of meetings held, which does not reflect the quality of the dialogue. In addition to the number of meeting or emails exchanged, indicators could be added to assess the perception of the quality of the relation: is the tone cordial or formal, do the stakeholders spontaneously reach out to share information, is it one-way (always the same that initiate the conversation) or balanced. These indicators will allow to collect factual data but also perceptions, which will help finetune the analysis and better determine the challenges. With public authorities in particular (e.g., Children Secretariat in charge of ECCD), there was a clear mismatch between the activities reported and the officials’ perception of collaboration.
- Strengthen the monitoring of activities (preparation, quality control of activities conducted with partners and closer monitoring and evaluation to continuously improve and modify activities if necessary).

## **Operational recommendations in the implementation of the programme**

5. **Strengthen the capacity of partners to manage a programme** in a given territory by providing strong support at the beginning of the programme, particularly with regard to Solidarité Laïque's expectations of the partner. This steering capacity must include:
  - Increasing the frequency of communication with AeA (weekly meetings or calls, introducing them via email to government officials, common brainstorming and working sessions to train them on project management, budget, monitoring and evaluation, etc) to ensure a smoother transition in a latter programme. AeA should take on increasing supervision responsibilities, strengthen their network and capacities to be able to independently run the programme.
  - Strengthening the provincial partners' skills in monitoring and evaluation, which the organisations (Solidarité Laïque and AeA) should be able to support. The quality of the services offered, the measurement of results and the demonstration of the added value of this type of programme to public authorities are at stake. SL could reserve a part of its future budget so that the first activities conducted are training of project managers. With or without the help of monitoring and evaluation consultancy, in-country programme managers of the partners should receive a basic training on how to set up indicators or collect information.
  - Strengthening the capacity of partners in particularly difficult areas (such as in the isolated North, where populations are more vulnerable), which requires more resources.
  - Clarification of responsibilities between Solidarité Laïque and partners, based on an audit of organisational and project management capacities, adapted to the context of each province. A model of co-responsibility should be developed so that the person hired by the partner is truly responsible and accountable for the programme, knowing that the project is not carried out by the partner who employs him/her.
  - Strengthening the capacity to plan activities and constantly update the potential risks analysis to identify early on alleviating and remedying mechanisms. This involves better anticipating blocking events, which are foreseeable risks such as national elections.
6. **Considering a convergence of the strengths of the organisations involved in early childhood education**, in this case Solidarité Laïque and Aide et Action (AeA), based on an analysis of the comparative advantages of each:
  - AeA has greater budgetary strength than Solidarité Laïque, has less experience in the field of early childhood in Sri Lanka, but can learn from experiences in many other countries, particularly on the governance of education systems that include early childhood.
  - Solidarité Laïque has 15 years of experience in this sector and plays the card of collective construction with local partners. Its PCPA approach, developed in France and elsewhere, seems to be an option to be studied for Sri Lanka in terms of the multi-actor approach and the empowerment of local actors. This approach would require continuous resources over a long period of time (8-10 years) but would bring about changes, co-constructed with the authorities and the beneficiaries of the national policy on early childhood. In addition, Solidarité Laïque has a network of members who can contribute their expertise as needed, both in the development of educational policy content and in the mobilisation of decision-makers, the structuring of teachers or the implementation of educational reforms.

The evaluation recommends a programme jointly piloted by AeA and Solidarité Laïque, and does not recommend a direct and immediate transfer of the programme to AeA, should Solidarité Laïque withdraw from Sri Lanka. This requires that the Solidarité Laïque office in Sri Lanka be maintained, and that the link between the French and Sri Lankan teams remain active (particularly in terms of capacity building and programme governance and management).

The questions below are answered with a view to providing hands-on and straightforward recommendations for a future project on early childhood education.

**What would be the advocacy axis to be encouraged as a priority? What could fuel this advocacy?**

**Answer:**

- To set up the dialogue with the provinces and the partners
- To sustain the PTCs and ensure their operationality across the country.
- To develop cross-dialogue amongst provincial authorities and PTCs and teachers, in order
  - to keep on fostering the intercultural dialogue at national level and,
  - to contribute to a common vision on the operationalisation of the national policy.

**What opportunities and risks do you see for this advocacy?**

**Answer on opportunities**

- There are opportunities if Solidarité Laïque uses the proper channels to implement programmes; the MoE and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs of Sri Lanka expect support from I/NGOs to work on relevant subject areas.
- Solidarité Laïque has several years of working experience in Sri Lanka, it is crucial to find an avenue to take decisions together with the relevant authorities to implement activities at the grass-root level. Solidarité Laïque is unlikely to perform this task by itself, and preferably with other NGOs and international organisations, specifically UNICEF.
- If possible, it is good to have baseline information/findings (may be out of this evaluation) and develop the project plan/ programme(stage-3) with relevant line ministries. Measuring the results of advocacy is challenging, but proxies do exist and should be tracked (e.g., using descriptors to reflect the progress in the quality of the dialogue amongst provinces and partners).
- If the joint design is impossible, then continue to systematically share the detailed project plan and the budget at the beginning of the project introduction and remain flexible to adjust activities as per the requirements/ needs of the country. SL showed it was possible (e.g., meeting with provincial education authorities and start-up workshops in all five provinces and sharing of information with Children's Secretariat in charge of ECCD).

### **Answer on risks**

- The risks are depending on the different situations encountered at local level (socioeconomic context, interplay between actors...). Therefore, it would be relevant to have national-level project discussion and approvals to minimise risks and take collective decisions at the provincial and district level.
- Including new project locations might not be adequate. This programme has demonstrated the capacity of partners to operate with Solidarité Laïque and results could be sustained. Expanding locations will require more resources, that are unlikely to be raised.
- Solidarité Laïque needs sufficient competent staff in the project team to continue dialogues with line ministries, participate in ECD meetings, monitor activities and conduct progress reviews with relevant authorities. This has a cost and will require increased budget.

**What perception do the public authorities have of SL and its actions? In a perspective of progressive appropriation by public actors in the preschool education sector, what could be put in place in the future to facilitate this relationship and increase their involvement? What alliances should SL develop in this direction?**

### **Answer:**

- Through continuous dialogue, local partners have built partnerships with the public authorities. The public actors (i.e., MoE, ECCD officers or Coordinators – these officers are appointed by the Children secretariat and attached in district secretariats and divisional secretariats, ECD Bureau and other ECD related grassroots level officers).
- The Central authorities are Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (Children Secretariat in charge of ECCD). Ministry of Education has a provincial structure with MoE Directors, Preschool Coordinators and preschool officers. There are ECCD officers and coordinators at district level and at divisional level. Considering this intricate legal setting and organisation on early childhood policy, there is a need for SL to think about the appropriate support to trigger harmonious cooperation between these levels. Such cooperation is an immense challenge. It should be done in cooperation with intergovernmental actors such as Unicef, as the organisation enjoys more legitimacy to operate at national level and advocate on the political scene than SL. However, the values of SL are numerous: the NGO succeeded in some provinces to mobilise the actors (at provincial, district and divisional levels). The NGO also demonstrated that working across provinces was possible. There are hence lessons learned from the current programme that could be used to build the cooperation with an organisation like Unicef.

**What training for preschool teachers should be prioritised for a possible 3rd stage of the programme?**

**Answer:**

- The programme conducted training on Inclusive Education, Child Protection and First Aid, it is important to give refresher training on the same subjects to those trainers. There is also a need to consider the quality of the ToT. There are risks that the knowledge of trained preschool teachers would not be sufficient to be a trainer for peer preschool teachers.
- In-service training for preschool teachers on the same subject areas (i.e., Child Protection, First Aid and Inclusive Education) are necessary, because most of the teachers hold ECD Diploma.
- Safeguard the quality of the qualifications of the resource persons of the ToT is key.
- There is a need to consider the training materials, as trainers cannot work without a proper training toolkit, and the concern on the distance to the training venue to get the maximum participation of preschool teachers.

**Concerning the structuring of teachers around Preschool Teachers' Committees (PTCs), is the expansion of these committees at provincial and national levels adequate and encouraged? To go further, what form should this structuring take (informal grouping, association, union, national or provincial, etc.)?**

**Answer:**

- As recognised PTCs are strong in most of the districts, the MoE, ECCD officers and coordinators are supporting preschool teachers to conduct different trainings, awareness programmes. It is a very strong forum to discuss matters of member teachers and find solutions as a team. As per the evaluation discussions, PTCs are independent and preschool teachers are in a position to take responsibilities, stand for their rights and take actions as a team.
- PTCs have functioned with more or less efficiency and those are strong to make a voice on behalf of the preschool community.
- PTC is not a new concept introduced to preschool teachers but needs to be reinforced, moderated and sustained. Their impact is likely to happen at national level if there are enough well-functioning PTCs. The future programme should keep strengthening PTCs and encourage preschool teachers to be resourceful through the committee.
- Finally, the evaluation team did not collect sufficient information to compare and recommend one level or form of support.



**SL has so far been involved in facilitating collective action and advocacy carried out mainly by Sri Lankan actors. Is SL Sri Lanka still legitimate in this role? What changes can be envisaged in SL's positioning towards Sri Lankan actors?**

**Answer:**

- Solidarité Laïque is in a position to be a facilitator and can take collective actions with the support of the line ministries and authorities. This role is effective when it consists in making different actors working together, such as at PTC level. It is less effective when it should deal with a range of public authorities which do not operate consistently despite a clear-cut national framework for early childhood education.
- Solidarité Laïque as the facilitator should contribute to implement the national ECD Policy and provincial ECD action plans should also be considered. This should be done in cooperation with other NGOs to constitute a convergence of forces and be more impactful. Cooperation with UNICEF is key, for its effective advocacy role. In isolation, Solidarité Laïque is unlikely to implement the component 3 on advocacy.
- There is a need to consider the capacity of the Sri Lankan actors/partners to:
  - Enforce the programme activities (ToT, support to PTCs and advocating to public authorities);
  - Interact with political authorities with on the longer-term for a constructive dialogue on early childhood education;
  - Monitor programme implementation and assess impacts.
  - The capacity building and monitoring support to partners is crucial to improve the impacts of the programme and the capacity of the partners. This is of the responsibility of Solidarité Laïque to strengthen both dimensions.

## Appendices

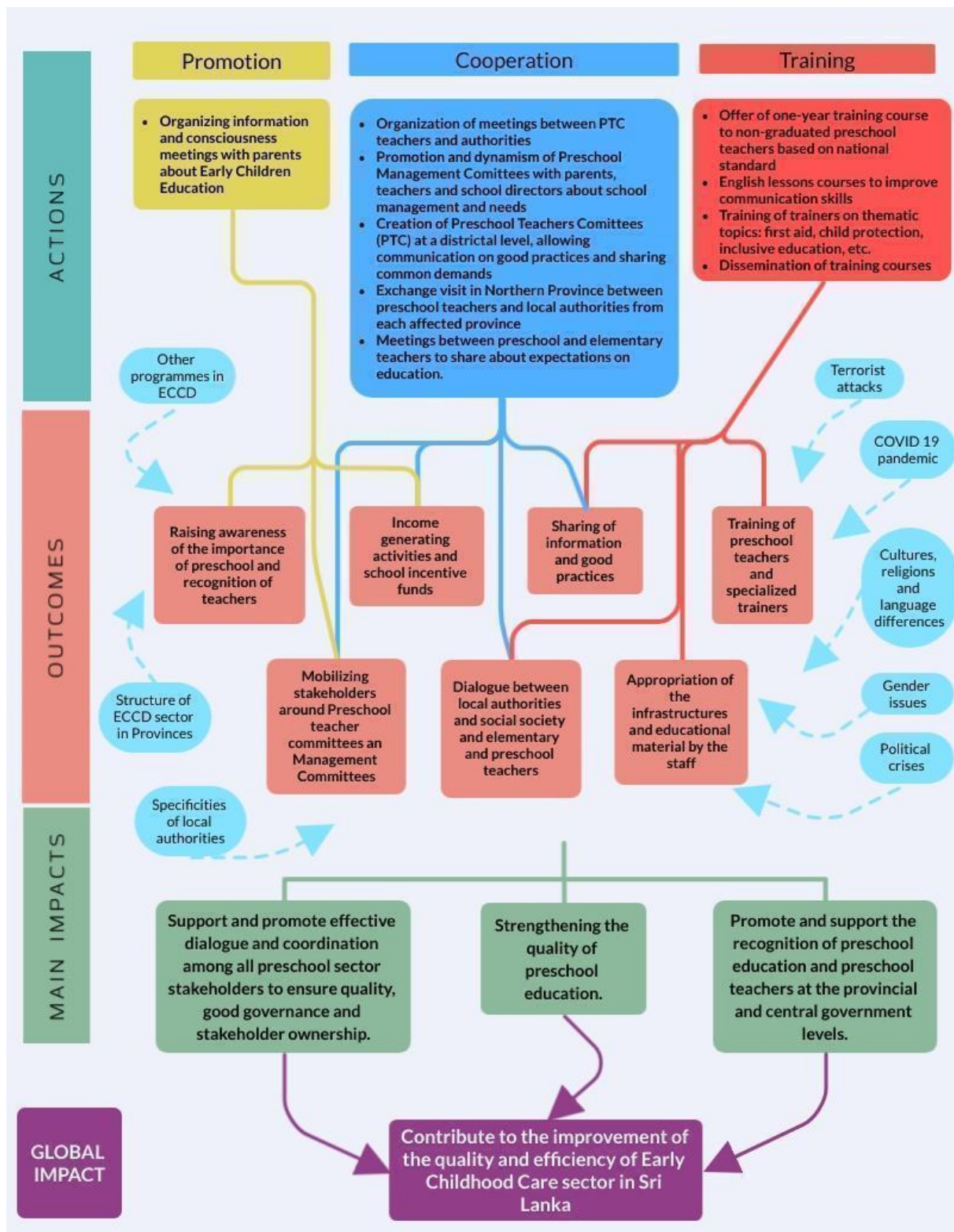
- a. Theory of change
- b. Evaluation matrix
- c. Informants list
- d. List of interviewees
- e. Interview questions
- f. Evaluation team
- g. Documentation list

### A. Theory of Change

The purpose of the logic intervention diagram is to provide a display of the programme implementation, from the concrete actions to the global impacts sought. It will serve as a reference for the evaluation, when assessing the greeting of the programme by its actual beneficiaries.

A difference can be made in the diagram between outcomes, main impacts and global impacts.

1. The first type represents the **immediate or short-term effects** of the actions implemented during the programme. For instance, the organisation of meetings between preschool and elementary teachers has a very promptly effect in the dialogue between several stakeholders.
2. The second level of effects, defined as main impacts in the diagram, exemplifies the concrete **mid to long-term intentional goals of the programme**, which have been defined at its origins, with the impact of external factors. In this context, those are strengthening the educational strategy of Sri Lanka, enhancing the development and learning experience of the children, supporting a continuous dialogue regarding the ECCD sector between different actors, and promoting the recognition and appreciation of ECCD and its workers at different scales.
3. Finally, a third level of effects, defined as **global impact**, corresponds to the wider outcome of the programme, which is a consequence of the main impacts and outcomes of the actions undertaken.



## B. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation questions	Assessment criteria
<b>1. <u>RELEVANCE</u></b>	<p>1.1 The programme is in continuity with policy initiatives regarding Early Childhood and pre-school education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2004: definition of a National Early Childhood policy setting up sector priorities and coordination mechanisms</li> <li>• Aug 2020: creation of a cabinet in charge of Early Childhood under the supervision of the State Education Ministry.</li> </ul>
	<p>1.2 The specific objectives of the programme (SO1, SO2, SO3) were thought accordingly to the overall objective of improving the quality of pre-school education in Sri Lanka (national policy and provincial implementation strategy).</p>
	<p>1.3 The 3 specific objectives of the programme were well thought to trigger networking and peer learning amongst teachers, as well as interregional and intercultural dialogues amongst communities</p>
	<p>1.4 Solidarité Laïque identified the needs of children, families and preschool teachers with all these categories, as well as partners and local-national authorities (although the children are not the direct target of the programme).</p>
	<p>1.5 The programme (objectives, activities, areas, partners) was built according to the in-depth diagnosis of needs of the local context (national, provincial, local) and of the local partners that are responsible for the implementation of the programme.</p>
	<p>1.6 The identification of partners results from documented selection and analysis of their capacities and needs to implement smoothly the programme.</p>
	<p>1.7 The diagnosis was shared and accepted by the local and national authorities and relevant stakeholders.</p>
	<p>1.8 There was a strategy from Solidarité Laïque to differentiate the interventions amongst the 5 provinces, according to pre-identified criteria and to the needs expressed by the stakeholders and partners.</p>
<b>2. <u>COHERENCE OF THE PROGRAMME</u></b>	<p>2.1 The design of the 3 specific objectives was done in consultation with partners and stakeholders with a view to triggering complementarity of their mandate, actions and other projects they might be part of.</p>
	<p>2.2 The partners understood and supported the programme structure and the interplay between the 3 specific objectives</p>

	2.3 The programme was set with a view to triggering interplay between actions across the 3 specific objectives and preventing silo-effect
<b>3. <u>EFFICIENCY</u></b>	3.1 Solidarité Laïque mobilised enough resources to reach its initial goals for Stage 1 and Stage 2)
	3.2 Resources were efficiently redistributed and reused given the change of plans and due to the socio-political context in Sri Lanka, as well as the spread of the COVID-19.
	3.3 The Solidarité Laïque team in Sri Lanka benefited from support of the Solidarité Laïque team in France.
	3.4 The Solidarité Laïque team in Sri Lanka was in capacity of steering the programme with the partners and provide support to each where needed
	3.5 Resources were adjusted according to the needs of each partner (e.g. in terms of human resources), prior to and during the implementation of the programme.
	3.6 The programme was planned according to the needs of the area of intervention (e.g. characteristics of the teaching community, particularities of children (e.g. disabilities) and the capacity or level of involvement of local stakeholders (e.g. parents support to preschool education).
	3.7 EPPTA benefited from capacity building support, with a view to sustaining its operational and organizational capacities.
	3.8 Planning and programming were of the responsibility of each partner who operated in cooperation with, and reported to SL team in Sri Lanka.
<b>4. <u>EFFECTIVENESS</u></b>	4.1 Stakeholders have been increasingly aware of the need to develop, steer and engage in early childhood education (teachers, parents, local authorities...)
	4.2 Stakeholders have been committed to the PMC and PTCs: attending meetings, contributing, reporting and any other activity showing their engagement in early childhood education.
	4.3 Parents are engaged in PMC and contribute to the functioning and development of the preschools.
	4.4 The programme has triggered the implication of stakeholders in the setting and/or the management of PTCs and PMCs (including local authorities).
	4.5 Teachers and trainers have exchanged views and practice on early childhood education, more frequently and on relevant topics for the quality of their teaching. Multiple levels have been sought (inter-district, inter-provinces)

	4.6 Action plan have been designed and/or enforced at district/provincial levels.
	4.7 Preschool and primary schools teachers have engaged relations (discussions, clarification of their responsibilities, common actions on school transition...)
	4.8 ToT has been enforced, organised, with a view to discussing, transferring, questioning the pedagogies and to stimulating intercultural dialogue
	4.9 Intercultural dialogue has expended and contributed to SO3 objectives, since SO3 is not meant to be implemented.
	4.10 Number of preschool teachers who were registered and who passed the certification.
	4.11 Teachers feel more fluent in English.
	4.12 Number of preschool teachers who were trained on specific themes (disabilities, first aid, child protection).
<b>5. IMPACTS:</b>	5.1 Evidence that the programme enhanced the ownership of the pre-school education sector, by local authorities and stakeholders.
	5.2 Evidence that professional capacities of teachers and trainers have been enhanced.
	5.3 Evidence that Intercultural dialogue and reconciliation has progressed
	5.4 5.2 Evidence that expansion of PMCs and PTCs to the provincial and national levels are supported by authorities.
	5.5 There are signs or evidence that the programme empowered women professionally, at school and in their relationship with authorities, as well as personally within their families and at home.
	5.6 The programme enhanced the perception and embedment of thematic issues at school and wider in the areas of interventions (e.g. in families).
	5.7 The role of pre-school teachers and the importance of early childhood is increasingly recognized by various categories (families, local and national authorities, other stakeholders), with evidence.
	5.8 Dialogue has spurred amongst stakeholders, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, location or political commitment, and enabled to address early childhood policy and implementation for the only benefit of the children of Sri Lanka.

	5.9 Coordination has improved between State and non-State stakeholders on early childhood education policy design and implementation..
	5.10 Solidarité Laïque is perceived as a legitimate and effective actor regarding the improvement of the quality of pre-school education, in Sri Lanka.

<b>6. <u>SUSTAINABILITY:</u></b>	6.1 Partners are able to further implement the programme and the national policy on early childhood and interact with families, preschool teachers, local and national authorities.
	6.2 PTCs members are committed to pursue their engagement into the structured governance and further development of early childhood education.
	6.3 Dialogue is likely to develop further amongst the provinces and local authorities and amongst people (communities with preschool teachers and families)
	6.4 Discussions launched within PMC; PTC enabled to weave sustainable links between all the stakeholders.
	6.5 Teachers are being consulted by authorities (Secretary of State) before taking actions in the realms of Early Childhood Care and pre-school education.
	6.6 Alliances between Solidarité Laïque and partners and other NGOs (AeA) or organisations (e.g. UNICEF) has gained momentum.
	6.7 The programme was resource-wise adapted and flexible enough to continue, despite political uncertainty, the ongoing devolution of power to provinces, and the aftermaths of the crisis such as pandemic
	6.8 There are signs showing efforts to trigger the recognition of early childhood in Sri Lanka (SO3).



## C. List of Informants

<b>Operators</b>	
Solidarité Laïque Team Paris	Judith Chavalarias Auray Aun
Solidarité Laïque Team Sri Lanka	Abbas Hithayathullah Anees Musappar Kumudu Jeewani Weththasinghe
<b>French partners / experts</b>	
SNUipp	Michel Olivier
CEMEA	Mathieu
Trainers/experts	Michel Debon

## D. List of interviewees

PROVINCE	DISTRICT	CATEGORY/MEDIUM(S/T)	MODE OF INTERVIEW	No of person interviewed
Eastern	Trincomalee	Partner EPPTA	FGD	2
		MoE/ ECE Bureau	FGD	2
		Preschool Teachers/PTC(S)	FGD	5
		Parents/PMC(S)	FGD	5
		Preschool Teacher/PTC(S)	Field visit-Structured Interview	1
		Preschool Teachers/PTC(T)	5- Teleconferences	4
		Parents/PMC(T)	5- Teleconferences	1
	Ampara	MoE/ ECCD Assi Director	Teleconference	1

		Preschool Teachers/PTC(S)	2- Teleconferences	2
		Parents/PMC(S)	2- Teleconferences	2
		Preschool Teachers/PTC(T)	5- Teleconferences	2
	Batticaloa	Parents/PMC(T)	5- Teleconferences	4
Northern	Vavuniya/ Jaffna	Partner Aruthal	Teleconference	2
		MoE/ Provincial Director	Teleconference	1
		Preschool Teachers/PTC(T)	5- Teleconferences	6
		Preschool Teachers/PTC(T)	5- Teleconferences	4
	Mannar	Partner RDF	Teleconference	2
		Preschool Teacher/PTCs(T)	5- Teleconferences	6
		Parents/PMC(T)	5- Teleconferences	5
Southern	Matara	Partner Susara	FGD	3

		Project Coordinator	Structured Interview	1
		Preschool Teachers/PTC	FGD	2
	Due to <b>COVID</b> - Not allowed to visit offices	MoE/ECCD Provincial Director	Teleconference	1
		ECCD Officer	Teleconference	1
		Parents/PMC	4-Teleconferences	4
	Hambantota	Partner ALSDC	FGD	2
	Due to COVID- Not allowed to visit offices	ECCD District Coordinator	Teleconference	1
		ECCD Officer- Divisional	Teleconference	1
		MoE-Project Coordinator	Teleconference	1
		NGO Coordinator	Teleconference	1
		Preschool Teacher/PTC	Field visit-Structured Interview	1
	Due to COVID- Not allowed FGD	Preschool Teachers/PTC	5-Teleconferences	4
		Parents/PMC	3-Teleconferences	2
Central	Kandy	Partner NECY	FGD	2

		ECE District Coordinator	Structured Interview	1
		Preschool Teachers/PTC	FGD	5
		Parents/PMC	FGD	6
		MoE-Deputy Secretary/ Director ECE/ PS officers	FGD	3
	Due to COVID- Not allowed FGD	Preschool Teachers/PTC	2-Teleconferences	2
		Parents/PMC	2-Teleconferences	1
Western	Colombo	Solidarité Laïque ECE Coordinator	Structured Interview	1
	Due to COVID- Not allowed to visit offices	ECCD Officer	Teleconference	1
		DO	Teleconference	1
		Director- Children Secretariat	Teleconference	1

## E. Interview questions

The questions were tailored for each type of stakeholders.

### Operators (Solidarité Laïque Paris/Colombo)

1. Would you say that SL identified the needs of the targeted population of the programme in order to implement it? (C1)
2. To what extent did SL design the 3 specific objectives after having consulted its partners and stakeholders ? Did it complement SL's mandate and other actions it is committed to? (C2)
3. Would you say that the SL team in Sri Lanka benefited from the needed support from SL headquarters in Paris? (C2)

4. Do you think each partner cooperated and reported its management and activities to SL? Were there problems in communicating? (C3)
5. Would you say the different stakeholders within the education sector are now more prone to listen to and dialogue with each other, in a peaceful climate? (C5)
6. To what extent do you think SL's links with partners and other organizations have been strengthened, thanks to this programme (AeA, UNICEF)? Please be specific. (C6)
7. Would you say enough flexibility and resources were allocated to this project to make it sustainable throughout its whole schedule, despite external events and threats? (C6)

#### **Partners (Local and French)**

1. Would you say that the specific objectives of the programme triggered networking between preschool teachers, partners and authorities? (C1)
2. In your opinion, did SL identify the needs of the targeted population of the programme in order to implement it? Please be specific / give examples (C1)
3. To what extent did SL adapt its intervention to the needs and circumstances of the stakeholders and partners in each targeted province? (C1)
4. Would you say that you understood and supported the programme's structure and carry the 3 specific objectives while intervening in the field? (C2)
5. Do you think SL mobilised enough resources (financial or human) to achieve the initial goals for stage 1 and 2? Were they efficient and well redistributed? How were they managed? (C2)
6. To what extent were the resources adjusted according to the needs of each partner prior to and during the implementation of the programme? (C3)
7. Would you say EPPTA benefited from capacity building support from SL? Did it help sustaining its operational and organizational capacities? (C3)
8. Do you think each partner cooperated and reported its management and activities to S? Were there problems in communicating? Please give examples. (C3)
9. How would you define the relationship between the stakeholders of the education sector? Would you say they are now more prone to listen to and dialogue with each other, in a peaceful climate? (C5)
10. How would you assess the importance of early childhood education and the role of pre-school teachers, now that the programme has ended? Please be specific (C5)
11. Would you say issues related to early childhood policies are more easily addressed, in a cross-cutting way between people of various gender, ethnicity, location and role? How so? (C5)
12. To what extent would you say SL's actions are effective when it comes to improving the quality of pre-school education? Please give specific examples? Would you say SL is now regarded as a legitimate actor within the education sector, by authorities, families and teachers? (C5)
13. Would you say you have sufficiently gained in autonomy to further conduct similar programme activities on your own? (C6)

14. Would you say external events and threats created trouble regarding your organisation? Were enough flexibility and resources allocated to the project to make it sustainable? (C6)

#### **National and Local governmental institutions**

1. Would you say that the SL programme connects and takes into account the national policy regarding early childhood education? Does it empower the national will for the sector? (C1)
2. Would you say you have been increasingly aware of the need to develop, steer and engage in early childhood education? Please be specific. (C4)
3. Has the programme triggered your implication in PMCs and the preschool management (in the case of local authorities)? (C4) (in the case of local authorities and preschool directors)
4. Have you exchanged views with teachers and other stakeholders on different topics and methods about childhood education? (C4)
5. Would you say issues related to early childhood policies are more easily addressed, in a cross-cutting way between people of various gender, ethnicity, location and role? How so? (C5)
6. How would you assess your relationship with non-state stakeholders on early childhood education policy design and implementation? Would you say it is now easier to collaborate with them and progress or go further on these topics? (C5)
7. To what extent would you say SL's actions are effective when it comes to improving the quality of pre-school education? Please give specific examples. (C5)
8. To what extent do you believe dialogue with other authorities, families and teachers regarding early childhood and pre-school education is likely to be sustained through the next weeks, months or years? (C6)

#### **Parents and PMC members**

1. How would you assess the importance of early childhood education and the role of pre-school teachers, now that the programme has ended? Please be specific (C5)
2. Has the programme triggered your implication in PMCs? Has your participation in meetings, contribution, reporting and more generally your engagement in PMCs increased ever since? (C4)
3. How do you contribute to the management and development of your children's preschool? (C4)
4. Do you feel your children's teacher is more aware of sensible themes? Do you feel he/she improved his/her teaching methodology?
5. To what extent do you feel more at ease and empowered in your duties, as well as capable of making yourself heard within the education sector? (C5)
6. As a woman, would you say you feel more at ease, autonomous and independent regarding your personal and professional relationship as well as with authorities? (for mothers only) (C5)
7. To what extent do you believe dialogue with provinces and local authorities, as well as with teachers regarding early childhood and pre-school education is likely to be sustained through the next weeks, months or years? (C6)

### Teachers and PMC/PTC members

1. Would you say that the specific objectives of the programme trigger networking between preschool teachers, partners and authorities? (C1)
2. Was the programme planned according to the needs of the area of intervention and the community? Did SL manage to promote the involvement of stakeholders (teachers in PRCs for example)? (C3)
3. Have you been increasingly aware of the need to develop, steer and engage in early childhood education? Please be specific. (C4)
4. Has the programme triggered your implication in PMCs/PTCs? Has your participation in meetings, contribution, reporting and more generally your engagement in PMCs/PTCs increased ever since? (C4)
5. Have you exchanged views with other preschool or primary teachers and trainers/teachers on different topics and methods in childhood education? (C4)
6. To what extent have you received adequate training during the programme's launch? Did it allow you to develop your capacities, question your pedagogy or stimulated intercultural dialogue with other stakeholders? (C4) (C5)
7. Did you register and pass the preschool teacher certification? When was it? (C4)
8. Would you say you are more fluent in English or Tamil? (C4)
9. Were you trained in more specific themes? Which ones? (C4)
10. To what extent would you say that, as a PMC/PTC member, you feel supported by authorities in your duties and actions regarding early childhood and education? (C5)
11. As a woman, would you say you feel more at ease, autonomous and independent regarding your personal and professional relationship as well as with authorities? (C5)
12. Would you say issues related to early childhood policies are more easily addressed, in a cross-cutting way between people of various gender, ethnicity, location and role? How so?(C5)
13. How would you assess your relationship with state-stakeholders on early childhood education policy design and implementation? Would you say it is now easier to collaborate with them, speak up and be heard when needed? (C5)
14. To what extent would you say SL's actions are effective when it comes to improving the quality of pre-school education? Please give specific examples? Would you now define SL as a legitimate actor within the education sector? How so? (C5)
15. To what extent do you believe dialogue with provinces and local authorities, as well as with families regarding early childhood and pre-school education is likely to be sustained through the next weeks, months or years? (C6)
16. Would you say, as a PTC member, that you feel encouraged to pursue your efforts and involvement regarding the development and governance of early childhood education, in the near future? (C6)

## F. Evaluation team

The evaluation was conducted by the following team, under the aegis of Learning Avenue:

- **Fabrice Hénard**, director of mission and contact point.
- **Bianca Abeygoonawardane**, consultant and evaluator, expert on issues related to child protection, development and community development.
- **Malani Balasooriya**, expert in EARLY CHILDHOOD, child development and child protection
- **AEA members**: PB Sajeev, Kapila Dhanapala, Ravi Pratap
- **António Neves**, research assistant at Learning Avenue
- **Perla Persicot**, research assistant at Learning Avenue
- **Lucie Haye**, research assistant at Learning Avenue

## G. Documentation list

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