

Development of Play Spaces to Enhance Wellbeing of Early Childhood and Primary Schoolchildren

The 10th National Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on "Development of Play Spaces to Enhance Wellbeing of Early Childhood and Primary Schoolchildren"¹,

Noting that play of early childhood and primary schoolchildren is important and invaluable, because at this age the appropriate learning is "*through play and with happiness*". Play, when equipped with enabling factors, will help promote good physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, social and disciplined development, analytical thinking, creativity, adaptation, and reduction of accidents and harms caused by inappropriate play and that a number of laws and agreements specify children's right to appropriate and safe play spaces, leading to health enhancement on an equal basis,

Noting that "children's play" refers to activity that brings pleasurable and happy feelings as well as learning and creative development, including playing by themselves, with people or animals, or objects found in the natural environment, that it embraces invention of playthings and activity such as gardening, cooking, sports, reading and body movements, that its significance is comparable to that of adult work, and that it has a therapeutic value,

Noting that "play space" refers to an area that the child can get access to, an area that has been developed and organized as a place for suitable pleasurable activity, learning creativity and development, and happy safe experience, all contributing to child wellbeing, that a child play space can be anywhere where play activity is held, ranging from the parent's body, area in the household, education institute, child development center, and the community, including natural environment equipped with safety management and supported by all the sectors in the community concerned,

Noting that the development of early childhood and primary schoolchildren is one of the country's important policies and that there are three national committees with an important role in this regard: National Early Childhood Development Committee, with the Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education, serving as secretariat; National Commission on the Promotion of Child and Youth Development; and National Child Protection Committee, with the Department of Children and Youth, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, serving as secretariat,

Aware that for a space to be useful and safe for children it needs to have activities and enabling factors appropriate to their age and development, taking into account all safety factors including ground surface and play equipment, that there must be a warden to look after children's safety when they come to play, a play

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facilitator, and a person responsible for maintenance and repair of playground equipment, including other safety considerations around the playground,

Aware that Thailand faces a number of acute shortages: shortage of safe and creative play spaces that children can equally get access to, shortage of child wardens well competent in play space management, lack of participation from various sectors concerned, and lack of policy and sustainable long-term support,

Concerned that the lack of opportunity for safe and creative play can lead to situations in which children are unable to achieve desirable development in a holistic manner, in which they play without proper care, in which they do not learn life skills necessary for survival, or in which they play in hazardous spaces, resulting in accidents, the top leading cause of death for children of one-year old and above,

Appreciating that over the last ten years several sectors and organizations in Thailand have joined hands to create model play spaces which are close to nature, including developing play wardens, in schools, child development centers, hospitals and community and that such development is still on-going,

Seeing that elements essential for the "development of play spaces to enhance wellbeing of early childhood and primary schoolchildren" are national and local policies, participation of every sector concerned at every level, appropriate workforce, good body of knowledge in every dimension regarding play spaces and children's play, and appropriate resource support,

Has, therefore, passed the following resolutions:

1) Requesting the National Early Childhood Development Committee

1.1 To add the issue of the development of play spaces to enhance wellbeing of early childhood and primary schoolchildren to the draft policy and strategic plans on early childhood development, 2017-2021;

1.2 To support the creation of mechanisms for working together at national and local levels in the development of play spaces to enhance wellbeing of early childhood, including data collection, development, dissemination, and exchange of learning, knowledge, measures for child care in play spaces starting from home, education institute, child development center to the community, while taking in account important roles of parents, development of knowledge and skills in child care, and play facilitation, including providing management skills for workers in the formal system or such volunteers as parents, administrators, people in the community, teachers, students, and the elderly, as well as development of appropriate personnel known as "play wardens and facilitators" for early childhood and children in various conditions,

to enhance wellbeing of early childhood and primary schoolchildren.

2) Requesting the National Child and Youth Development Committee to add the issue of development of play spaces and innovation to enhance wellbeing of early childhood and primary schoolchildren to the 2nd National Plan on Child and Youth Development 2017-2021, leading to concrete action and evaluations.

3) Requesting the Ministry of Interior, through Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning and Department of Local Administration, local government organizations, and other special forms of local government organizations:

3.1 to work with education institutes and professional associations concerned with space management, and other mechanisms of every level in the management and development of habitat, community and town/city, together with the private sector, state enterprises and other agencies under the State's supervision, to prepare guidelines for selection, development, and management of play spaces to enhance wellbeing of early childhood and primary schoolchildren, including promoting an adequate number of appropriate and safe play spaces to be available to children in each community;

3.2 to work with Child Safety Promotion and Prevention Research Center of Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thai Industrial Standards Institute (TISI), Ministry of Industry, and other sectors concerned, to set safety standards of play spaces and use of play spaces by children within one year and submit them to the Cabinet for approval and announcement for implementation.

4) Requesting the Ministry of Public Health, through Department of Disease Control, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, district committee for the development of the quality of life, regional committee for the development of the quality of life, Department of Local Administration, community committee, and Child Safety Promotion and Prevention Research Center, Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital, to coordinate with every sector concerned in the development of a system of surveillance on health and safety, including communicable diseases in children's play spaces at local and national levels.

5) Requesting local government organizations, special forms of local government organizations, and provincial social development and human security offices, together with the district committee for the development of the quality of life and regional committee for the development of the quality of life, to set up a local "Play Space Committee to Enhance Wellbeing of Early Childhood and Primary Schoolchildren", with participation of partner networks concerned such as the community committee, local children and youth council, Work Group of Family Development Center in Community, and local committees of religious places. The aims are to make available safe play spaces to enhance wellbeing of early childhood and primary in adequate numbers, to increase the learning opportunity for children and youth under the cultural context of the community and locality concerned, and to put in place a supervision and inspection system to ensure the safety standard of the play space on a regular basis.

6) Requesting provincial education committees and provincial education offices to support the Primary Education Service Area Offices and Basic Education School Committee of each school, private education institutes, and local education institutes under their jurisdiction to work with the community in making available safe play spaces for early childhood and primary schoolchildren in their areas of responsibility for wellbeing enhancement in a comprehensive and sustainable manner, and to provide supervision, monitoring and evaluation on a regular basis; and for Bangkok, requesting the Education Department, Social Development Department, and education institutes under its jurisdiction to act accordingly.

7) Requesting public and private healthcare establishments to consider making available play spaces that meet safety standard on their premises for children and family to serve as spaces for health promotion, to promoted awareness on the part of the parents on the importance of play appropriate to child development, and to organize the environment that is friendly to children, family and community, including promoting their play spaces as models for wellbeing enhancement of early childhood and primary schoolchildren.

8) Requesting the Secretary-General, National Health Commission, to report the progress to the 12th National Health Assembly.