



The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development

# CREATING THE FOUNDATION STONES FOR EDUCATION FOR ALL: ACTION INITIATIVES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

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*Why invest in programmes of Early Childhood Care and Development as part of a basic education strategy? Before you can build a house, it is necessary to lay foundation stones to support the entire structure. Before a child enters primary school, a similar foundation must be laid. Embedded within their family, their community, and their cultural values, very young children, (from birth to six) need to be supported in the development of the physical, mental, and social abilities that will enable them to survive and thrive in later years. The successful education of the child during its years of schooling depends to a great degree upon the foundation stones laid during the pre-school years. (from Meeting Basic Learning Needs)*

In the first year and one-half following Jomtien, attention of the EFA Consultative Forum and of the Forum Secretariat was directed toward primary school education and literacy, with little attention to the early childhood part of basic learning and education. The first meeting of the EFA Forum, held in Paris in December 1992, did not include early childhood on the agenda. This oversight was corrected with inclusion of the topic at the Second EFA Forum, held in New Delhi, India from September 8 - 10, 1993. The meeting brought together approximately 120 individuals including resource people and representatives of country, agency and NGO

constituencies. The central theme of the meeting, Quality Education for All, was pursued in relation to four main topics: Early Childhood Development; Improving Primary Schooling; Improving Non-formal Education; Financing Quality Basic Education. In addition, there were roundtable discussions dealing with new partnerships in EFA, basic education for girls and women, and the contribution of the media to EFA.

In discussing each of the topics mentioned above, participants were asked to address three cross-cutting themes: gender equality; assessment and monitoring of learning (measuring success); and going to scale.

To prepare for the early childhood portion of the New Delhi Forum, an ad hoc committee was formed. The Bernard van Leer Foundation assumed the role of organizer, assisted by the Secretariat of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development. Funding was sought to prepare a handout covering background issues and ECCD strategies (Meeting Basic Learning Needs), case studies, and a video (First Steps, produced by the Aga Khan Foundation) to support participation in the New Delhi meeting by presenters.

As a result of the New Delhi discussions, the following was read into the record as a statement of intent and in order to highlight several topics that arose as areas of priority during the discussion:

"During the Forum a group of institutions and individuals concerned with early childhood learning and development met in order to identify key themes and collaborative actions to pursue following the Forum. The purpose of the collaborative actions would be to strengthen policy, planning and implementation of programs directed toward enhanced learning during the early years, better preparing children for school and life.

The Group emphasized the importance of continuing representation of the early childhood area on the Steering Committee of the EFA Forum and in future EFA Fora. We began by identifying lines of action already being pursued by organisations within the Group and took into account suggestions for action that emerged during the Forum, both in the plenary sessions and in informal discussions with participants. Extending collaborative effort was recommended within three general lines of action:

- strengthening human and financial resources;
- strengthening the knowledge and information base;
- linking early childhood development with other program lines.

Examples of priority issues to be worked on were also identified. These include:

- strengthening regional and national centres which support quality in early childhood programs;
- costs and financing;
- development and use of indicators of early development in order to measure progress toward goals;

- collaboration of early childhood programs with primary school programs, adult education and literacy programs, programs directed to girls and women, health and nutrition programs, and community action programs.

To achieve these inter-relationships requires building partnerships. To move these ideas forward, it was decided to call a meeting in early November of an expanded group in order to develop concrete plans of action in these priority areas.

As a result of the New Delhi meeting, Early Childhood is again on the agenda. A general report summarizing progress toward EFA goals (and reflecting the renewed attention to early childhood development) will be available from the EFA Consultative Forum Secretariat in early 1994 (see Related Resources).

The questions we are now asking include:

- What can be done to move beyond the rhetoric of the meeting?
- What can be done to strengthen actions now being planned or carried out?
- What can be done to extend the growing, but still weak, attention to early learning and development within the priorities and budgets of organizations at international, national and local levels?
- What needs to be done that is not being done?
- How can limited resources be used more effectively?

To address these questions, and to formulate a more concrete plan of action, the follow-up meeting mentioned above was held in New York, hosted by UNICEF, November 3-4, 1994.

### *The New York Meeting on ECCD*

The general purpose of the meeting was to promote working together in common cause in order to activate and strengthen work in the field of early childhood development. The specific purposes of the meeting were:

1. To identify areas within the field of early childhood care and development that need to be strengthened or extended (beginning with those suggested at the New Delhi meeting).
2. To suggest concrete activities that are being (or could be) carried out in order to strengthen the field, in line with purpose No. 1.
3. To identify partners in the task of improving and extending programs of early childhood care and development.
4. To arrange a mechanism (mechanisms) for mobilizing, monitoring, summing up and extracting lessons learned from activities.

Representatives from the following organisations were present for the discussion: UNICEF, the World Bank, USAID, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, Save the Children/USA, the Christian Children's Fund, High/Scope Foundation, the Consultative Group on ECCD, and The US Coalition for EFA.

A set of background notes was prepared for the meeting, including an analysis of responses to a questionnaire distributed prior to the meeting in which organizations indicated their priorities and plans.

The background document also included information on earlier EFA meetings, some questions to guide discussion, as well as a cautionary note pointing out that although early childhood development now seems to be actively on the agenda of many organizations and although considerable strides have been made since Jomtien, a great deal remains to be done. This position was backed by evidence that top officials and writers of the "World Reports" produced by the four major organizations that sponsored Jomtien have not yet incorporated early childhood development into the mainstream of their thinking.

Discussion began with efforts to specify what the group would like to see happen as a result of formulating a larger, collaborative vision and a Plan of Action. It moved quickly to how that might be done. Most of the meeting time was spent on discussion of specific issues and activities, which appear (or are reflected) in the action plan outlined in Table 1.

### *Identification of priority issues and areas for work*

As a starting point, the participants turned to issues identified during the New Delhi meeting. These were:

- strengthening regional and national centres
- costs and financing
- indicators/monitoring
- linking early child development initiatives with primary schooling, health, adult education and women's programs.

Two other topics were added to the list, based on the original Jomtien declaration:

- social communication
- fundamental research.

### *A Plan of Action*

For each of the priority issues, participants first indicated what their respective organizations were doing to address the issue and/or indicated the level of organizational interest in cooperating with others to address the issue. Based on this discussion it was possible, for each issue, to identify activities that could be completed over the next two years, specify who would participate, describe expected outcomes, and indicate the uses to which the outcomes would be put over the longer haul.

Although the initial time frame for the activities chosen is approximately two years, some activities are of shorter duration and will be used to mobilize interest and support over a longer period with respect to each area.

TABLE 1

TOWARD A FAIR START FOR CHILDREN:

A DRAFT WORK PLAN TO STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND TO MOBILIZE RESOURCES

| <i>ISSUE</i>                             | <i>RESPONSIBLE PARTIES</i>         | <i>ACTIVITIES</i>   | <i>EXPECTED OUTCOME(S)</i>  | <i>USE</i>  |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. Monitoring Programs                   | UNESCO*, UNICEF, WHO               | Development & Application of Indicators of ECD Coverage   | –statistics: ECD Coverage<br>–permanent mechanism for data collection         | –In monitoring EFA and Summit goals.<br>–in UNESCO/ other World Reports               |
| 2. Monitoring status of children         | IDRC*, UNICEF, USAID               | Operational research: Child/school status profiles  | –profiles and institutionalised system of data collection in 4 to 6 countries | –planning<br>–advocacy<br>–program evaluation & monitoring                            |
| 3. Training                              | van Leer*, UNICEF, SCF, CCF        | Develop/apply training package(s) for:<br>–training trainers<br>–policy makers<br>–program staff of NGOs & donors | –tested training package<br>–trained people<br>–strengthened institutions     | –capacity building<br>–in various training programs of governments, NGOs, donors      |
| 4. Determining ECD Program Costs/Effects | World Bank*, UNICEF, van Leer, AKF | –Create inclusive list of benefits<br>–Synthesize data on cost and effects<br>–Design longitudinal studies        | –concept paper<br>–review paper<br>–design/funding of longitudinal studies    | –advocacy<br>–evaluation<br>–in meeting of governments and donors to mobilize funding |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Financing ECD Programs                           | UNICEF*, WB, IIEP, Innocenti, CCF         | –Case studies: alternative financing<br>–Studies of who bears costs                     | –set of cases: forms of financing<br>–set of studies of who bears costs | –advocacy<br>–in meeting of gov'ts/donors to mobilize funds               |
| 6. Linking ECD & Primary Education (The transition) | USAID*, van Leer, SCF, UNICEF, AKF        | –Summarize exp. with programs facilitating transition                                   | –review of experience   | –in workshop prior to EFA 96<br>–advocacy/mobilize program support        |
| 7. Linking ECE & Adult Education                    | UNDP, SCF*, AKF, ICAE                     | –Case studies of ECD programs combining benefits to adults & children                   | –set of cases   | –advocacy/mobilize support for cross-generational progr.                  |
| 8. Linking ECD & Health/Nutrition                   | USAID*, WB, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, PAHO       | –Case studies: combining H/N with psycho-social   | –set of cases   | –advocacy/mobilize program support<br>–in meeting of health organizations |
| 9. Linking ECD & Women's Programs                   | UNDP, SCF, UNICEF, USAID*, UNI-FEM, UNFPA | –Childcare/Women's Work cases<br>–Analysis of gender issues in ECD                      | –set of cases<br>–paper presenting gender analyses                      | –in Beijing '95 meeting<br>–advocacy                                      |
| 10. Social Communications                           | US Coalition*, van Leer, EEC, UNICEF      | –Bring together existing materials in a catalogue<br>–Experimental project in 1 country | –catalogue: video bank<br>–results from country study                   | –advocacy<br>–training  |
| 11. Fundamental Research                            | van Leer*, IDRC, WHO                      | –Review of research on the child's environment as affects ECD                           | –review paper   | –in training programs<br>–in curricular development                       |

(The responsible organisations are marked with an \*).

### *Assignment of Responsibilities*

Each organization took responsibility for leadership in one or more of the priority areas set out.

Liaison with the EFA Secretariat fell to the Bernard van Leer Foundation and USAID, both of whom have members on the EFA Steering Committee.

General responsibility for keeping organizations informed of progress, for seeking extended cooperation, for monitoring and for synthesizing results from the various activities within the Plan of Action was assigned to the Secretariat of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development.

In addition, work on gender issues and the link to women's programming was assigned (jointly with USAID) to Judith L. Evans of the Consultative Group Secretariat.

Responsibilities were also assigned, where appropriate, for exploring how early childhood care and development issues might be integrated into each of several up-coming international meetings or initiatives. Events specifically identified were:

- The Nine Country Education Summit
- The Cairo Population Meeting
- The Copenhagen Social Development Summit
- The Vancouver Conference on "Stronger Children—Stronger Families"
- The Beijing Women's Conference
- Jomtien II

### *Plans for involving additional organizations*

A long list of organizations that might be interested in collaboration was drawn up, many of whom are located in Europe. It was recommended, therefore, that a similar meeting be held in Europe in early 1994. Such a meeting would have as its main purpose to extend collaboration in activities intended to strengthen work in the field of early childhood development. It would take as its starting point the outcomes of the New York meeting. The Secretariat of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development will convene the meeting which will be hosted by UNESCO.

At the end of 1991, there was little evidence that young children and their parents were a serious concern to those striving to achieve Education for All. Yet much was being done, especially by the organizations mentioned in Table 1, to address the conditions in which young children and their families are living. Through the New Delhi meeting, there was a renewal of commitment and attention to young children and women as part of the EFA basic education strategies. The more that specific efforts to address ECCD within countries or regions can be communicated to others, evaluated and understood, the more likely they are to contribute to the knowledge base and to the momentum that is being gained. Thus this coordinated Action Plan represents an

exciting step forward in the efforts to move from EFA rhetoric to action in creating significant supports for young children and their families around the globe.

*If your organization is conducting work in ECCD, or would like to collaborate in this coordinated effort, please contact Judith L. Evans of the Consultative Group Secretariat.*

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*Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.*  
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington D.C. : World Bank, 1999.