



The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development

REGIONAL PROFILE—SOUTH ASIA, EAST ASIA, AND THE PACIFIC

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UNICEF support to early childhood development (ECD) is based on an inter-agency policy developed in 1993 and recently updated at a workshop held at the Innocenti Centre in Florence in June 1995. This policy stresses that ECD is important both in its own right, and—as the foundation for subsequent learning and education—as a major factor in the attainment of Education For All. Because of this importance, it must be more systematically planned, more effectively implemented, and more strongly supported by partnerships of governments, non-government organisations, communities, and donor agencies.

In order to strengthen and broaden UNICEF activities in ECD, the Education Cluster, in collaboration with the regional education advisers from the regional offices in South Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific, organised a workshop on *ECD in Asia* in Bangkok, Thailand, from December 11 to 13, 1995. Forty-five participants, mostly from ten South and Southeast Asian countries (Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam, Philippines, and Indonesia), took part in the workshop. These participants included the following:

- ECD and education officers from UNICEF country offices;
- education and health/nutrition advisors from the UNICEF Asian regional offices and headquarters;
- representatives from governments and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) collaborating with UNICEF in early child development programmes; and
- specialists in ECD from universities and international NGOs and networks.

During the course of the workshop, several different activities were carried out. These included descriptions of how ECD activities fit into the programmes and budgets of UNICEF country offices; the exchange of experience in ECD in the ten Asian countries; presentations concerning cross-cutting issues in ECD (e.g., nutrition and child development, health promotion for ECD, community partnerships, and global and regional networks); and the development of country action plans and recommendations for regional cooperation related to ECD.

A large variety of materials was distributed at the workshop, including descriptions of project activities, ECD training and learning materials, and copies of notes from oral presentations. In the sections that follow summaries of important issues discussed at the workshop are presented.

The Place and Importance of ECD in UNICEF Country Programmes

The scope of total ECD coverage (roughly services for children aged 3 to 6) in the Asian countries represented at the UNICEF workshop ranges from 2% in Myanmar, to 8% in Cambodia, to 26% in the Philippines and 33% in Viet Nam. In general, such coverage is provided by private and religious organizations.

Considerable variety is shown across the region in terms of where ECD "sits" in UNICEF country programmes. It most often appears in Education units, with full-time officers assigned to it, in Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Viet Nam (and with only a part-time officer in Lao PDR), but it also fits (with only a part-time officer) into the Women in Development programme in Cambodia and into the Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC) programme in Thailand. There is no clear-cut assignment of responsibility for ECD in Indonesia.

In terms of UNICEF budget allocations, even greater variety is shown, both absolutely and relatively. The amount of funding allocated annually to ECD ranges from no funds in Indonesia and \$10,000 in Fiji; to \$75,000 in Laos, \$135,000 in Sri Lanka, and \$140,000 in Bangladesh; \$200,000 in Nepal; \$300,000 in Myanmar and \$325,000 in Cambodia; \$677,000 in the Philippines and \$747,000 in Viet Nam. In percentage terms, compared to the total education budget, this means, for example, 3% in Bangladesh, 5% in Myanmar, less than 10% in Lao PDR and Cambodia, 11% in Nepal, 15% in Sri Lanka, up to 17% in Viet Nam, and 40% in the

Philippines (though a re-budgeting exercise in light of EFA goal achievements in 1995 reduced this to 20%).

There are often good reasons for such allocations. In some countries, such as Viet Nam and Sri Lanka, ECD is a strong government priority or, as in the Philippines, a focus of strong NGO attention. This is in part because of high percentages of children found in primary education and therefore the ability of governments and NGOs to focus their attention on other levels of education—which UNICEF is willing to support. In other countries, such as Myanmar, the absence of government and NGO interest has led UNICEF to launch a major programme in the area. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, a strong government and UNICEF focus on the EFA goal of primary education has led to neglect of ECD.

Issues and Lessons Arising From Country Experiences

New Trends of ECD

Several new trends in the development and provision of ECD activities need to be taken into account. First is *the slow movement in some countries of the region toward seeing ECD as "compulsory"* or at least as strongly desirable, a belief already the case in much of Latin America (and in strongly centralised states such as DPR Korea). In a narrow sense, this can mean that kindergarten becomes compulsory for admission to elite public and private primary schools, but it can also mean, more generally, that ECD is seen as being an integral and necessary part of basic education. While some countries in the region are first expanding the definition of basic education up the system, to include grades 7 to 9, others are at least considering the need to expand coverage *down* the system as well.

Along with this trend is *the desire to give priority to expanding ECD coverage first of all out to rural, indigenous, and impoverished areas*—partly as a process of positive discrimination and affirmative action toward disadvantaged areas. There is general realisation that the urban elites can take care of themselves and that greater efforts need to be put into more equitable distribution of ECD programmes.

Both of these trends imply a third: *the need for some kind of government policy in regard to ECD*. Though some governments fear that having a "policy" means establishing an expensive state-supported ECD/preschool system, most now realise that a policy can mean many different things, from providing universal ECD coverage (as in DPR Korea) to defining core curricula, providing standardised teaching and learning materials, training (and perhaps paying for) teachers, and subsidising ECD programmes in disadvantaged areas.

A fourth trend is *the realisation that the area of ECD provides space for innovation*, a chance to move from more traditional institutional approaches to family- and community-based approaches, with new kinds of more child-centred, interactive pedagogy and stronger links between ECD and primary school, between formal and non-formal approaches, between the education of children and of adults, and between mothers and fathers.

Of particular importance is a fifth trend: *the realisation that innovations in ECD can sometimes feed back into the primary education system*. In other words, ECD is not only being viewed as facilitating, through school-readiness activities, children's transition to a formal primary school. In addition, it is more and more being seen as a means, among parents, the community, and teachers, to build awareness about, and provoke the changes required in, the formal school system. This is being done, for example, through educating parents of pre-school children about what to demand from primary schools; the training of primary school teachers with preschool teachers, in more interactive, child-friendly ways (as happens in Fiji); and a special eight-week transition programme added into the first grade of school in the Philippines which is training teachers how to make the primary school more child-friendly and "ready" for the young child. The issue here is to ensure that ECD programmes more positively influence primary schools than primary schools negatively influence ECD.

A final trend relates to *the link between ECD and child rights*. ECD is being seen as one of the "development" rights of the young child, as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and protection of the young child from abuse, both inside and outside the family, is becoming a more important rationale for ECD activities.

Who Needs to Be "Developed" and Who Does the "Development"?

In keeping with the desired inter-sectoral, inter-generational approach to ECD, there was wide-ranging discussion at the workshop concerning the variety of actors who need to be involved in ECD in order to expand it and to make it work more effectively. There was agreement that the *primary target group of ECD activities are infants and young children*, even fetuses in regard to pre-natal care and those 0 to 2 years of age (who are often left out of programmes which focus on institutional ECD approaches), and extending to cover children up to eight years of age, therefore overlapping with the first years of school and ensuring that children succeed in the transition into the formal system. Of most importance are young children "at risk" — those with special needs in regard to health and survival, care, development, and protection, as well as those not receiving any available social-sector services.

In dealing with this group, a large number of actors need to be "developed" in regard to best practices in the care and development of young children. These include:

School children and older siblings must be involved in ECD—as mobilisers of support for ECD; in mapping and gathering data in regard to issues such as child health, school health, and pupil absenteeism; as producers of programmes for children; as members of *child watch* committees; and, through school-based child-to-child approaches, in teaching and caring for younger children.

Youth (parents-to-be), especially adolescents who will soon marry and have children, must be given information and skills (e.g., through family life education) related to good parenting and child development.

Pregnant women and new mothers must be provided knowledge and skills related to pre-natal health and care of the very young child (e.g., maternal nutrition, breastfeeding and weaning, growth monitoring).

Mothers (and fathers and other caregivers) must be taught a broad range of skills, in areas such as the best methods of stimulating and caring for children and of monitoring physical and social development. In Indonesia the village-based Posyandu (health) centres teach mothers how to use physical and psycho-motor development charts for their young children, and the BKB (Bina Keluarga Balita centres for families with children below five years of age), train mothers how best to play with and stimulate the mental development of their children.

ECD caregivers and preschool teachers clearly, must be trained in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate to holistic, integrated child-development activities.

Adult educators (such as other teachers of non-formal education programmes) can play a more active role in ensuring that child-development content is put into all adult education and literacy programmes.

Community and local government leaders can not only provide financial and material support to ECD activities, but also help create awareness about the need for ECD, change attitudes, and mobilise the community for action.

Community, religious organisations, and NGOs, because of close relationships with communities, are particularly well-suited to carry out research on childrearing practices, strengthen human resource capacity at the community level, and encourage networks of child welfare and development workers. *Women's associations*, especially those that reach down into local communities, can be mobilised to organise ECD activities.

Extension agents of other sectors can be encouraged to work closely with ECD programmes and organisers. These include agents in health, agriculture (with a focus on household food production), and internal affairs (with its often close link to local government).

Academics and other professionals can encourage research in areas such as traditional childrearing practices and changing risk patterns and family structures.

Government officials and policy-makers, at higher levels of the system, can be encouraged not only to provide greater financial support to ECD, but also to develop more systematic ECD policies in areas such as language of pre-school education (i.e., mother tongue vs language of primary-school instruction) and a focus on disadvantaged regions.

The private sector can also get involved in general fund-raising for ECD and in the establishment of ECD programmes for children of employees.

The media can be mobilised to increase demand, build political will, and provide a channel for parental education about ECD. The Parent Effectiveness Service (PES) in the Philippines, for

example, includes, in addition to home visits and group discussions, a radio programme with drama, song, and a talk-show.

Also, a video-based child development programme has recently been developed by UNICEF titled *Enhancing Early Childhood Development*. It provides essential child development knowledge, strategies, and resources which can be used by parents to support child development during the first six years of life. Each of the four animated videos is accompanied by a facilitators' and parents' guidebook. The videos are to be used in conjunction with country-specific live action, and a production guidebook has been prepared to suggest ways to add country-appropriate materials. The videos can be used on national television or, in videocassette format, in a variety of group settings, including community-based parent discussion groups, training courses for professionals and para-professionals, and in health-care centres.

UNICEF staff, especially Representatives, programme coordinators, and project officers in all relevant sectors, also need awareness-raising in regard to the importance of ECD for the eventual success of other UNICEF activities and training in how better to organise ECD activities.

What Has to Be "Taught," and How?

Participants at the workshop also discussed what needs to be "taught" to young children (and to their caregivers and teachers) in effective ECD programmes. One particularly interesting approach to the "what" and "how" was described in a Sri Lanka programme *where children are taught very practical knowledge and skills while taking part in every-day activities*, including eating, bathing, washing, cleaning, and cooking. During cooking, for example, they wash rice, scrape coconuts, and cut vegetables and, while seemingly playing, they gain experience with useful work habits; learn skills such as naming objects and identifying weights, smells, tastes, shapes, relative sizes, colours, and textures; increase their vocabulary; develop gross and fine motor skills and hand and eye coordination; and learn to understand mathematical concepts and how to tell time.

Doing better in primary school, although an important by-product of ECD, should not be its main concern. In other words, the *school-readiness* function of ECD, which focuses on extending the formal school cycle downward and accelerating school instruction during the early years of life, should not be its main pre-occupation. But such readiness is important, both in reality and in terms of advocacy for ECD programmes, especially in highly competitive education systems, where a good early start may lead to later success, and especially for the crucial, early "survival grades," during which, for one reason or another (e.g., learning in an unknown national language rather than mother tongue), children often drop out of school.

An example is the eight-week transition programme in the Philippines, at the beginning of first grade, which is teaching skills and competencies in the areas of communication, numeracy, social-emotional development, psychomotor development, and aesthetic development, via games, stories, manipulative activities, and indoor and outdoor activities. In Bangladesh, through preschool and continuing through two years of "learning preparedness" work in school, children are inducted into the learning routine, with the main common learning difficulties, especially in language and maths, identified and then focused on. Also, in Sri Lanka, a very useful instrument

has been developed to measure children's readiness for school; it consists of a series of pictures that are used to determine a child's understanding of space, numbers, sequence, and seriation.

For parents, it is important to ensure that they understand the *facts for life*—practices leading to good health and nutrition (e.g., food supplementation, early detection of ARI, treatment of diarrhoea), how to care for simple illnesses, how to create a "child-safe" house and help children avoid accidents, etc. It is also important to teach about *child rights*—survival, development, protection, and participation—in a way that is understandable by parents and other caregivers. This includes knowledge about the various kinds of "social ills" that young children may eventually encounter and need to learn how to cope with.

Parents must also *gain skills to be better caregivers, parenting the "whole" child*—its physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual needs—by trying to ensure that children have a happy childhood, with love and affection, much play and little work, and the chance to discover the joy of learning. This means that parents must learn good parenting practices (e.g., how to play with children, how to provide discipline, and how to use the home and the immediate environment as the primary sources of learning and development before school age), and appropriate early childhood care and development techniques. The latter requires knowledge about various indicators of physical growth and mental/social development. The monitoring charts developed in Indonesia represent good examples of tools that can help parents and other caregivers in this process.

Finally, parents also need to gain *a better understanding of the importance of enrolling and keeping their children (especially their daughters) in school*, of their own role in the education of their children, of how to discriminate between good and bad teaching, and good and bad schools, and of how to participate actively through the school in demanding and achieving a better quality education for their children.

How Should ECD Be Organised?

The organisation of effective ECD programmes requires both strong and supportive institutions and efficient processes. In terms of structure, one conclusion of the workshop was to try to *use available organisations rather than start every time anew*. In this regard, the workshop looked at two levels of the system, national and local:

■ NATIONAL

An essential question is: *who, at the national level, has the power and authority to bring people together around ECD issues?* Who, in other words, has the political and/or moral authority—and the resources which might flow from such authority—to mobilise a population concerning ECD? Tapping such a person's authority—whether it be the head of state or, as is often the case, his wife—may help promote the issue.

National instruments—laws, broad policies, development plans—may also be important. In the Philippines there is a legal mandate that each village must establish a daycare centre, and the Local Government Code states that local governments must provide ECD services to all

constituents. Some governments are now developing more explicit policies in regard to ECD, although many are rather minimalist in nature, and more and more national development plans are including chapters on women; a chapter focused on children may also be useful.

National agencies—such as the Children's Secretariat in Sri Lanka and the National Council for the Care and Protection of Children in Viet Nam—may also be useful to promote, especially to the extent that they have some mechanisms to reach down the system to the level of the community. Another option is a coordinating or inter-agency committee, at each level, among donors, government agencies, and NGOs (such as the Inter-Agency Committee on ECD in the Philippines).

Finally, also important in the promotion of strong, systematic infrastructures for ECD are *research, training, and advocacy* units which focus on the problems (and solutions) related to ECD. A new example is Thailand's National Institute for Child and Family Development, located at Mahidol University in Bangkok.

■ LOCAL

Organisations at the local level can be designed both to enhance ECD services and focus support for ECD from among various interested parties. In Nepal, for example, a proposal is being developed which would create a cluster system of 10 satellite home-based ECD programmes, staffed by facilitators (with a seventh grade education), managed by the Village Development Committee, provided space and materials by the community, and situated around a "cluster" centre located in a primary school and staffed by a trained teacher. Such a place can be an accessible resource centre and a centre of "good practice" where ECD workers can get help and view good care-giving and good management.

Also important is the development and strengthening of local-level organisations and networks concerned with the health, welfare, and rights of the young child. Such community-based networks can serve to motivate the community around ECD, operate as a kind of village "watch" to ensure implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), maximise opportunities and resources from all potential sources, help improve the community's readiness for, and environment surrounding, the child, and enhance links and exchanges between communities.

This is where *partnerships for ECD become important*—a different mix of partners at each level, each with a clear definition of tasks and responsibilities. In Nepal, for example, the Primary Curriculum and Textbook Development Unit develops ECD curriculum, trains teachers, provides guidelines and necessary materials, and supervises and evaluates programmes; the District Education Officer motivates local communities to establish and run activities; the community arranges for space, teachers, and other materials; parents provide books and pens, send children regularly to the programmes, ensure cleanliness of their children, and share information about the progress of their children; and teachers try to be aware of the interests and capability of each child, give attention to the learning process, inform parents about the children's progress, and keep evaluation records of the children.

Similarly, in the Philippines, in terms of the implementation of pre-schools, partnerships have been created in which the local government unit or local NGO pays honoraria for caregivers, parents and the community provide the space, parents contribute to the feeding programme, and the Ministry provides teacher training, monitors implementation, and provides other assistance when necessary.

■ OTHER PRINCIPLES OF ORGANISATION

Besides the above structural issues relating to the organisation of ECD programmes at national and local levels, a number of other principles related to the process of developing these programmes are important to consider.

Integration. The integration of ECD is required in several different ways:

- Integration *within* the Ministry of Health itself is obviously important, to ensure that units concerned with mothers and young children (for example, nutrition, breastfeeding, and immunisation) work well together.
- *The combining of various ECD programmes in one larger system*—as in Viet Nam where the ECD programme includes daycare centres, parent education, growth monitoring, regular health check-ups for mothers and children, credit schemes and savings groups for women, immunisation, nutrition education, women's literacy programmes, home visiting, and the teaching of agricultural skills. In one year a pilot of such integrated services has led to remarkable improvement in women's and children's health status and household food security. The credit scheme of this programme is especially interesting, where pregnant and illiterate women, poor mothers with children under 5 years of age, families with school drop-outs, teachers, child-care providers, and health workers are eligible to get \$US 30, with 2% interest, for income generating activities (raising chickens, vegetable gardens).
- *Integrated training* is also important, so that all major actors in ECD, at each level, are trained together. This includes, among others, ECD workers, managers, local extension agents from concerned sectors, and primary school teachers.
- *The involvement of all possible media in ECD programming can also help to promote ECD.* Advocacy, mobilisation, and education by radio is one example, as is the use of sermons and other religious messages (in churches, temples, and mosques) to promote ECD messages.

Grounding in local reality. Another important organisational principle is that ECD programmes should be based on local resources, on the everyday life of the family and, to the extent possible, on traditional child-rearing practices and existing knowledge. As shown in a study in Lao PDR, while some of these practices may be harmful to the child, many more deserve to be encouraged and strengthened. Related to this is the use of local culture and language—as well as local rhymes, religious sayings, folk tales, games, festivals, puppets, plays, songs and lullabies—in ECD programmes.

One way to gain information on such local practice, among other important data, are *knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) surveys*. These can assess such issues as attitudes of mothers and fathers towards having children, knowledge about children's needs, child-rearing practices which

help and hinder child development, caretaking practices that help social-emotional development, knowledge about dangers and risks around the home, indicators of physical development, common practices for cognitive and language development, perceptions about the relationship between home-based and school-based activities, perceptions about school skills and the parents' role in the development of such skills, and discriminatory behaviour in parenting practices, especially in regard to girls.

Related to this is *the need to use participatory methods of needs assessment, programming and planning, implementation, and evaluation*. In other words, methods should be found to involve children, women, men, and the community at large in ECD activities. Participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) methods are an example of this, including the mapping of ECD services and families with young children.

Clarity of roles and process. Another important principle is the need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in ECD programmes. In order to determine an appropriate division of labour among the various actors at various levels in ECD, a matrix is useful—of who (government, NGOs, the private sector) does what in regard to the primary target group (young children at various ages), to caregivers (parents, siblings, parents-to-be, and other caregivers), and ECD shareholders and interest groups (community leaders, trainers, extension agents of other sectors, academics and professionals, government officials, policy-makers, the public). Once such a matrix is developed, it is easier to determine, for example, gaps in services, where additional resources and training are required, etc.

It is also important to clarify what is meant by good ECD practices. This is where it is useful to have (e.g., for parents, daycare workers, teachers) clear manuals, guidebooks, curriculum guides, record formats, (self) evaluation materials, and checklists of milestones in the child's physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and linguistic development.

Related to this is *the need to have systematic methods for tracing and tracking*—tracing the progress of children related to various services of ECD (e.g., immunisation and growth monitoring) and tracking down those who do not avail themselves of these services. In any given community, it is therefore important to be able to list children by age (e.g., through local government or church records or a special census or survey), record various milestones in their development, and determine who, within the community, is responsible for ensuring that children, especially children at risk and with special problems, use the services provided. Such a monitoring process can also focus on issues related to child protection.

How Can ECD Success Be Measured?

The first issue related to the monitoring and evaluation of ECD "success" is that *monitoring and evaluation processes must be integrated into ECD programmes, from their very beginning*, and into the ways of thinking of participants, both organisers and implementers. Monitoring and evaluation also need to be structured so that they look both at the more quantitative issues of coverage and costs and at the "flavour" and nature of the programmes. They also need to be used both for

system accountability and central planning purposes, and for individual project improvement and localised planning.

Another issue is the need to ensure that *there is clear reporting to the family concerning the progress of the child*. This can serve as strong feedback to increase parental awareness about the usefulness of ECD activities and to strengthen their demands for higher quality ECD programmes.

A third issue relates to *the need to focus assessment particularly on children and families at risk*. ECD planners, programmers and practitioners need to know whether their programmes and activities are useful for those who need them most.

A further issue, given the lack of developed evaluation systems in many countries, is *self-evaluation* (for parents, caregivers, and institutions). In Sri Lanka, a self-evaluation package, called "Where Am I Going," has been developed which asks teachers to evaluate themselves in areas such as free play, storytelling, the use of the environment, language development, etc. There is a similar checklist developed as a chart that can be hung on the wall so that parents can see what should be happening in the programme.

Home observation of parents' knowledge, skills, and behaviours and their impact on child's development is also important. This can be labour-intensive, of course, but can also provide direct feedback to parents on their parenting skills and on the effectiveness of parent education programmes.

ECD programmes must also develop a variety of indicators—physical, behavioural, neurological, linguistic, etc.— to assess children's progress. The important thing is to ensure that these are very much *practitioner and parent-friendly*.

A final issue is *the need to develop and clearly define the year 2000 goals*. Who will define the indicators used to measure these goals? Will such indicators be only quantitative in nature (e.g. the percentage of children who are in preschool or in a range of ECD programmes) or more qualitative (the percentage of children who enter school "ready" or with developmental delays)?

Problems and Constraints

Despite the achievements and trends related to the development of ECD in the region, many difficulties remain. These include:

- *difficulties in expanding access to, and improving the quality of, ECD programmes to those who need them most*. ECD activities usually focus on older children (aged 5 to 6) living in urban areas. The preferred approach is either mere child-"minding" (a place to leave and feed children) or an academic, instructional approach in preparation for school—rather than on integrated child care and child development.
- *the low status of ECD itself and of its teachers and workers*. In comparison to teachers in the formal system of education and to workers (such as health and agricultural extension workers) in other sectors, ECD personnel are generally badly paid (if at all) and without security and often little motivation. This is where the issue of incentives becomes

important—the problem of losing volunteers from ECD activities and the need, therefore, to devise non-salary incentives such as access to income-generating activities, field trips, free health care at local hospitals and appreciation from the local community.

- *rivalries and competition within the community*, exist despite myths to the contrary. Thus, communities are often riddled with conflict, lack solidarity, and have limited time and energy to participate in ECD activities.
- *poor coordination and weak intersectoral linkages at all levels*. Various parts of the education system itself (daycare, pre-school, and the primary school) often work together for coordinated attention to the young child, and concerned sectors, such as health and social welfare work usually collaborate even less.
- *the politicization of ECD*, as traditionally in Latin America, where it is popular with the people and therefore in the rhetoric of competing political parties. Thus, ECD programmes begun by one government may not outlast changes in government. To make the distinction used in Latin America, if a programme is not a commitment of the "State" (irrespective of government), it will not long survive.
- *the fear of governments that any involvement in ECD will invariably lead to excessive demands* for expensive, formal ECD systems which most can ill afford.
- *the premature (and often simplistic) rush to develop and disseminate a standard model* which is meant to work in all regions and among all strata of a given country.

Suggestions for Future National and Regional Action

At the seminar country teams were asked to develop plans for short-term action (i.e., what they would do once they returned to their offices based on what they learned at the workshop) in order to expand and strengthen ECD services.

A common theme across the teams was the need for UNICEF itself to play a larger role in advocacy, mobilisation, partnership-building, and awareness-raising at all levels of the system: international (e.g., via donors), regional, national, and local, village. The need here is to present arguments for investment in ECD that include, but go beyond, its role in preparing children for primary school into other economic, social, and psychological areas. In this regard, several ideas were raised:

- the shared packaging and marketing of ECD within a region and beyond;
- media initiatives, again at both the local level (e.g., through popular theatre) and the national level;
- fund-raising—for example, determining which donors are most willing to support ECD activities and framing the proposal to meet donor expectations (e.g., linkages with Women in Development (WID), the girl child, the environment, indigenous peoples);
- the writing of case studies and demonstrations of effective programme models;
- the location of ECD in the context of child rights and human development;

- the use across borders of key decision-makers who have opted for strong ECD programmes; and
- well-targeted seminars and study tours.

Other areas for regional exchange ...

■ TRAINING

- to identify and prepare a directory of organizations, institutions, and individuals working in ECD within the region (e.g., regional universities);
- to prepare an inventory and content analysis of existing training materials in the region, leading to the sharing of materials, methodologies, and approaches, including different packages, videos, and tested practices;
- disseminate how to plan and design different training programmes (e.g., for parenting or child-to-child education or the training of trainers);
- address issues of certification/credentialing; and
- examine how to organise training in ECD at the regional level—with country teams attending, perhaps using global training funds (e.g., the University of Victoria model implemented in the region).

■ CURRICULUM/ MATERIALS

- prepare an inventory of existing materials in the region (curriculum, support materials, toys, etc.) for both young children and parents;
- develop an ECD curriculum framework that could be used across countries within the region—with a "how-to" manual (e.g., community-based curriculum);
- identify regional resource persons who can assist in ECD curriculum development; and
- organise fora to discuss issues of particular importance (e.g., language use in ECD curriculum)

■ INDICATORS

- identify common quantifiable indicators; e.g. the number of children (boys and girls), teachers, centres, and training courses;
- develop a set of "core" quality indicators, leaving flexibility for country-specific needs in order to measure impact at different levels (the child, family level, community);
- address validity and reliability issues—how to develop "built-in" processes to assure accuracy of data; and
- examine the various batteries of tests developed elsewhere (e.g., the International Education Association (IEA) study).

■ RESEARCH

This is a neglected area, yet it is basic to all aspects of ECD and needs to be central to ECD programmes.

What to do research on

- basic and baseline information and data for policy analysis, planning, and programming;
- insight into the behaviour of children (aged 0 to 8), especially as these relate to gender differences, child-rearing practices, and socialisation processes;
- understanding of cultural contexts;
- studies and research demonstrating the benefits of ECD (including economic and social analyses);
- unique populations (AIDS-affected children); e.g., what is the extent of the problem and what are its unique characteristics?
- assessments of the impact of the programme.

How to do the research

- explore new methodologies (e.g., action research, with the involvement of target groups);
- make research available to all—parents, community, planners and policy-makers—and as a tool for public education; and
- use all possible partners in research, across sectors—universities, NGOs, school teachers, community workers, training institutes, departments of monitoring and evaluation.

In addition, UNICEF should go beyond general advocacy to assistance with national policy formulation. ECD is an area where ill-informed policy decisions can go seriously wrong, with long-term consequences (e.g., use of national language rather than mother tongue; the development of entry tests for primary schools); thus, the need for informed debate as such policies get developed.

UNICEF can assist as well in the development of networks which combine an interest in child development and child rights—and the media—perhaps for the purpose of multi-country funding. This includes activities such as the Save The Children Fund Strong Beginnings programmes which attempt to integrate ECD, Women in Development (WID), family development, and preschool activities.

In sum, within the region there is a wider diversity of experience in ECD programming. The opportunity to share experiences across countries was invaluable and will lead to mutual support and additional sharing which will enhance ECD programming throughout the region.

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Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.
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