



THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

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The Regional Members of the Secretariat represent diverse networks and organisations in the following regions: *the Arab countries, the Caribbean, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Eastern and Southern Africa, Francophone Africa, the SAARC countries, Latin America, and Southeast Asia*. New regions or sub-regions may periodically be added to the Secretariat.



The Consultative Group
on Early Childhood
Care and Development



*an
international
resource*





The evidence is in. Research from a variety of fields demonstrates that what happens for children in the early years makes a difference in children's lives. Children's success in school and later life depends to a great degree upon the foundation stones laid during the first years of life. In order for children to develop in a healthy way, attention must be paid to their mental, social, and emotional growth, as well as their physical growth, particularly in the early years.

Young children (from birth to eight) need to be supported in the development of the abilities that will enable them to survive and thrive in later years. That support comes from the family and community and is in fact embedded in cultural values. Economic, social, cultural, and demographic changes have greatly affected the family's ability to cope. When the family, community, or culture is unable to provide appropriate, nourishing environments, children are at risk of delayed or debilitated development. It is in these situations that programmes for young children and their families offer an extraordinary opportunity to avoid or moderate learning problems, and bring about lasting benefits.

Programmes that are of the most benefit to children address not only the specific developmental needs of the child, but also the environmental factors which affect those children and their caregivers. There are plentiful opportunities to do this through maternal health care programs, through childcare and preschool efforts, through community organisation efforts, through government initiatives that support families, and others.

In response to changes in knowledge about children's growth and development and how it is best supported, and in anticipation of the need to disseminate new scientific and programmatic knowledge, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development was launched in 1984. The CG has taken as its main purpose the fostering of communication among international donor agencies and their national counterparts, and among decision-makers, funders, researchers, programme providers, parents, and communities with the goal of strengthening programmes benefitting young children and their families.

The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG) is an international, inter-agency consortium dedicated to improving the condition of young children at risk. The CG acts as a network of networks. Each participating organisation has its own extensive network of field offices, representatives, and projects. Participation in the CG allows for the sharing of information among its constituents and counterparts throughout the world.

GOALS

- **To increase the knowledge base.** The CG gathers, synthesizes, and disseminates information on early childhood care and development, drawing from field experience, traditional wisdom, and scientific research.
- **To serve as a catalyst.** The CG works to increase awareness of issues affecting young children by developing materials and strategies to help move communities, organisations, and governments from rhetoric to practice and from policy to programming.
- **To build bridges.** The CG fosters networking among those with common concerns and interests. Working across sectoral divisions, the CG bases its efforts on a cross-disciplinary view of child care and development. The CG puts people in touch with the work of others by organising meetings, by disseminating information through publications, and by serving as a channel for communication.
- **To serve as a sounding board.** The CG engages in dialogue with funders and decision-makers about developments in the field, thereby providing the base for policy formulation, planning, programming, and implementation.



ORGANISATION THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP IS SERVED BY AN INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, COMPRISED OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIALISTS WHO ARE ACTIVE IN ECCD NETWORKS IN DIVERSE REGIONS OF THE MAJORITY WORLD. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SECRETARIAT COMES FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS. ADMINISTRATIVE BACKSTOPPING IS PROVIDED BY THE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER.



ACTIVITIES

Through its Secretariat, the Consultative Group (CG):

CREATES AN ACTIVE PROCESS FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

- ***through publications.*** Information linking practitioners, researchers, policy-makers, and donor agencies is shared and exchanged through the *Coordinators' Notebook*, a bi-annual journal reaching 3,000 individuals and institutions. A quarterly newsletter fosters cooperation in sharing information and resources among Partner Organisations. Occasional papers, advocacy tools, manuals, documents presenting research and practice, case studies, and programme evaluations are published in both print and electronic formats, and are offered for free use within the public domain.
- ***on the World Wide Web.*** At <http://www.ecdgroup.com> visitors can find information on child development, programming, policy, research, cross-sectoral attention to young children, and in-depth information on dozens of issues and topics in early childhood care and development, such as the intersecting needs of women and children, parent education, and linkages between ECCD and primary education. The Secretariat corresponds widely with practitioners and organisational task managers around the globe.
- ***through meetings and advocacy work.*** The Secretariat organises annual meetings of the CG consortium, and provides a voice for ECCD at relevant international and regional meetings, advocating better-informed attention to the needs of young children and their families.

HELPS MOVE KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

- ***by serving as a resource to donor agencies.*** The members of the CG Secretariat provide technical support to CG partners in the development of policy, programming, training, and evaluation.
- ***by supporting regional networks.*** Each member of the Secretariat works to promote networking among donor organisations, NGOs, government ministries, and early childhood associations within their region. The Partners of the CG jointly support the organisation of regional seminars, collaborations, and meetings that strengthen ECCD activity in Majority World regions.

RESULTS

- ▶ ***The joint efforts of the CG consortium have contributed significantly to a common understanding of young children and what they need.*** ECCD has been established as a “field”. Through Robert Myers’ landmark book, *The Twelve Who Survive*, as well as through other efforts of the CG partners and Secretariat, there is now extensive shared understanding of the holistic nature of early childhood development, and of the necessity of integrated programming to support the child within the family, institutional, and community context.
- ▶ ***ECCD has become an official part of the development agenda.*** Attention to young children and their families is now considered by many policymakers and donors to be the place to start in development work.
- ▶ ***Investment in ECCD has increased exponentially.*** As a result of increased understanding of the importance of the early years, there is greater financial investment by international banks, bi-lateral and United Nations organisations, and foundations in ECCD programmes.
- ▶ ***The CG successfully influenced the Education for All platform.*** The Education for All Forum has adopted the concept that learning begins at birth. Early childhood development has been identified as a key component of basic education. This understanding has influenced policy and planning within individual countries as well as within the large organisations which support international development efforts.
- ▶ ***Many governments, education ministries, and regional bodies now have the political will and appropriate ECCD policies to support young children and their families.***
- ▶ ***Longitudinal research projects have yielded powerful evidence of the financial, educational, physical, and social benefits of quality ECCD programming.*** Many of these studies are being funded or supported by CG partners.
- ▶ ***The CG has collaboratively defined and refined appropriate programming models and complementary strategies for supporting young children and their families in diverse circumstances.*** There is now extensive experience available to



support development of diverse high quality, cost-efficient programming strategies.

- *There is increasing collaboration, partnering, and sharing of resources among donor organisations, and between funders, NGOs, and government.*
- *CG materials have been used extensively in the creation of organisational policies and practices.*

The mechanism of the Consultative Group—as a consortium with an active Secretariat and an extensive communication network—has proven to have a significant ripple effect in promoting ECCD programming. It has also allowed those who participate in the consortium to greatly deepen and broaden their understanding of young children and families, and of how to support them. The CG mechanism for knowledge exchange and pooling of resources is a low cost and flexible way to combine advocacy with concrete advancement of ECCD programming efforts and experience.

WHO HAS JOINED US *Since 1984, partners have included:*

FOUNDATIONS

Aga Khan Foundation
Bernard van Leer Foundation
Carnegie Corporation
Ford Foundation
Rockefeller Foundation
International Youth Foundation

BI-LATERAL ORGANISATIONS

Inter-American Development Bank
International Development
Research Centre

Organization of American States
Swedish International
Development Agency
USAID
World Bank

UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

International Child Development
Centre
UNICEF
UNESCO
World Health Organization

INTERNATIONAL NGOS

Christian Children's Fund
Save-the-Children/USA
World Vision

OTHER

Academy for Educational
Development
Education Development Center
High/Scope Educational Research
Foundation

Participation in the Consultative Group

- **Partners** include bi-lateral organisations, United Nations agencies, international NGOs, and other agencies, which form the core of the group. Partners participate in the following ways:
 - ◆ participate in periodic meetings of the Consultative Group to exchange information, discuss topics of mutual interest, and seek ways to collaborate with other organisations;
 - ◆ receive all concept papers, reviews, evaluations, and other documents and materials produced under the auspices of the Group;
 - ◆ contribute to and receive the Network Notes and the *Coordinators' Notebook*;
 - ◆ use the International Secretariat as a resource in the development of policy and programming;
 - ◆ contribute to the definition of action research projects, special reviews, and other activities of the Secretariat.

Partners contribute to the functioning of the Secretariat with a minimum contribution of \$10,000/year, either through direct support or as part of the support for a project carried out under the auspices of the group.

- **Friends of ECCD** Individuals and groups can participate in the knowledge exchange, both regionally and internationally, by participating in regional ECCD networking and advocacy activities sponsored by the CG; contributing information to the *Coordinators' Notebook*; participating in electronic e-mail exchanges; distributing CG publications through their networks or adapting CG materials to reach appropriate audiences; and using and contributing to the information available in the CG World Wide Web Site and the regional ECCD Web Sites.

The *Coordinators' Notebook* is available free of charge to Majority World organisations or individuals, and at a nominal subscription fee in North America and Europe.

