Advocacy

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We Call Upon the Global Village

Advocacy, Communications, and Social Mobilisation on Behalf of Young Children

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With the advent of a global media that links us to realities across the planet, we can no longer afford to view a child, a family, a village, a community, or a group of people as isolated entities. They (and we) are affected by the decisions made upstream and downstream—by the political, physical, social, and economic environments that surround them. In that context, we are challenged, as proponents of early childhood care and development (ECCD), to work on many levels to address the rights and needs of young children. In the following pages we will explore the roles advocacy, communications, and social mobilisation play in getting young children the care and attention that they need and deserve.

Section one, Advocacy for ECCD, explores five different dimensions of advocacy for ECCD, moving us to an expanded view of what constitutes advocacy on behalf of young children. In Section two, The Many Faces of Communication in Advocacy for ECCD, we explore the role of communication in moving agenda and practice forward. In Section three, ECCD Advocacy in the Global Village, we explore the purposes and roles of advocacy within the emerging Global Village.
Advocacy For ECCD

Influencing Policy

The most common understanding of advocacy on behalf of young children is the work we do to get young children included in the formulation of national and international policies.1

March 1990, Jomtien, Thailand Participants to the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) ratified the Conference Declaration, which included this statement: “Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities or institutional programmes as appropriate” (Article 5).

A Framework for Action was developed to guide governments and their partners from civil society in creating national plans of action with targets to be met by the end of the decade, including this one: “Expansion of early childhood care and development activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children” (Article 5, para. 8). Ten years later, 104 countries reported on the assessment of their progress toward achieving the goals of EFA—including two indicators for ECCD.

The inclusion of this brief but significant reference to ECCD in the EFA Declaration was a milestone in global efforts to promote ECCD, urging all to go beyond the limited goal of simply ensuring that young children survive and instead promoting their sustained and optimum development as whole human beings. But before three in the morning of that final day in Jomtien when the Declaration was to be ratified, this text that many of us now know by heart, was not yet typed into the Declaration. So how did it finally get there?

It took two years of persistent groundwork by the co-founders of the Consultative Group on ECCD, specifically four people representing four different organisations, to get those five sentences into the EFA Declaration and to ensure that ECCD would be a part of the EFA agenda. They (along with CG colleagues and allies around the world) maximised every opportunity possible to raise awareness of the issues. They convened special meetings and invited key EFA planners. They participated in pre-EFA meetings at the regional level, and, in particular, they rallied a critical mass of support for ECCD in Latin America. They also participated in preparatory activities at the headquarters of EFA conveners, and they took advantage of serendipitous encounters with key agency heads like James Grant, then Executive Director of UNICEF, to point out that child development was being left out of the EFA.

The group of four formed a creative collaboration with certain speechwriters to ensure the inclusion of ECCD in key speeches of development agency leaders. They strategically positioned three CG representatives to take part in the drafting committee for the major EFA documents before the conference. And finally, their efforts culminated in Jomtien with a CG-organised ECCD panel and video presentation. The three CG representatives on the drafting committee for the Declaration engaged in intense lobbying efforts and skilful negotiations, and by
three a.m. they finally succeeding in getting the text into the Declaration.³

In many ways, the EFA example was classic advocacy work. It included the following strategies:

– Codifying key ideas into slogans, or easily understood concepts, such as “learning begins at birth.”
– Carrying out persistent groundwork leading up to meetings where policy will be determined, maximising opportunities to plant the seeds of belief and introducing those seeds to key decision-makers and their support staff.
– Coordinating the efforts of several like-minded individuals or organisations.
– Convening and participating in meetings and inviting influential people to be present.
– Participating in preparatory sessions to be sure that the key ideas stay in the public eye and mind.
– Garnering the support of movers and shakers and helping them to see how they might be allies.
– Helping writers to see how to insert appropriate wording into public speeches and texts.
– Creating presentations and media products to inform, move, and persuade people.
– Lobbying skillfully and personably.
– Positioning advocates strategically on committees, especially those who are willing to do the actual work of drafting policy documents to ensure that the belief is represented in its proper context and with sufficient weight.

Social Mobilisation

Advocacy in ECCD goes beyond influencing policy; it includes action that changes the type and amount of care children receive. Social mobilisation is advocacy that activates people to get involved in children’s well-being in new and more sustained ways.

1975, Agueda, Portugal An association of parents of children with special needs from the city of Porto travelled to Agueda, a regional capital in the central coastline of Portugal, on a mission to get services for their children. They pointed out to officials the lack of educational and social resources for children with special needs in the region. This experience inspired the work of a small group composed of parents, educators, paediatricians, and volunteers. They started by searching for Agueda’s marginalised children, youth, and adults who were virtually invisible except to family members and close neighbours. These marginalised individuals lived in isolation, socially ostracized and often in quite horrible conditions, at best receiving occasional help from a distant rehabilitation centre. The work of this group to identify and begin to address the holistic needs of marginalised children led them to set up the Bela Vista Nursery School as one of the initial steps in a campaign intended to raise community awareness and initiate a process for changing the conditions in which people with special needs of all ages were living.

Bela Vista was successful and generated interest also because it was featured by the press. Community information and activation gatherings were organised. The group worked with professionals and laypeople alike, to help them to develop more inclusive practices and activities with the neglected individuals in their families, neighbourhoods, and communities. All these activities contributed to making it a highly visible programme for children with special needs.

These initial steps led the growing group to set up other concrete forms of support for families. They set up the first public health centre in Agueda that focused on maternal, infant, and child health. They convinced the Ministry of Education to set up Special Education Teams, which were itinerant multi-disciplinary teams providing support to teachers and programme leaders in mainstream schools throughout the region. The group created informal support systems for families, teachers, and other service providers to assist them in their daily lives, decision-making, and continuing efforts to fulfil the goals of “social-educational integration” for all children and young people with special needs.

Bela Vista also set up early intervention programmes, such as using home visits to work with children under three and their parents, and establishing hospital-based screening, diagnostic, and guidance programmes. They created a multi-disciplinary development consultation team to support communities after their local plans were developed. They also established and helped to foster thriving community groups composed of children, youth, parents, volunteers, and professionals. In essence, the Agueda experience is not just a systematic and comprehensive approach to providing for the education, health, and social needs of children with special needs. It has become a broad social movement for inclusion, compassion, respect, and tolerance for human diversity that continues to make a difference twenty-seven years later.⁴

Social mobilisation strategies used by the Agueda movement included the following:

– Naming and giving a human, personal face to a need or problem that exists for young children within a particular social context.
– Creating a coalition of stakeholders from different sectors, including those closest to children, such as parents and neighbours, who are dedicated to addressing the identified concerns.
– Finding and identifying the children and families in need of support and most deprived of their basic rights.
– Engaging marginalised people in identifying their own needs and possible solutions, and building on whatever strengths exist around them already.
– Setting up programmes that can directly serve children and families in holistic ways, and using
them as a springboard to create public awareness of the issues.

- Reaching out to the press and media.
- Setting up local community engagement and information sharing events.
- Inflaming the passion and will of community members to organise on behalf of all their children.
- Sponsoring the formation of new services or reform of existing but ineffectual services.
- Creating multi-disciplinary teams to work to educate, expand awareness, break down prejudices, and broaden the orientation of individuals in key sectors such as education, health, and social services.
- Creating or strengthening informal support systems for children, families, and those who interact with or influence them.
- Devising preventive and proactive activities to help stop the marginalisation of children.
- Working to help local efforts, programmes, and systems to grow, take root, spread, and create a groundswell of public will to serve children and support their development in holistic, comprehensive ways.

Networking, Communication, and Knowledge Exchange

The work we do to share what we know and build alliances is an important component of advocacy work. Each time we are able to awaken awareness of the issues and concerns involved in ECCD, or to share our experiences, we are engaging in advocacy on behalf of young children.

Tanzania 2002

AMANI, ECCD Tanzania is the Secretariat of the Tanzania ECD Network and was actively involved in the 2002 MINEDAF VIII—African Ministers’ Conference to review progress on Education for All and plan future actions. The Tanzanian ECD Network represents a collaboration of government and non-government organisations, and was active at the MINEDAF VIII conference with the goal of ensuring that ECCD would be a priority in national plans for EFA (See Case Study on page 49). While not all their plans for getting young children on the African national agendas bore fruit, the group had some successes, and learned important lessons about how they might proceed in the future. Through sharing their experiences via the Coordinators’ Notebook with other regional and national networks, they have contributed to the growing knowledge base on how networking and communication can support advocacy efforts.

In the past ten years, regional ECCD networks (formal and informal alliances) have been formed and linked with the Consultative Group on ECCD. They represent collaborations between thousands of ECCD proponents and groups in the Caribbean, Latin America, Arab countries, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Francophone Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Eastern Europe. They are also linked together through various coordinating groups, including international NGOs such as the Save the Children Alliance, foundations such as Bernard van Leer Foundation, UN organisations like UNICEF, and international financial and/or aid agencies like the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank.

The Consultative Group on ECCD, a consortium of diverse agencies whose Secretariat is charged with carrying out joint purposes, acts as a mechanism for promoting networking, communication among groups, and knowledge exchange through annual meetings, through the Coordinators’ Notebook, electronic and print publications, and through focused joint research, investigation, and knowledge creation processes.

The member organisations within each regional network also collaborate on diverse activities such as information exchange, resource development, research, policy analysis and advocacy for change, and local/regional capacity-building. Their insights and knowledge feed into the work of the Consultative Group through regional conveners, and the joint work and products of the CG in turn are distributed through the regional networks and partner agencies to serve as resources in their advocacy and programming efforts.

Sharing knowledge about effective, cutting-edge practice and programming experiences as well as significant findings from research has been an important advocacy tool. This knowledge has made its way into a whole range of national and international forums and conferences, through panel presentations, workshops, media presentations, and participant comments. It has been also used to educate individuals and
groups within development agencies and government ministries and to influence the policies and practices of these institutions. The knowledge gained has also informed the creation of television and radio emissions and publications aimed at parents or the general public, and it has been codified within a whole range of creative publications and videos by both the CG Secretariat and member organisations, as well as NGOs working in very specific conditions locally.

All of this work has helped to put young children on the international agenda, raise awareness about appropriate holistic programming, and create a stronger synergy between the efforts of individuals, groups, and networks—a stronger sense of a global village, working together on behalf of young children.

Advocacy through knowledge exchange and networking includes the following strategies:

- Forming strategic alliances of groups that have a shared purpose, focus, or stance in their work on behalf of young children.
- Creating a strong chorus of voices, through ongoing exchange, discussion, sharing, and relationship-building among ECCD proponents that clearly puts young children and their families at the centre and puts divisive institutional politics and agendas aside.
- Increasing the knowledge base on what works in various conditions by sharing experiences and jointly analysing them.
- Working with and through national and international development organisations to sponsor/support inter-agency networking.
- Hammering out agreed-upon language, concepts, frameworks, action plans, joint efforts, and tools that can then be used by the network members to garner greater support for quality ECCD within their home agencies and settings, as well as to influence decision-makers whose work has an impact on children.
- Coordinating efforts among local or regional groups to have an impact on district, national, regional, and international gatherings.
- Sharing, adapting, and co-creating materials and media products, as well as creating materials that can readily be used by others within the networks.
- Sharing strengths and knowledge through joint knowledge creation activities, and working actively to break down turf-guarding and competition among groups and individuals.
- Conducting participatory and action research, and cross-agency investigations of issues that can enrich the field of ECCD as a whole.
- Celebrating the diversity of knowledge and cultures that inform practices that support children.

Multi-pronged, Multi-dimensional Programming Initiatives

While multi-dimensional programme development might not at first glance appear to be an advocacy approach, when carried out in a way that activates systems and processes that improve the well-being of young children, it is indeed advocacy in a very concrete form.

Westport, Connecticut 1991  The Education Director of Save the Children (USA) and his team initiated “Strong Beginnings,” designed to be their special contribution as an international NGO committed to the global challenge of Education for All. Strong Beginnings builds on the proponents’ rich and extensive multi-layered, multicultural knowledge and experience base in education from the early childhood years to adulthood. It is also anchored on this premise: “where there is a need for improved education in developing countries, what is essential are reconstructed and rebuilt systems, as well as community participation and commitment.” Thus, they invested in building community support for children through the provision of complementary, inter-generational, community-based educational programmes: early childhood development, primary education, youth development, and adult literacy.

These four components comprise the “Strong Beginnings Cycle.” This cycle, which has been activated in more than twenty countries, has served at least one million children and adults in the last ten years. Among the impressive achievements are the 800 Village Schools in Mali, which now ensure access to education for 50,000 children who live in these previously “school-less” villages. The Village School’s success has been contagious. It has inspired seven other African countries to set up Village Schools and four more countries in other continents (Bolivia, El Salvador, Haiti, and Nepal) to adopt the model.

However, although we commonly think of success as expansion of children’s access to education, this is not necessarily the most significant achievement of the Strong Beginnings’ initiative. What is a more significant benchmark of success is the nature and quality of the programme development processes in each of the contexts for Strong Beginnings. Healthy processes are crucial to ensuring programme sustainability. In each of the countries, programmes were developed based on local needs, capacities, and support systems that were created by building on whatever was available. For example, in Malawi, the Community-based Options for Protection and Empowerment (COPE) has mobilised 200 Village AIDS Committees who now support orphans and their caregivers by developing home-based care kits, setting-up communal nurseries and gardens for their food and income, and using various forms of communication like theatre and home visits for education about AIDS. In El Salvador,
non-violence was incorporated into early childhood curriculum, reflecting issues that preoccupied young children and their families. Animadores and other volunteer teachers rewrote and retold non-violent versions of fairy tales, and in the process, thought through the role of violence in their everyday culture. In Vietnam, they started a pilot programme with daycare centres in three lowland communities to guide and support the teachers. A mentoring programme to raise awareness of young children involving principals and junior teachers was also established in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

The stimulation of multiple layers of interactive community-based processes and activities from the initial stage of identifying needs and problems, through problem-solving and planning, to concrete actions for the benefit of young as well as adult learners, is the lasting legacy of Strong Beginnings.

Some of the strategies of Programming Initiatives that advocate for young children include:

- Bringing policy and social will into focus through locally relevant and effective programming efforts.
- Creating frameworks that promote local solutions to local situations—an approach to ECCD that embraces local, diverse, complex, culturally relevant, people-centred, evolving, and flexible understandings of the many ways that children can be supported and families can thrive.
- Anchoring ECCD efforts in the inter-generational context that can best stimulate mutual benefit and commitment between younger and older children, adults, and elders.
- Using complementary programming strategies and flexible models that are embraced, adapted, and re-invented locally.
- Creating multiple interactive community-based processes that carry participants through stages of planning, action, reflection, and sharing.
- Understanding that when people are successfully engaged in participatory processes, the experience itself, even more than the particular child development content learned, is what will enable families and caregivers and planners to serve children and solve problems more effectively over time.
- Supporting individual communities and families to act on their own behalf, and allowing all the dimensions of young child development and family development to serve as entry points for community enthusiasm and action.

**Strengthening the Circles of Support around Children**

Advocacy for ECCD includes making sure that the interactions with, around, and on behalf of children are of high quality, and strengthen the supports that parents and caregivers can provide for children. It includes empowering individuals within the environment, in a non-threatening way, to use their native wisdom and experience as well as to learn new behaviours. It promotes situations in which not only the children, but the caregivers as well, are growing and thriving and realising their potential.

**Loob-Bunga Resettlement Site, Zambales, Philippines 2001** Thelma became a parent volunteer after years of participating in the parent education programme organised by the Community of Learners (COLF), a Philippine NGO that started the community-based Family Education programme for the Aetas of Pinatubo in 1990. Then in 1999, she became a “parent-apprentice” child development worker (CDW) working alongside the COLF CDWs in the home-based, parent-child programme for her own sitio (community). Thelma helps to facilitate the children’s activities in the playgroup, caring for and teaching the children while their parents participate in the parent education activities. When COLF phases out of its direct involvement in the programme, Thelma will be one of the parents who will assume full responsibility for the home-based ECCD programme.

Part of Thelma’s training involves group activities with other parents. She participates actively in the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) workshops that are a part of the parent education programme. Here she learned to use tools for problem-solving and analysis such as the health calendar, the health matrix, and the health fence. She posted the health charts in the venue for their home-based programme as a reminder for all parents to be more careful and prevent the recurrence or spread of children’s diseases.

She also attends meetings with the parent volunteers from the ten sitios in Loob-Bunga who comprise the ECD Coordinating Committee and then convenes meetings with the parents in her own sitio to discuss programme matters needing immediate action, such as their cooking schedule rotation and plans for a new menu cycle for the children’s feeding programme.

As parent in charge of her sitio’s playgroup, Thelma also implements the nutrition interventions which involve regular growth monitoring and discussions with parents on the results of these, running the milk stations for the malnourished children, following up with home visits for severely malnourished or sick children, and assisting them in getting access to treatment and medicine. This level of participation motivated her to volunteer to be a barangay (village) nutrition worker (BNS) so she could also attend nutrition seminars organised by the local public health office and has allowed her to establish linkages with the public health centre for the benefit of the children in her own sitio.

Thelma was very concerned about the lack of clean potable water sources in her own sitio as she could see firsthand its adverse effects on the children’s health. She wrote a letter to the Mayor of Botolan town on behalf of the parents, requesting the installation of two water pumps in their sitio. She persistently followed up on her request with the Mayor’s office. When she finally got a chance to talk to the Mayor, she started by intro-
ducing herself as a “parent-apprentice” from COLF then told him about the living conditions of the residents in their sitio, highlighting the frequency of children’s illness caused in large part by the lack of access to clean water. That same week, the Mayor approved the purchase of two water pumps for their sitio.

There are many others like Thelma, a volunteer learning to be a community development worker. “Animadora, Madrichot, Madre Guía,” are different titles from different countries and cultures, but which all denote the same responsibility as caregivers and teachers of young children and parents in their own communities. Together with parents, they constitute the first circles of support for young children.

Thus effective programme operation is a strong advocacy tool. Strategies relating to strengthening the circles of support around children include:

– Keeping in mind that the people, not the written policies or programme models or child development messages, are at the centre of effective support for children.
– Setting up systems in which parents and community caregivers can take increasing responsibility and initiative in acting as advocates for their children.
– Providing processes through which parents discover what they know, identify what they want to learn, try out and evaluate new behaviours, share and articulate their experiences, and become spokespeople for their own interests and the interests of their fellow parents.
– Providing or stimulating programme participants to create tools that can be used by laypeople to document, evaluate, articulate, reflect on, and analyse their own programmes.
– Planning programmes so they progressively phase out outsiders and phase in insiders to the community.
– Finding ways to engage parents’ and community level workers in activities that are natural to their roles as parents, and that both activate their passion and give them tools to build a better world for their children and themselves.

The five examples above all illustrate different dimensions of advocacy. The work, commitment, and timely actions of the individuals and organisations described have all had a positive impact on the lives of young children—whether it is one infant in the home visiting programme, ten or twenty children in a playgroup, or a percentage of the millions of birth to six-year-olds affected by a country’s comprehensive policy for ECCD that broadens access to ECCD services.

What is common across the examples is the success of those who act as advocates for early childhood care and development at various levels—either directly with children and families at the community level...
doing capacity building or managing programmes; at
the organisational level creating projects and initia-
tives; more globally, working in networks; and on all
levels, addressing issues of policy and practice.
Whatever their involvement in ECCD, they are the
advocates who inform and communicate, negotiate
and appeal, and organise or at least reach out to
potential participants in a global challenge to ensure
the growth, development, and well-being of the
world’s youngest citizens.

The Many Faces of Communication in
Advocacy for ECCD

Historically, communicators tended to be specialists
who concerned themselves with social marketing and
promotion, with the packaging of messages into pub-
llications and media products, such as brochures and
booklets, films, press releases, and glossy promotion-
al presentations of an organisation’s or government’s
accomplishments. But with the advent of desktop pub-
lishing and the explosion of electronic media we now
live in a multimedia world where information
exchange takes place continuously, and new tech-
nologies continue to break through barriers posed by
space, time, and limited resources.

The role of communication within ECCD has shift-
ed and expanded. And with it, we have all had to learn
to use communication tools more effectively as a sig-
nificant aspect of our advocacy and programming
work. We have all become part of an ongoing infor-
mation exchange process, and the added value of
communication tools and activities in social develop-
ment programmes is emphasised now more than ever.

Thus, our understanding of communication, what it
is and what it can do for us, needs to shift. After
exploring an expanded definition of communication in
the following pages, we will consider some examples
and issues within Development Communication for
ECCD. In particular, we will discuss: a) the strengths
and weaknesses of social marketing, b) communica-
tion aimed at positioning ECCD within the broader
social development framework, c) communication
support for active community participation, and d) the
role of face-to-face communications in ECCD
Advocacy.

Development Communication
for and about ECCD

Development Communication, also referred to as
Communication for Development, can be defined in
the field of ECCD as all of the information generating, sort-
ing, analysing, sharing and exchange activities we engage in to
accomplish our mission.

And what is our mission? It is to ensure that all chil-
dren, particularly those who live in the Majority
World (and in the communities which are pockets of
poverty, social exclusion, and conflict in the Minority
World), will have all the necessary services and fami-
ly support systems to facilitate their healthy develop-
ment and allow them to thrive socially, emotionally,
intellectually, physically, and spiritually.

Thus, Development Communication embraces not
only the more traditional approaches of Social
Marketing and Publications, it also includes all the
interpersonal exchanges we engage in, the tools we

FIGURE ONE:
Development
Communication Model
Including Participatory
Agenda Setting

Neill McKee, 1992
use for working together, and the information flow within the relationships and alliances we build. It is a key factor within advocacy, social mobilisation, and programme operation as well.

The goal of communication has always been to inform and to activate people. But historically it was approached primarily as a top-down process, where information was processed and delivered and people would then receive it and (hopefully) act upon it. What is now evolving is a conception of communication as a give-and-take exchange, offering a set of tools that help people working at all levels of ECCD to participate, work together, create shared understandings, and articulate their experiences to those who are their most appropriate “audiences.” Thus development communication at its best provides the tools for active community participation, social mobilisation from the ground up, and shared social discourse by all key stakeholders in children’s lives.

Neill McKee has developed a “development communications model” that is compatible and consistent with the goal of activating genuine community participation in ECCD (see Fig. 1). He has also articulated the interaction between advocacy, social mobilisation, and programme communication, defining their possibilities as well as limitations. He takes the perspective of a new-style communications specialist in emphasising that active community participation is the goal of advocacy and social mobilisation. Here the two perspectives of the communications specialists and ECCD practitioners come together.

Applying McKee’s definitions to ECCD, “Advocacy consists of the organisation of information into arguments to be communicated through various interpersonal and media channels with a view to gaining political and social leadership acceptance and preparing a society”; in this case, preparing communities to support and sustain ECCD programmes.

McKee goes on to say “Social mobilisation is the process of bringing together all feasible and practical inter-sectoral social allies to raise people’s awareness of and demand for a particular development programme [such as ECCD], to assist in the delivery of resources and services, and to strengthen community participation for sustainability and self-reliance.” Effective communication tools, including those that facilitate brainstorming, thinking, analysing, documenting, and sharing decision-making processes and results are an essential part of social mobilisation activities.

“Programme communication is the process of identifying, segmenting and targeting specific groups/audiences with particular strategies, messages or training programmes [on ECCD] through various mass media and interpersonal channels, traditional and non-traditional.”

Opportunities arise throughout the course of programme implementation for communicating with specific groups and audiences. When strategically designed communication tools or processes are introduced in a timely manner, they can enhance and strengthen the roots of the programme and its dialogues with the programme’s stakeholders. But deciding on what forms, and how and when to use or disseminate them, requires in-depth knowledge and understanding of the unfolding programme.

Just as programme and curriculum development should begin with and build on what parents know, do, and believe as caregivers, communications approaches and products are also best anchored on this understanding and respect. And to achieve this, communication tools need to be selected and applied skilfully in context by the people who must use them and who will gain something from using them. We no longer can work from a model in which donors and governments create the documentation and reporting forms, and overworked programme personnel fill them in. We have to recognise that effective communication is embedded within the programme’s operations, and sustained communication is a critical part of the work of ECCD.

Social Marketing and Social Development

In the past two decades we have seen how countries in the Majority World became the test market for the application of marketing theories. Social marketing was applied to promoting social programmes for family planning, to address malnutrition, to prevent or cure diarrhoeal diseases, and more recently to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. In many places they succeeded, in others they failed. Either way, these experiences offer many lessons about social marketing.
Social marketing has been defined as "...the design, implementation and control of programmes calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas, involving considerations of product, planning, pricing, communications and market research." The jargon sounds alien to ECCD. In fact, many NGOs are wary of social marketing because it is seen as manipulative.

Over the years, we have seen both positive and negative effects from the social marketing efforts to promote breastfeeding and weaning foods, Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT), and contraceptives and family planning. In the most positive cases, the emphasis has been on encouraging positive change in the behaviour or the practice of the caregiver as needed to promote children's health and family self-reliance. But in the more negative cases, these campaigns became little more than commercial marketing efforts to sell products like ORT tablets or packets, weaning foods, and even infant formula disguised as another product.

One of the best examples of a negative experience with social marketing that accounts for such distrust involves an issue that is very important in ECCD: breastfeeding. Long after the breastfeeding advocates had scored a major triumph with the passage of the "International Milk Code," and most countries had passed legislation to complement and enforce the Code's provisions at the country level, the active marketing of infant formula in the Majority World by large multinational companies continues unabated. Sometimes, in blatant violation of the Code, this social marketing is carried out through print and broadcast media, but usually is pursued as subtle but manipulative forms of marketing through health professionals and facilities. Health professionals are given "training" sessions on the benefits of bottle feeding, and health centres are provided with free samples of the product—enough to get a mother started on the product, causing her breast milk to dry up, but not enough for a poor woman to adequately continue to nourish her child.

Breastfeeding advocates retaliated in kind, and also used social marketing strategies to counteract the actions of the giant multinational corporations manufacturing infant formula. In the UK, for example, a coalition of organisations launched international campaigns for mother and child health including a boycott of Nestlé products. Nestlé changed its products and marketing strategy as a result.

Unfortunately, the tendency of social marketing proponents to focus more on the marketing of a product than on a change in behaviours and beliefs creates situations that can actually work against positive change. For example, certain pre-packaged early childhood education programmes, imported from North America and Europe, were introduced through social marketing within the Majority World. These expensive and not always culturally appropriate programmes have become popular and are status symbols for middle- and upper-class families.

Often, the programmes are sold on the basis of how well they can ensure children's rate of entrance exam success and admission into the more prestigious private schools. This approach should be considered well-meaning in that it speaks to parents' concerns that their children do well in school and society. However, such tactics do not do much to educate the public on the value of early childhood experiences for children as a support to their development. Instead, they shift the public discourse on early education from a focus on what is best for young children, to what will most effectively get them accepted to higher levels of education—two goals that may conflict in countries where the education system features rote learning and assimilation of facts.

Social marketing that promotes a key idea or an attitude or stance can help create public demand for higher quality ECCD and greater access to it. For example, marketing of the idea that "parents are a child's first teachers" can promote greater attention to children, without insisting that the public must "buy" a particular product or formula.

Head Start and Sesame Street, two pioneers and still frontrunners in far-reaching, publicly funded ECCD programming, were initially promoted and "bought" on the basis of their "school-readiness" tag. However, in the case of these two highly visible programmes, the introductory sales pitch was transcended by their quality content; both programmes address the whole child's development and serve as positive models of a comprehensive approach to ECCD in their respective contexts.

Social marketing has inspired a recent generation of components or campaigns, called Information, Education, and Communications (IEC). When IEC campaigns are lodged within existing ECCD service delivery systems, they have been shown to be effective for educating caregivers. They are also good starting points for stimulating community interest, which will in turn lead to community participation and active support for ECCD programmes. ECCD programmes that successfully mobilise community support also provide the impetus to initiate and expand child-centred community development efforts. Thus social marketing in the form of IEC components has proven to be a useful tool.

The case study on page 53 offers a good example of this tight combination of IEC and ECCD service delivery. The "Healthy Babies Campaign" in the state of Kentucky, USA, was part of a state-funded, fifty million dollar comprehensive plan for child health and development. The campaign aims to ensure that all young children are healthy and safe, have a firm foundation for personal and school success, are cared for and grow up within strong families and communities. It involves educating women of childbearing age and
new parents about the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices during pregnancy and the first years of their child’s life. Various forms of media and dissemination channels are used, including a million dollar advertising campaign targeting pregnant women and the provision of information resources for every parent. The Kentucky Parents’ Guide is also used in home visiting programmes. Healthy Babies materials are made available through 8,000 distribution points such as hospitals, clinics, public libraries, family resource centres, and youth centres.

Put in a proper context as a short-term undertaking within a long-term social development process, social marketing has its uses. However, there should always be transparency about the goals of the campaign and there must be no hidden agendas that promote vested interests, create need, or impose unnecessary conditions.

Cognisant of the importance of providing information on ECCD-related issues and the potentials of various media for awareness raising and education about ECCD, UNICEF country offices in the Maldives, Vietnam, and Bangladesh are now supporting their partner governments in various ECCD and media projects. Some of the countries are also interested in learning about production of media for children.

The common strategy of the UNICEF offices involves assisting these countries with capacity-building to develop and implement their own communications programmes. UNICEF has tapped an external resource person who has combined ECCD and media expertise. She works as an ECCD advocate within the UNICEF country offices by encouraging them to make the ECCD-media connection and invest in communications for ECCD projects, as well as to orient media projects toward ECCD. She also works with both media and ECCD practitioners in the countries.

In the Maldives, the government and UNICEF developed and implemented an ECCD Media Strategy for and about infants and young children. Training on ECCD was conducted for radio and TV producers. Then the producers joined ECCD core teams composed of a preschool teacher, supervisor, and a representative from the group responsible for the advancement of local culture to work on materials for a public information campaign on ECCD. They produced a 52-week TV and radio campaign for caregivers. These TV and radio spots were broadcast three times a day, each for one whole week. Complementary print materials such as children’s books, books for caregivers and posters were also produced.

In Vietnam, the Government’s Committee for Population, Families, and Children is spearheading a media campaign on ECCD for caregivers. These TV and radio spots were broadcast three times a day, each for one whole week. Complementary print materials such as children’s books, books for caregivers and posters were also produced.

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In Vietnam, the Government’s Committee for Population, Families, and Children is spearheading a media campaign as a part of an existing programme, Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD), with support from UNICEF. This also involves in-house collaboration within UNICEF between the Education Section and the Communications Section.

A study on knowledge, attitudes, and practices in relation to ECCD and a survey on media for children were conducted in 2001. Several workshops involving media practitioners and those directly involved in ECCD programmes were convened. In 2001, children’s books and posters for caregivers were developed in an “ECCD and Media” workshop. The books feature child and family interaction, telling stories about the importance of family support in nurturing curiosity, and about different ways of developing the child’s senses. One story portrays gender fairness through the daily routines of two siblings in a family from an ethnic tribal community. In another story, a grandfather nurtures his disabled grandchild’s holistic development and works for the child’s inclusion in the community.

The 2002 workshop focused on the development of a more detailed communications plan with a media campaign to be launched in early 2003. The participants also developed prototype materials designed to communicate key concepts and principles. They made posters depicting caregivers’ activities with children, children’s books, caregivers’ books, radio and television spots, and a “newborn gift pack” for families to promote holistic child development from birth.
Positioning ECCD

The view of ECCD as consisting primarily of school readiness programmes has been too successfully marketed in many parts of the world, and may need to be “unmarketed.” ECCD is about addressing the child’s rights now and not for some future time, focusing on much more than school. We are working to promote the best interests of young children in a crisis-ridden world where poverty, inequality, discrimination, conflict, violence, and environmental degradation pose extraordinary challenges to families as caregivers. Implanting ECCD within the landscape of human and social development requires recognition of all the layers of human behaviour and interaction it touches.

ECCD is like an onion (or asBronfenbrenner described in his ecological model of social development, a series of concentric circles). At the centre is the young child’s full development as a whole human being. This centre is the foundation upon which all later development is based, and therefore needs to be seen as an important time in its own right, not just as preparation for school or citizenship.

Directly surrounding the individual are the people who most have an impact—the parents and the family. Therefore, ECCD has to do with parent-child interactions and family relationships. The next context that supports (or fails to support) these relationships is the community. ECCD programming that activates communities as learning environments, and that strengthens the communities’ commitments to human development from the ground up, is more likely to create lasting change. Finally, in a circle surrounding communities, we find the governments as duty bearers for children’s rights to survival, development, protection, and participation, and societies as the contexts in which individuals and groups may be afforded meaning, safety, and dignity.

Thus, we need to get past a marketing mentality of promoting selective desirable outcomes such as “school readiness” or “child survival” and work to position ECCD programmes, especially those designed to serve young children and families living in difficult conditions, within a broader social development framework. We need to insist that focusing on young children is not a luxury or elective—it is at the centre of strengthening the circles that make up a society, and that set the contexts for all social issues, from individuals, to groups, to structures, to the culture and society as a whole.

In this view, reaching all those responsible for early childhood care for development cannot be done through sporadic, short-term information campaigns, as if parental responsibility only involved making three or four major decisions over a six- or eight-year period (e.g., where to go for prenatal care and childbirth; whether to breastfeed or to bottle feed; whether to speak in the home language or use English; or when to enrol in child care—at age three, or four?). Neither can we continue to accept the view that ECCD is merely a service to be purchased by those who are interested in it and who can afford it.

Community participation and engagement in ECCD goes beyond simply requesting communities to participate by donating time and materials: true participatory methods involve community members in problem and needs identification, planning, implementing, and evaluation of ECD projects.
Communication for ECCD, when it is put in its proper context, will focus on activating a variety of processes intended to achieve specific objectives:

– to raise awareness of the importance of the early years and create demand for ECCD services;
– to improve the quality of existing services and expand their reach to all children;
– to generate resources for ECCD and to embed ECCD within the local and national economy and culture in ways that will ensure its continued support;
– to sustain and provide recognition and supports for the caregivers and systems that enable them to nurture and protect young children;
– to develop enabling policies or change regulatory frameworks at the community, district, national, and international levels;
– to convince the society that the well-being of people, starting with the youngest people, is a central concern for all, including both public and civil society.

In order to realise these objectives it is necessary to capture the hearts and minds of people at all levels of society, to build up social will on behalf of children within individuals and within institutions. In that sense, those of us who are working within ECCD need to become more inspirational and articulate as communicators, sharing our experiences and perspectives on children in as many contexts as we can.

**Communication Support for Active Community Participation**

Central to our work is the need to activate genuine community participation and engagement in ECCD. We can no longer afford the luxury of seeing ECCD as primarily “delivery of services,” because experience has shown us that services that are delivered without supports and learning built into the environment around the child and/or family will quickly diminish in effect when the services are withdrawn. Although ECCD programmes may focus on children and families, it is the community learning environment that is the closest and in direct interaction with the child and family. The community also bridges young children and families with government and civil society.

For the purpose of this discussion we can define “community participation” by describing what is involved in participation, adapting Robert Myers’ definition of what it means to be participatory in ECCD:

*We should look beyond a limited view defining programme participants as individual users or beneficiaries or receivers of knowledge. Simply requesting communities to participate by donating time and materials is not sufficient…. To be truly participatory, programming methods should be adopted that involve community members at all stages of programming—in diagnosis, planning, implementing and evaluation of early childhood projects. Programming for early childhood care and development should involve working in partnership, employing dialogue, drawing on both traditional wisdom and scientific knowledge, with a goal of mutual learning and of empowering communities to assume control over decisions and actions influencing their condition of life.*

Note that the operative concepts here are: mutual learning, partnerships, problem and needs identification, planning, managing, assessing collective actions, and empowerment. These are the essential elements of participation in ECCD.

Communication tools for active community engagement have proliferated in the past many years, including use of PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) and PRA (Participatory Rural Assessment) techniques, the use of technologies such as tape recorders, video, and cameras to help people document and tell their own stories, the use of drama and radio to bring community concerns into clearer focus, and also the use of traditional sharing techniques such as story-telling and the creations of rituals, song, and artwork.

Despite this proliferation, ECCD as a field still tends to fall back on the old model of communication, in which the exchange and dialogue that is shared at the family and community level doesn’t really get captured, registered, and processed into communication products. There is a separation between the communication generated within programme operation, the documentation the NGO and programme must provide to funders, and the communications that take place at the donor or government level. Too often, NGOs censor their experiences heavily or translate them into uninspired, stiff report language in order to meet the requirements of donors. At the same time, donors and government agencies still see their role as formulating information for dissemination, and are less focused on deriving knowledge and insight from the wealth of communication that has been generated in Pakistan: Aga Khan Foundation/0304-094/Jean-Luc Ray

Participants make dolls from locally available materials in an ECD cross-sectoral workshop to raise awareness of ECD issues across sectors.
the course of a project or programme. The public presentations and products about programmes end up bearing little resemblance to the real learning and exchange that has arisen from ECCD projects.

However, in the past two-and-a-half years, an innovative joint-agency project to address the issue of investigating and “capturing” programme realities has been carried out. It is called the Effectiveness Initiative (EI), and is a project initiated by the Bernard van Leer Foundation within the context of the Consultative Group. The EI involves collaborative participatory action research with and within ten ECCD programmes in countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

The outcomes of the work within the Effectiveness Initiative are currently being analysed and summarised by each country team and as a cross-site effort. However, in keeping with the ‘process’ approach that saw the EI as a large-scale, ongoing dialogue, there were opportunities at several stages of the EI project to share some of the emerging issues, themes, and lessons. Reports were written and shared with all country teams. Artwork and artefacts, PLA materials and innovative investigation tools, photos and video footage, group maps/analyses, and other programme level materials were also shared. Public forums and conferences, roundtables on ECCD, and workshops provided opportunities for presentations as well as consultations about the work “in progress” of EI country teams.

Regional meetings were convened with the added objective of using the EI experience as a tool for advocacy by the EI team’s organisation in the host country. Articles have also been written and published. Hundreds of photos and hours of video footage are available. An EI Website has been set-up and serves as a means of continuing cross-site collaboration on-line. The summaries of lessons learned and insights gleaned through the EI process will be presented through various forms and media that will also be communicated or disseminated among ECCD stakeholders.19

This project represents an effort to identify investigative, learning, and communication tools and practices that can strengthen programme effectiveness and stimulate broader, more meaningful community participation.

Face-to-Face Communication

In ECCD programmes, direct, face-to-face interchanges are still the most frequently used forms of communication—we talk with each other, we have meetings, we carry out training in person, and we count on child-to-child, parent-to-child, parent-to-parent, and caregiver-to-parent/child interactions for learning to be shared and built upon. These have long been at the centre of ECCD programming, supplemented by diverse communication forms, such as indigenous traditional sharing rituals, theatre, or puppetry, as well as print and audio-visual media. The quality of ECCD programmes and their success depend in large part on whether the communication processes, as well as the products or tools used to aid or enhance these processes, are effective.

This is true whether the context is communication between a parent and a community or field worker or if it is a massive social mobilisation campaign related to children’s health, such as the Expanded Programme for Immunisation (EPI) which was organised in many countries in the early '90s. In Bangladesh for example, a successful social mobilisation process for EPI involved virtually all sectors—from the parents and field workers in villages, religious leaders, many civic and health organisations in cities, entertainers, and NGOs like BRAC, CARE, World Vision, Radda Barnen, at local and national levels, to the highest officials and central government agencies, to donors like UNICEF, WHO, USAID, World Bank, and international celebrities such as UNICEF ambassadors Audrey Hepburn and Imran Khan.20

The communications strategy encompassed all forms of media—from the traditional forms like community theatre and print, to radio and TV. But an evaluation of the communications component showed that even if television had some impact in the urban areas, the most important and persuasive source of information was still interpersonal. When parents were asked who persuaded them to get their child vaccinated, 78% of the respondents said that government field workers convinced them. This was true, despite evaluation findings that communications training for the field workers was too general and needed improvements so that they could counsel mothers more effectively about side-effects or the need for

A participant in the EI project uses a “Community Timeline” to recount life immediately following the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo.
follow-up visits. But what is clear is that face to face interaction by the community-based ECCD workers—whether they are a health worker or social worker—is still the best way of communicating with parents and other community members.

Similar findings emerged from another ECCD project several years later. In 1996, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) implemented the Nutrition Communication Project in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Honduras. The project goal was to improve maternal and child nutrition without an increase in family income. It was designed on the basis of principles of nutrition education and social marketing. Each country strategy involved a five-step project process that actually matched the steps in a developmental communications project. Each country also started with an assessment phase where formative evaluation and surveys were used to identify problems, and then behavioural messages and targets were defined. These messages were communicated through community activities using different techniques and materials like picture story cards, interpersonal communication using counselling cards, and stickers on the mother’s health record card to reinforce the messages.

Among the lessons learned in relation to the communications process were: 1) specific messages must be developed for specific audiences; 2) a media-based approach focused on eating specific kinds of food was effective for increasing Vitamin A intake; 3) different strategies are required to change different kinds of behaviour; and 4) complementary feeding posed the greatest challenge as it was the most difficult to change and required intensive interpersonal communication.

As we can see from these carefully planned projects, there are as many forms of communication and media as there are opportunities which can be maximised or created in order to inform people about an ever-growing knowledge base related to ECCD. This knowledge base ranges from the very practical information about childcare, such as appropriate feeding practices and common childhood diseases, to more technical topics, such as the implications of brain development research, the findings from longitudinal studies of ECCD programme participants, cross-cultural studies on ECCD programmes, or cost-benefit analyses of public ECCD programmes.

The challenge is to make the best possible match between the message, the medium, and the specific individuals or groups of people we need to reach, inform, or interact with. The objective is to motivate them to either apply the information or to support and participate in ECCD programmes in whatever way is appropriate for them. In all cases, we need to keep our goal in mind: to enhance the care and education provided for young children.

**ECCD Advocacy in the Global Village**

Thirty years ago the phrase “Think Global, Act Local” became popular. Now, with the explosion of communication media and the emergence of the sense that the world is a global village, the saying should evolve to “Think Global—Act Local and Global.” It is not as catchy, but this concept is becoming increasingly necessary to take into consideration.

As the global village becomes a growing reality, we, as ECCD proponents, are being challenged to learn to operate more skilfully within it. We need to know more about how to make our institutions work for us in flexible and complex ways. We need to know more about how to leverage finances and marshal resources. We need to know more about how to make our political systems work for us in flexible and complex ways. We need to know more about how to leverage finances and marshal resources. We need to know more about how to make our political systems work for us in flexible and complex ways.

ECCD Advocacy in the global village involves getting young children on the social agenda and making sure that they receive the care they deserve. It involves four essential purposes (see figure 2):
1. To deepen the knowledge base on children and effective programming This requires us to become more effective learners and teachers, researchers and collaborators, and to communicate with those who affect the lives of children and families.

2. To create alliances and build bridges We can't work effectively in isolation, nor can we do the entire job on our own. We need to know how to reach out to people working in diverse sectors, and across cultural lines. We need to build alliances not only within ECCD, but also with government officials, members of civil society, educators, health workers, and social welfare proponents. And we need to help families to build similar bridges.

3. To influence decision makers and empower people to make better decisions We need to understand the agendas of key players and find ways to dialogue with decision-makers so they can understand ECCD agendas. We need to learn which kinds of decisions most benefit the children and the adults who support them, and empower the decision makers by providing them with knowledge, public support, clarity of goals, and clear models of success.

4. To strengthen practice Our advocacy goal is to put children at the centre of the social agenda, but we need to keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to improve the well-being of children. Thus we need to know how to strengthen the circles of support for children at all levels of the global society. We have to learn how to strengthen our own practice, as ECCD professionals, and to improve our institutions, as well as influence the practice of others.

These four purposes influence each other. We form alliances so we can influence decision-makers. We deepen our knowledge so we can strengthen practice. We share examples of good practice with decision-makers so they can strengthen practice.

Advocacy is necessary at all levels of government—from national to local to village levels, at different stages of policy development and programming. Often advocacy requires flexibility and the ability to act in an impromptu manner by creating or seizing opportunities. It is necessary to invest in and nurture ECCD advocates at each level of society and to sustain advocacy for ECCD over time.

Success is also dependent on good timing, the ability to build relationships with peers and decision-makers, and the ability to shift focus or emphasis as needed.

Good advocates are able to choose entry points and recognise the potential to set up groundbreaking activities. They are able to facilitate transitions as people become increasingly committed and need to be engaged at more complex levels of dialogue. They are able to make adjustments in methods and timetables and shift gears as needed to stay attuned to the pace and interests of key partners.

In other words, advocacy is both an art and a science. As a field, we in ECCD are increasingly learning how to advocate well, and to encourage parents and ECCD workers to advocate more effectively for their interests. What follows is a description of some of what has been learned.

Advocacy in Developing National ECCD Policy

Most national policies are developed on the basis of a legal mandate. Although ECCD policies can also be developed as an administrative function of the executive branch of government, a legal mandate through a national law or even through local ordinances provides a stronger basis for justifying public financing and use of resources in ECCD programmes. Therefore, legislative advocacy for ECCD may be necessary.

Legislative advocacy has been defined as “the effort of the people usually through non-government organisations and cause-oriented groups to initiate changes in the law by directly influencing the formal parliament (congress) to adopt policies for the benefit of the majority.”

There are many activities that help us to accomplish this, beyond merely initiating contact with key parliamentarians holding strategic positions in committees or in parliamentary leadership structures. ECCD advocates find it helpful to engage in the following strategies:

– Become familiar with the national “legislative mill” as well as local processes in their own countries.
– Build alliances with ECCD allies, so that diverse advocacy efforts can complement each other.
– Provide informational and brainstorming sessions for key allies to get them involved and find roles for themselves in the process.
– Prepare information materials or briefing kits tailor-made for parliamentarians.
– Enlist media support through features on ECCD issues to influence politicians who pay attention to media coverage of national issues.
– Give inputs at public meetings on related topics and at public hearings on proposed legislation.
– Make key ECCD proponents available as resource people, and help stakeholders learn to articulate their concerns to public figures.
– Meet with legislators and their staff face-to-face.
– Offer to help draft wording, or provide concise summaries of the issues and key points to be legislated.
– Arrange visits by officials to see successful programmes in action, and by engaged programme personnel to see officials.
– Work at all levels (local, district, national) to ensure both support for the proposed legislation, and that the conditions are in place for enactment.
– Build rapport through sustained (and constructive) interactions.
– Share knowledge gleaned from local and international ECCD efforts that will help to influence good decision-making.
– When appropriate, call on allies from other countries in the region or from international organisations if it will help to bring external influence to bear on decision makers.
– Alert all those who might be affected by pending and passed legislation and let them know what they might do to participate.
– Follow through on advocacy efforts by making sure that action matches rhetoric.

An example of advocacy for national policy development comes from the Philippines, where ECCD-focused NGOs, academic institutions, and government agencies worked on and lobbied for the enactment of a new law on ECCD from 1999-2000. The law promotes a comprehensive and integrative ECCD policy and identifies coordinating mechanisms to be established through national and local level inter-agency councils and committees. It creates a special ECCD fund that uses a block grant mechanism to support the municipalities serving a large number of poor families by providing national funding for the improvement or expansion of ECCD programmes.

Several representatives from ECCD-focused NGOs and academic institutions were invited to public hearings to provide their inputs. After the initial public hearing, one of the representatives was asked by the Senators to participate directly in drafting the law and to serve as a resource person for the senators, congressmen, and their legislative staff. This allowed ECCD advocates to remain involved throughout the many stages of drafting and defending legislation in both houses of the Philippine Congress up to the final stage, when the law was signed by the President.

These sustained advocacy efforts, which included providing the legislators and their staff members with all the necessary information about ECCD, influenced the key legislators involved in drafting the bill. Apparently they were successful enough so that the Senator, who headed the Committee on Education and who was one of the major proponents of the law, took the initiative to set aside her discretionary funds for a pilot ECCD project that would demonstrate key features of the law. The Senator wanted the ECCD advocates to demonstrate how the integrated national ECCD programme could work by providing funds to implement the project in several municipalities of at least one province. She wanted to show how the proposed law would work even as it was going through the final stages of the legislative mill.23

As a field, we in ECCD are learning how to advocate well and to encourage parents and other ECCD workers to advocate more effectively for their interests.

Development of Policy in the Philippines

Advocacy for National Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

In the past, many governments assumed sole responsibility for the development of national legal and regulatory frameworks, such as national curriculum or credentialing systems. External participation was limited to “expert” consultants, usually from academia. But now we are seeing more examples of participatory processes in the development of such
frameworks, or at least in the ECCD programme and policy reviews that are undertaken as a preparatory step to creating frameworks. This is because various ECCD stakeholders have taken the initiative to seek opportunities for active participation, compelling governments to become engaged in these processes. This was one of the many effective advocacy strategies in the work of MLPC, a coalition of ECD crèches in Minais, Gerais, Brazil, and Pueblito, a Canadian NGO (see p. 46).

There are also some governments who have taken the initiative, and who have established broad, participatory consultative processes from the outset. The processes that State Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have been encouraged to initiate have, in some cases, supported joint government-civil society efforts in ECCD.

Like the participatory approaches discussed above for developing policies, advocacy of regulatory and legal frameworks requires the organisation of ECCD alliances. They are supported through the mobilisation of different groups of stakeholders including parents, ECCD practitioners or specialists, childcare providers, teachers, health workers, and even religious groups. Organising work in itself can be a daunting task as there will always be diverse perspectives, social and political orientations, and agendas to reckon with. But the effort is worthwhile. We have seen through the experiences of child-focused NGOs in promoting the rights of children, the value of investment in organising and network building. This advocacy work was a major contributing factor to achieving progress on children’s rights.

As with advocating for policy, consensus building is desirable in terms of developing regulatory mechanisms. While groups can more easily agree on broad principles that inform policy, sometimes agreement on the specifics that go into curricula and regulatory frameworks is more elusive.

Some tools that help:

- deciding where to invest energies considering personal skills and resources;
- communicating with key individuals or sharing information in effective and creative ways—this includes knowing how to formulate beliefs and experiences clearly;
- identifying indicators of success that are appropriate to the kinds of participatory programming we are advocating, and making these available to policy-makers;
- gathering evidence of the capacity of various institutions to implement proposed frameworks and guidelines;
- evaluating frameworks against local realities (especially those that have been adapted from very different contexts);
- demonstrating the nature and strength of the organisations that support a participatory approach to programming;
- helping to open the eyes of officials to more imaginative and creative systems, to new
paradigms, and to examples of where these new paradigms have been successful;

– maintaining vigilance to make sure that frameworks and guidelines are implemented with high quality and that they in fact serve rather than block the systems they are meant to regulate; and
– sustaining communication and learning to balance tact with toughness, and encouragement with pressure, as appropriate.

Effective ECCD programmes in action are some of the best tools for advocacy because success attracts interest and makes the concepts easier to sell.

The Teachers’ Resource Centre (TRC) in Karachi, Pakistan (see case study, p. 35) offers a good example of how a successful early childhood education programme was effectively used for advocacy. It was used as the basis of a national curriculum and helped to institutionalise early childhood education in the public schools in Pakistan. The project involved the organisation of new Kachi (pre-primary) classes for the under-five’s as well as the improvement of existing classes in forty-five public schools, the development of a culturally-appropriate early childhood curriculum and learning resources; and the training of teachers and school heads.

Advocacy in our Own Institutions
In 1984, when the Consultative Group was first founded, it was comprised of individuals who were committed to young children, even though most of their home organisations had no such mandate. The only donor organisation that was clearly and exclusively dedicated to ECCD programming was the Bernard van Leer Foundation. All the others, including UNICEF, USAID, IDRC (International Development Research Centre), Save the Children, and the Ford Foundation, ranged from viewing ECCD as a trivial interest and makes the concepts easier to sell.

Because of the mutual support of the CG consortium, however, and the work of their jointly-supported Secretariat, the CG quickly built up arguments and evidence in support for ECCD programming. They worked together to create strategies for getting young children on the international agenda, and at the same time, each member had to work very hard to get young children onto the radar screen and funding agenda of their home institution.

Now, in 2003, many of the organisations mentioned above have made public commitments to ECCD, other groups have joined the CG consortium, and networks have formed regionally as well. But each of us still has work to do at home: to educate our colleagues, to distribute the information and evidence of effective programming we are co-producing, and to lobby, advocate, push, and cajole our organisations to not only invest in young children, but to invest significantly and intelligently.

Advocacy for ECCD and International Collaboration
While the Consultative Group is one of the most visible international collaborations in ECCD, there have been numerous other collaborations as well—between institutions, between country offices of a single institution, and between individuals from different institutions. The purposes of these collaborations have been to exchange or create knowledge, conduct joint programming or research, offer training or mentoring, create shared media products, or just serve as support systems.

These international partnerships have also served as valuable and effective leverage for individuals and NGOs doing advocacy work at the country level.

Early Childhood within UNICEF
In 1986, the ECCD advocates within UNICEF prepared the first of many position papers in an effort to convince their leaders to make ECCD a priority. They managed to find a few “converts” but little official recognition. But over time, recognition grew. In 1996, ten years later, one of the staunch ECCD advocates within UNICEF suggested that they “… should go beyond general advocacy to assistance with 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.” Efforts by the ECCD advocates within UNICEF and their partners continued. They were successful in securing significant investments by the Nutrition Section and the Education Section in research and development to ensure attention to child development within UNICEF programmes.

There were then escalated efforts throughout the last four years of the decade, when in-house advocates conducted more frequent and strategic activities for information exchanges with their partners around refining conceptual frameworks and programming principles. These efforts culminated in the decision by UNICEF to make ECCD a global priority starting in 1999.

The 2000 UNICEF State of the World’s Children Report focused on ECCD. Many UNICEF-assisted country programmes now include support for initiating ECCD pilot programmes or a renewal of support for ECD, including a commitment to revitalizing existing ECCD programmes and services through Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) approaches.
We have helped each other to convince governments to increase public investments, allocate resources to ECCD, and create policy that supports more effective programming and service delivery. The proliferation of ECCD collaborations and joint ventures has created much greater visibility for ECCD as a field and allowed us to mobilise members of the international community on behalf of young children.

One of the most concrete ways that international collaboration has had an effect is on increasing investments, resources, and support for ECCD. In the past ten years, we have seen a growing awareness on the part of international, multilateral agencies and financial institutions that investment in ECCD is a sound investment. The frameworks and arguments hammered out through the Consultative Group process have influenced staff within these organisations, and a combination of in-house and external lobbying by ECCD proponents has gotten young children onto the agendas of such organisations as World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, and USAID. Historically, these organisations have promoted mainly sectoral programmes, yet the rhetoric and some of the realities of integrated early childhood programming have made their way onto the grant and loan agendas.

The interactions between these larger agencies and country governments have similarly been affected by the call to pay attention to the youngest children. While in too many places, young children are still seen as peripheral to the “real” business of government, in some places, the realisation is beginning to dawn that investment in people begins with ECCD.

In his global review on ECCD for the EFA 2000 Assessment, Myers highlighted the increased international funding for ECCD as one of the significant developments within the period 1990–2000. He noted that from the early to middle years of the decade, there were more international NGOs, such as the Aga Khan Foundation, Plan International, members of the Save the Children Alliance, Christian Children’s Fund, World Vision, and the Soros Foundation, which increased allocation of resources and strengthened their own expertise in ECCD.

When UNICEF made ECCD a global priority in 1999, there was an increase, or in some cases, a revival of support for ECCD in almost all countries with UNICEF-assisted country programmes. Among the financial institutions, the most significant increase is in World Bank lending for ECCD over the decade, amounting to a total of over a billion dollars for thirty ECCD projects, mostly in Latin America and Asia, with some in Africa. The Asian Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank have also promoted and increased support for ECCD projects in their regions.

The interactivity of international collaboration and advocacy can also significantly help in strengthening programmes and improving quality. ECCD specialists from around the world have worked together to develop conceptual frameworks and programming principles based on a combination of research and programme experiences and innovative analyses. These have stimulated agency-wide, or inter-agency, multi-country initiatives in ECCD.

An example of this involves the convergence of various initiatives from 1995–1999 focussed on programming for children under three. By mid-decade, it was clear to ECCD advocates that there were major gaps to be filled in ECCD programming, particularly for children aged birth-three and their caregivers. The persistent and worsening cases of illness and malnutrition in many countries further amplified this serious gap in ECCD programming. Several significant initiatives were spurred by the need to explore more effective approaches to solving these problems, which eventually reflected the contention of ECCD proponents that it is important to create integrated programmes to address nutrition, health, and child development. The World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization, the World Bank, UNICEF, the Academy for Educational Development, and other organisations all pursued initiatives during this time focussed on the under-threes. Among these was the CARE Initiative, which was developed by the Nutrition Section in UNICEF, New York. This initiative advocated Nutrition + Care, and developed training courses and manuals for policy-makers and programme planners on using the concept of care in programming.

There were also regional responses to the issue. Concern about the slow progress of many Asian countries towards reaching World Summit Goals (WSC) to reduce maternal and child malnutrition motivated UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank to collaborate on a regional study involving seven countries. The study aimed to “assess how nutrition of young women and children improves and what resources should be used.” The preparation of a ten-year investment plan to achieve the WSC goals, based on rigorous policy analysis, was one of the expected outputs from the participating countries.

The process also compelled those involved to seriously study the linkages between health and nutrition and the service delivery systems, including community-based ECCD programmes. Many significant lessons emerged, including insights into effective programming approaches and practices. These also reinforced the call for more participatory and integrated approaches.

In these joint international initiatives, there was much to be learned from all the participants who brought their expertise in health, nutrition, education, research, and/or their extensive experiences in implementing ECCD programmes. It was also helpful that
there were individuals from the global ECCD community who assumed multiple roles as resource persons, researchers, writers, and “networkers.” By being major contributors to the problem-solving and conceptualisation processes, learning about and documenting programme experiences in different countries, participating in key meetings and projects, they helped to bridge these separate initiatives and provided both continuity and connectedness among agencies. In the process they helped tighten the connecting threads needed to bind knowledge and practice, research and programming, child health, and child development and education. They also developed communications products and engaged in various forms of interpersonal communication. They were good models of effective ECCD advocates, working within the global community.

The Role of Networking in Advocacy

An important development in regard to international collaboration within the past decade has been the organisation of regional networks and alliances. These networks have served multiple purposes—stimulating country level ECCD programming and discourse, and carrying local experience to the global village. In almost all of the continents, activities are being jointly undertaken by national and international non-government organisations, academic institutions, and regional and country offices of international agencies like UNICEF, UNESCO, and its partners. The cross-country interchange enriches their knowledge about ECCD and the new insights gained provide impetus for improving their own programmes. In some cases, regional exchange has also led to the creation of new initiatives.

The Caribbean regional network for ECCD is one of the most organised and dynamic ECCD networks (see case study, p. 27). The Caribbean Child Development Centre (CCDC) has served as coordinator, focal point, and facilitator since the lead-up to the first regional conference when ECCD stakeholders from the government and civil society convened. They developed a Regional Plan of Action for ECCD, which also served as a starting point for individual country plans of action. The Caribbean experience demonstrates how national ECCD networks or alliances can be established or strengthened as a part of the regional network’s advocacy and support for capacity-building.

Thus there are mutual benefits of regional collaboration—the regional group supports country level growth, and country level efforts strengthen the shared knowledge base and impact of the regional network.

As the examples provided above have shown, international collaboration makes two important contributions to advocacy and social mobilisation for ECCD:

- First, it creates a valuable support system for organisations committed to ECCD and for practitioners who must work as advocates in their own countries. Collaborative or joint actions engaged in by international partners enhance capacity, create useful resources, and generate tools and ideas for essential communications. They also help to strengthen resolve among all involved to continue working despite the challenges we face.

- Second, it expands the spaces and resources for ECCD programmes. The continuing cycles of collective inquiry, interactive learning and
problem-solving enable ECCD advocates throughout the global village to work better. It helps us to fine-tune arguments, and sharpen recommendations for programme design and policy development in ECCD. It also spurs us to improve the quality of ECCD efforts and mobilise greater resources.

Summary
Whoever we are, and wherever we are working, we have a chance to reach out to the Global Village. Each time we reach out to others to engage them in some way, we are ensuring that another strand is added to the growing web of connections that will ensure that young children grow up whole and healthy.

Who are the advocates for ECCD?

■ It could be a rural health midwife who has to cross a river by boat then walk for hours through mountain trails to visit a newborn baby and mother in a remote village. She is also recruiting volunteers for the next week’s immunisation at the health centre.

■ It could be an ECCD NGO worker in an urban slum accompanying parents to a meeting with the city Mayor to discuss their project proposal. They are asking him to construct a room for their ECCD centre near the health centre.

■ It could be members of a peasant women’s organisation writing a description of their organisation and preparing photos of the children in their family home-daycare. These will accompany a project proposal to be mailed to a potential donor.

■ It could be a bank task manager and an ECCD specialist working together on a government inter-agency committee. Their task is to prepare programming options that will broaden the range of services available to children under three.

■ It could be participants in an ECCD roundtable, where a member of the EU parliament, the president of a multilateral financial institution, several programme managers of international and local NGOs, and representatives of a large multinational corporation gather for a day. They are discussing the benefits of ECCD and experiences of organisations from three countries, and trying to think of ways of applying the knowledge to their own work.

■ It could be a large multinational corporation that manufactures childcare and family products for health and nutrition investing in a major print media and broadcast advertising campaign about the early childhood years.

■ It could be a team composed of a communication specialist, writers, and ECCD specialists, working on the themes and content outline for a special project to develop a video-CD-ROM-book pack about an ECCD action research project.

■ It could be a team of folks scattered around the planet who work jointly on an ECCD focussed website. They put together an on-line bulletin to provide ongoing information about organisations, conferences, and activities in ECCD.

■ It could be a group of four- and five-year-olds drawing a map of their community to show the places that they have visited, while their teacher writes down the text they dictate. Then they jointly compose letters to the owner of a bakery, the car repair shop, and the market vendors’ association to ask if they could visit them. Yes, young children can also be effective advocates for ECCD in their own communities—they are living proof of its benefits.

Indeed, we know that it does take a village to raise a child. Today, more than half of all the world’s children live in poverty. They are among the more than 600 million children born in countries of the Majority World. If we hope that tomorrow the world will be in the hands of healthy, caring, and competent human beings, we have an urgent task: to mobilise the global village and call upon as many people as possible to invest in the care and education of the world’s young children now. And we can be assured of very high returns on that investment.
ENDNOTES


2. Advocacy derives from the medieval Latin word ad-vocare or avocare, meaning “to call”, advocate comes from the old French avocat that means “one summoned to” or “pleading for a cause.”

3. E-mail exchange with Robert Myers, conversations with Fred Wood, Sheldon Saeffer, Frank Method, Judith Evans, and Nittaya Kotchabakhdi over the past years.


8. Ibid, p. 163.


10. Ibid, p. 163.


15. “Support/educate caregivers” is the second complementary programming strategy in Table 4.1 p. 105, discussed in pp. 131–47 of Early Childhood Counts by Evans et al. 2000.

16. From e-mail communications, conversations, and a presentation on these projects at the Pre-Conference of the Prix Jeunesses Festival in Munich (June 2002) by Barbara Kolucki, UNICEF consultant.


23. R.A. 1990. “The Early Childhood Care and Development Act” was designed for ECCD programming within a decentralized context for local governance that the Philippine government shifted to twelve years ago, devolving responsibility for basic social and health services to the local government units. By providing a more comprehensive policy and institutionalizing the national ECCD programme with its range of ECCD services, the law also clarifies the responsibility of the local government units vis-à-vis national government, the private sector and NGOs.


28. The seven countries are: Bangladesh, Cambodia, People’s Republic of China, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.


30. Dr. Patrice Engle, consultant to UNICEF at that time (and previously also to WHO), was a resource person at the Wye meeting. She was also involved in the Asian nutrition studies and was a participant at the CG meeting. Dr. Judith Evans, co-director of the Consultative Group at that time had worked as ECCD consultant to the WHO, UNICEF, World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank on different projects and at the same time represented the CG in several meetings related to these initiatives. As both of these individuals were ‘strategically positioned’ this allowed them to link various initiatives, contribute important papers and articles, which were published and help to sustain this very important dialogue on Care for the very young children. (See P. Engle’s paper on Care in ECCD programmes in “Investing in Child Nutrition in Asia” edited by J. Hunt and M.G. Quibria, 1999, and several articles based on papers on Care and young child and family support programmes by J. Evans published in the Coordinators’ Notebook of the Consultative Group e.g., no. 24, 2000, and through the CG Website, as well as Early Childhood Counts, the ECCD Programming Manual.)
Related Resources

Publications

Working for Change in Education: A handbook for planning advocacy. Save the Children, UK

Advocacy is becoming a key component of all development work. This practical handbook offers a detailed and clear framework for planning advocacy.

While this book focuses on education, it is a valuable resource that is relevant for anyone interested in advocacy work in any sector.

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/functions/index_search.html


In its unique “Mothers’ Index” first presented in 2000—each annual report offers critical information on the status and very real needs of the world’s two billion mothers and their children around the world (the 2003 report ranks the well-being of children and mothers in 105 countries). With the introduction of a new “Girls’ Investment Index,” the 2001 report zeroes in on the quality of girls’ and young women’s lives today and thus provides an indication of how the next generation of mothers and children will fare.

By offering critical information about the world’s two billion mothers, these reports help to focus attention on the very real needs of mothers—and their children—and to suggest actions needed to support women who are raising the world’s future generations.

Indicators used for women include the areas of health status, use of contraception, literacy, and political participation and, for children, Indicators cover the areas of infant mortality, nutritional status, primary school enrollment, and access to safe water.


The State of the World’s Children 2001 on Early Childhood details the daily lives of parents and other caregivers who are striving—in the face of war, poverty and the HIV/AIDS epidemic—to protect the rights and meet the needs of young children. Country profiles, maps and statistical data for 193 countries are also presented.

For online version, see: http://www.unicef.org/sowc01/toc.htm

“It is never too early to become involved but it can easily be too late.”

Armed with such alarming statistics as: 125 million primary-school age children are not in school; another 150 million children drop out of primary school before they complete four years of education; and almost one-half of the children in the least developed countries of the world do not have access to primary education; the World Bank convened a global conference in April 2000, to address the benefits and challenges of investing in early childhood development. Scientific studies now show how critical the first few years of a child’s life are in terms of later physical and mental health, behavior, and capacity to learn.

The Millennium Development Goals endorsed by 189 member countries of the United Nations and the World Bank are targets for reducing global poverty. The goals specifically address the need for universal primary education as a means for breaking the cycle of poverty in individual families and in countries. With the publication of this volume, which contains the conference proceedings, the World Bank hopes to encourage a broader investment by countries, companies, organisations and private sector institutions in early child development.

To order, see: http://www.publications.worldbank.org/ecommerce/catalog/product?item_id=838512


The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) does not contain a dedicated section that addresses the rights of children from birth to eight specifically. Rather it encompasses the rights of all children, up to 18, or whatever a State designates for the entry into adult status. Yet the world’s young children (0-8) demand special attention: they are the most vulnerable and therefore most in need of the benefits and protection that the CRC guarantees. This edition of Early Childhood Matters provides arguments, examples of work at all levels, and analyses to contribute to the discussions that are needed to elevate the CRC to its rightful place in ECD programming—and indeed to justify ECD programming as a key strategy in realising the aspirations of the CRC.

To order, see: http://www.bernardvanleer.org.

Video


Every year 129 million babies begin an extraordinary developmental sprint—from defenseless newborn to pro-active three-year-old. Because of the critical importance of the first three years in shaping a child’s life, we face this fundamental choice: either invest in children before the age of three, or put all our futures at risk. The crucial role of early investment in children and families is brought home by unique footage from around the world—Chechen children in the midst of war, three-year-olds in inner-city Johannesburg; a tiny baby and his sixteen-year-old mother in Jamaica; schoolchildren in Cuba; pregnant women in Bangladesh. This powerful seven minute video narrated by Jeremy Irons for UNICEF calls on governments and communities everywhere to shift resources to children’s earliest years.

To order, see: http://www.unicef.org/vidcat/order.html

Key ECD Global Documents

A World Fit for Children
http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/


Education for All
http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/index.shtml/

Background materials on ECD and EFA : http://www.ecdgroup.com/education_for_all.asp

Millennium Development Goals
http://www.undp.org/mdg/
The following six case studies illustrate the expanded view of what constitutes advocacy on behalf of young children as outlined in the main article, the role of communication in moving the ECD agenda and practice forward, and the purposes and roles of advocacy within the emerging Global Village.

The Caribbean case study describes the consultative work of various partners in the evolution and implementation of the Caribbean Plan of Action for Early Childhood Education, Care and Development—a framework and authoritative advocacy tool for national ECD programme implementers and advocates working to increase the prominence of ECD issues on national agendas. Similarly, the work of the Teachers’ Resource Centre in Pakistan, Madrasa Resource Centres in East Africa, and the Movimento de Luta Pro Creches in Brazil has succeeded in improving not only national but local programming and policy for ECD as well—highlighting the important role of civil society organisations in advocating for the needs of young children and families. The work of AMANI, the Tanzania ECD Network, illustrates the ongoing challenges in highlighting both national and global attention to the importance of Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development, specifically the ongoing challenges in demonstrating and communicating the positive linkages between ECD and broader Education for All goals, for example, in preparing children for school, in increasing achievement and retention in primary school, and as a way of improving girls education. Finally, the work of the I Am Your Child Foundation in the USA integrates mass media, community mobilisation, public education, and policy outreach to raise awareness about the importance of the early years as well as its relationship to school readiness.
A Case Study on Regional Advocacy: the Caribbean

Securing ECD Policy Agenda

JANET BROWN AND SIAN WILLIAMS

April 4, 1997 "Could you go back to the third column, fifth line? I think the word 'ensure' should replace the word 'promote'; we want governments to take responsibility, not just cheer us on..." By now a few groans are heard around the table, as disagreement erupts over this renewed attempt to more firmly bind governments to their promises, tempers move towards edgy. Thirty people have been engaged in this discussion, round-table style, for over seven hours at this point, and the group has only discussed six of the ten proposed goals, each with perceived obstacles and opportunities, and proposed strategies attached.

The UNICEF officer chairing this marathon once again pumps up his charm and lets the group know that pizzas have been ordered. The crankiness of hungry and tired participants subsides a few notches and the word-by-word, column-by-column debates continue. At the end of eleven hours, at 1:00 in the morning, the Caribbean Plan of Action for Early Childhood Education, Care and Development has been amended and agreed to by the weary senior delegates from eighteen English-speaking countries, with the support of a resource team from the Caribbean Child Development Centre of the University of the West Indies (CCDC/UWI) and the UNICEF Caribbean Area Office. The next day, the document is endorsed in plenary by over eighty delegates attending the second regional conference on ECECD in Barbados, to be forwarded to the Ministers of Education of CARICOM (the Caribbean Community of fifteen states and two affiliates). The Ministers did endorse the Plan, the final endorsement by CARICOM Heads of State followed shortly after. In July 1997 the Plan of Action for ECECD thus became an official part of CARICOM’s Human Resource Development Strategy.

A Tripartite Collaboration

As painful and prolonged as the eleven-hour process was, the end result has proven the value of this ownership-creating exercise. This Plan of Action (POA) is one planning document that has not sat collecting dust, but instead, for the past five years, has served as the unchallenged "guidebook" for national ECD programme implementers and advocates in the Caribbean region in their efforts to move early childhood development issues higher up on national agendas. This case study is about the tripartite advocacy efforts of Governments, the University, and UNICEF that have variously maintained the momentum for reform within the Plan of Action framework.

Graphically, the regional advocacy thrust might look like this:
The Governments of the English-speaking Caribbean are linked in a number of contractual mechanisms, the most prominent of them being the Caribbean Community, or CARICOM, with fifteen member and two associate states, bound together by a range of collaborative agreements on economic and social development strategies.

The University of The West Indies (UWI) has three campuses (Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad) and University Centres in thirteen non-campus countries (Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Anguilla, Cayman Islands, and Turks and Caicos Islands). The total population of all countries served by UWI is approximately five million. The School of Continuing Studies (SCS) is a primary outreach arm of UWI, consisting of the non-campus country centres and three specialist centres, one of which is the Caribbean Child Development Centre (CCDC). Thus CCDC has a regional mandate for its four primary areas of work: research, training, curriculum development, and advocacy, with the early childhood period as its major target.

UNICEF has been the most consistent major international funding organisation promoting early childhood development programmes within the region, with current offices in Belize, Jamaica, and the Caribbean Area Office responsible for a sub-office in Guyana and partnership relationships with most countries within the eastern Caribbean, including Suriname. In 1997, the UNICEF Caribbean Area Office led the other UNICEF offices in the region in driving the process of endorsement of the Caribbean Plan of Action by CARICOM.

These three entities have been intertwined over a long history of mutual accountabilities—the governments of the sixteen countries with a campus or extension service within the region financially support the university, and expect back the requisite benefits through the return of educated leadership, research outcomes, demonstration projects, publications, technical assistance, etc. UNICEF cannot work in any of these countries without an agreement with the government. Five-year plans of operation are regularly agreed upon and reviewed between UNICEF and government partners to advance mutual social objectives within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All governments within the region have
some commitment to early childhood services, whether through direct provision (limited) or through the regulation or training support of private sector initiatives. CCDC’s building and initial staffing was a result of a UNICEF-UWI contractual agreement in the early 1970s, and the Jamaica and Caribbean offices of UNICEF have provided numerous project grants to CCDC over the past thirty years. The government of Jamaica supports CCDC with an annual subvention, supplementing the university’s staff and operating contributions.

This case study is thus the story of a dynamic synergy in which there is no one key player, but the tug and pull of strategic decisions that keep all partners at the helm of reform. From another angle, this is also the story of maximising the resources and impact of a small centre through collaborative partnerships and flexible roles.

The Evolution and Implementation of the Caribbean Plan of Action

The germination of the CPOA probably began within discussions around the Belize Commitment to Action, the outcome declaration of the Caribbean Conference on the Rights of the Child, October 1996, co-sponsored by UNICEF and CARICOM. There, sixteen countries reviewed their progress as signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Senior government officials of delegate countries signed their agreement to the listed commitments ensuring children’s rights to full development, protection, and participation, which had been hammered out in committee in an exercise not dissimilar to the one which followed only a few months later in Barbados.

The first opportunity to push for action on some of the Belize commitments came when the Barbados Early Childhood Association requested the help of the Caribbean Area Office (CAO) of UNICEF in planning the second Caribbean Conference on Early Childhood Education. Envisioned initially as a series of professional development workshops, the Barbados Association was persuaded by UNICEF to embrace a wider vision—that of policy development within delegate countries. UNICEF provided financial support to the conference planning committee, and strategically enlisted the University (consultants attached to CCDC) to provide a series of background documents, to survey instruments for data collection, and to draft a five-year Regional Plan of Action for the development of early childhood provisions. That draft sought to address urgent needs for policy and legislative reform to support early childhood, for data on coverage and quality of early provisions, and for training supports for under-equipped and underpaid personnel in the ECD sector. Most critically, it addressed the need for supports to improve the quality of early provisions, which were for the most part developmentally unsound and certainly insufficient across the region.

Ten key strategic issues were addressed in the plan. Delegates had to agree as well to statements describing the current situation, constraints, and opportunities in relation to each issue, and to the goals and recommended actions to tackle the issue. The ten issues were stated as overarching goals:

1. **Legislate** for services to children from birth to school entry, within national legislation for the child as a legal entity
2. **Entitle** the child from birth to school entry living in at risk situations to targeted resources
3. **Ground** public and parenting education and children’s programmes in local cultures
4. **Educate** for parenthood before adulthood
5. **Support** the parent and the child in the year after a child’s birth
6. **Develop** the child within the family in the years before preschool
7. **Promote** the child’s learning and development in all preschool settings
8. **Implement** integrated approaches for ECECD for children from birth to school entry
9. **Designate** budget allocation for ECECD services and plan investment
10. **Improve** quality of monitoring, evaluation and training support in ECECD

Such seemingly simple goals have remained for many countries frustratingly elusive. But ECD advocates within the five intervening years have produced some measurable achievements through the use of a range of strategies. Some of the regional and national/local strategies have included the following:

**Regional Strategies**

1. UNICEF CAO provided a technical consultant to UWI through CCDC to meet requests from Eastern Caribbean governments specifically for help with elements of the POA; seven countries have benefited directly from technical assistance to the government and local ECD sector stakeholders with draft legislation and/or policy development, national representative surveys on the quality of learning environments, establishment of service standards and regulatory mechanisms, the formation of national ECD oversight bodies, training system supports, and national ECD consultations.
2. *Piggy-backing* on related activities/opportunities helped spread limited financial and human resources to all signatory countries. For example:

- UWI’s Child Focus Project (World Bank funded 1996-9) held a regional workshop in May 1999 to which two representatives of each country in the region were invited to participate in policy development processes, and to consider the outputs and replicability of this Jamaica-based project in the development of occupational standards for ECD workers, assessment, and certification schemes.

- The Education for All (EFA)Assessment 2000, in preparation for Dakar, was an opportunity for a Caribbean survey of early childhood indicators, which informed not only the Caribbean report for EFA but a regional conference on monitoring systems of education indicators (now to include the early childhood sector) and the 3rd Conference on ECECD in 2000. The consultant who gathered the EFA data (with the assistance of CCDC) became the consultant to report on CPOA progress at this Conference.

- CCDC’s small UNESCO cooperating centre grant has been used to sponsor quarterly teleconferences and newsletters among parenting and early childhood sector colleagues for two years. The network makes use of the University’s satellite-linked teleconference and teaching system, which can simultaneously link twenty-four sites within sixteen countries, thus enabling dynamic group discussions across thousands of miles at relatively low cost. This Caribbean LINK for ECECD has been used to assist with Conference Planning, to update each other on progress on the CPOA, to support the development of national advocacy associations of practitioners, as well to serve as a professional development tool for discussions of current research and topical issues. Country representatives not linked by the UWI network receive the newsletter reporting the discussions and other news via e-mail and website.

- Funds available but insufficient for a regional parenting conference were combined with funds from a CCDC/IADB regional project and funds from UNICEF CAO to mount a Media Strategy conference for parenting and early childhood programme managers in St. Lucia in 2001.

3. *Negotiated load-sharing with multiple funders* was another key strategy:

- Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) entered the ECD arena with a grant to CCDC to support the advancement of some specific aspects of the Caribbean Plan of Action—but limited to seven IADB member countries within the region. Here the alliance with UNICEF was critical, as UNICEF’s contract with UWI/CCDC was combined with funds within this new IADB contract to maintain the technical assistance post as a full-time position. Thus the IADB Project Director (part-time) was also able to provide continuing technical assistance to the Caribbean countries that were not IADB members.

- This strategy was also used in organising the logistical nightmare of conference planning across thousands of miles and nearly two dozen jurisdictions, the three UNICEF offices played a central role in galvanising CARICOM Secretariat participation, provided key planning and consulting inputs, and they sponsored national delegations/consultants who could not be supported by co-funding from IADB. The Caribbean Development Bank was also brought in, along with the Bernard van Leer Foundation’s Caribbean Support Initiative, to support conference planning and delegate attendance.

- A key principle here has been to reduce *turfism* as much as possible, and to promote collaborative work focused on product and process sharing. Through this pooling of financial and technical resources, twenty countries have been able to share their experiences and the outcomes of their efforts on three occasions since the 1997 Barbados conference. This strategy will continue through 2003, year two of the IADB-supported regional project at CCDC, to ensure that as many delegates as possible can attend two planned workshops on curriculum development and on national association building, and the final end-of-project regional sharing of all project outputs.

4. *Changing the triangle into a circle of partners* has become an important instrumental strategy:

- A management consultant from Grenada, Leon Charles, was recruited for the World Bank workshop in 1999 to assist participants with strategic planning exercises. Leon, the father of a new daughter, became a ready
ECD “convert” and both CCDC and UNICEF CAO have relied on his expertise in a number of areas. Using other regional colleagues to assist in capacity development opportunities has been an important way of building the regional advocacy cadre.

IADB first entered the Caribbean ECD scene in 1997 via CCDC’s Profiles project in Jamaica. Thus by the 2000 Conference, IADB was participating as a member of the donor panel, and shortly afterward announced their intention to assist the advancement of the Plan of Action in IADB member Caribbean countries. IADB suggested working through UWI/CCDC as Executing Agency for a two-year multi-faceted project, and placed emphasis on the development of national ECD associations and of the germinal Regional ECD Association (elected at the 2000 Conference) as advocacy mechanisms to strengthen the push-pull dynamic with national governments. CCDC’s assistance to UNICEF/CAO in drafting their mid-term report on Plan of Action progress in their priority countries considerably aided the envisioning process with IADB in fleshing out the critical areas for interventions within the new Child Focus II project. This collaboration also helped in the negotiations with IADB for “sharing” the Project Director with CCDC’s commitments to CAO countries.

A Bernard van Leer Foundation response to the CPOA was to launch the Caribbean Support Initiative (CSI) in support of regional ECD/parenting activities. The CSI has evolved via a range of consultations into an important partner within the circle, working collaboratively with a number of regional organisations including CCDC. CSI’s support has ensured the participation of the five countries of the Netherland Antilles in the regional Conferences and the ECD collegial network.

5. CCDC has had to juggle several flexible roles and functions to work within the strategies described above, sometimes of necessity (limits of personnel and finances), and sometimes by design. Examples of the major roles include:

Envisioning: Drafting the CPOA in 1997; drafting the 2003-7 UNICEF CAO Programme Plan of Operations; drafting a discussion paper on organisation of future regional conferences (after 2002) for regional colleagues

Monitoring: Preparing the mid-term review of CPOA progress in twelve countries in 2002; CCDC’s Profiles Project outcomes (see footnote 3) being shared regionally

Reviewing: Designs and support for reporting national CPOA progress to 2000 and 2002 Regional Conferences (with consultant Leon Charles)

Children from birth to three still remain the most unserved and vulnerable: most ECD advocacy efforts and interventions serve children from age four up.
Strategies at the National Level

1. Conducting national surveys of early childhood provisions and assessments of the quality of these provisions via a 25% sample (in seven countries) was another strategy. They helped establish national data systems for ECD as well as arrive at national priorities for resources and interventions. The technical assistance of CCDC was enlisted for training local assessors/surveyors and helping with the analysis of the findings, supported by funds from UNICEF and the EU.

2. St. Vincent’s discouraged ECD sector was stimulated by the findings of its quality survey to seize the “advantage” of an upcoming election. The early childhood workers formed lobbying groups to take an ECD “manifesto” to campaign meetings of candidates in all districts leading up to the election. UNICEF assisted the process by providing support for a consultant to lead this process, which was part of a larger strategic development of a national plan of action. The government was changed, and early childhood issues have advanced on the national agenda.

3. The regional Parenting and the Media conference in St. Lucia aimed to assist national programmes to more effectively use the media for public and parenting education efforts as well as for advocacy purposes. Most countries have national celebrations of Child Week/Month in which wide-ranging activities draw media attention to specific early childhood issues and activities. In St. Kitts this week is used in a major media event with the Minister of Education handing out the licenses approved each year for preschool centres meeting national standards. St. Lucia launched radio parenting programmes and talk shows in Kreyol and English. Several countries use the media to draw specific attention to child abuse prevention.

Unfortunately there are as yet no systematic evaluations of the impact of these types of media participation. Barbados strategically presented media awards for promoting children’s rights.

4. Guyana undertook a school mapping exercise resulting in more specific targeting of nutrition and training supports for at-risk areas; a poverty survey in Curacao resulted in a two-year “Head Start” programme for at-risk preschool-age children and their parents.

5. To broaden public understanding and acceptance of a revised, more child-centred curriculum, Barbados published booklets with the agreed attainment targets of the new curriculum for children from ages three through seven, these are widely circulated in bookstores throughout Barbados.

6. Inter-sectoral/interministerial approaches to integrating tasks of planning and programming for ECD have been adopted in Jamaica and Suriname, largely as a result of stakeholder advocacy strategies external to government. Suriname’s developments are more recent, but Jamaica has advanced to a Cabinet-appointed inter-sectoral Early Childhood Commission (by mid-2003) with oversight responsibilities for national policy and programme development, training systems, research promotion and utilisation, and public education. This process was spurred by two other strategies—a stakeholders lobbying group that became an advisory body to the Ministry of Education on integrating the ECD sector, and the engagement by government (supported with UNICEF funds) of a management consultant firm to provide a strategic assessment of the early childhood sector, with recommendations regarding sector structure and sustainability.

7. UNICEF’s lead in establishing an ECD Donors Forum in Jamaica to periodically review areas of strategic interventions has reduced funder overlap and increased the overall amount of support to the sector. One outcome has been to engage major funders of other sector developments in discussions of ways to integrate ECD elements, e.g., in multilateral loan negotiations for a social safety net programme, and with the Jamaica Social Investment Fund.

8. Several countries commented in their 2002 reports on the importance of grass-roots consultative processes to the achievement of their specific objectives. In Jamaica this led to a groundswell of demand for a certification policy for paraprofessional preschool practitioners. In Grenada this was used to build support for curriculum reform and eventually the first national ECD policy within the region. In St. Lucia and Jamaica, broad baseline discussions have fueled efforts to integrate day care and preschool services/supports to these services.
Periodic Status Reports on Plan of Action Implementation

The regional conferences have served as benchmark occasions for checking on achievements against CPOA objectives. The 2000 conference acknowledged that the phased targets of 1997 were ambitious, and a few goals had only been reached by a few countries on a piecemeal, project-opportunity basis, not within adapted national plans of action. More realistic targets were adopted at this conference after shared experiences of obstacles and limited successes.

In preparation for the Guyana 2002 Conference, CCDC coordinated country responses to a questionnaire on progress on each of the original ten goals. Several of the strategies noted above were gleaned in this exercise. Sian Williams summarised some of the key lessons learned from country and regional efforts to achieve objectives within the CPOA framework:

- Stakeholder participation and public/parent consultation are indispensable to the policy endorsement/ownership process.
- Advocates within and external to government need to be change agents—to understand how to plan, envision, advocate, articulate, mobilise, and manage the development process.
- Advocates need knowledge/facts/trends, internationally, regionally and locally, to build and “sell” programmes.
- The challenge of long term financing of ECD provisions nationally requires more than competing for currently available resources. It requires creative interlinking of poverty reduction and employment creation initiatives, private sector investment, as well as cost savings and shifting of government investment priorities.
- There are current outcomes of Caribbean research and programme interventions which point to the most effective ways to target the most vulnerable families; these need to be shared and modelled/adapted.

Williams also noted areas that remain as serious challenges for CPOA implementation:

- Regional governments are not yet mainstreaming ECD across sectors or programming for ECD policy, which requires time, planned processes, specific tasks, intersectoral structures, verifiable and informative outcomes, many partners across sectors, public relations efforts, and a number of technical inputs. Most interventions remain project-driven, unlinked to either national or regional plans.
- Achieving many of the priority targets requires changing roles and building the capacities of all critical stakeholders.
- Effective use of research and current, solid data are needed for advocacy efforts to meet objectives.
- Children from birth to three remain the most unserved and vulnerable; most ECD advocacy efforts and interventions are predominantly focused on children from age four up.

Most of these major challenges will not be addressed until senior government policy makers understand the direct link between comprehensive early childhood provisions of quality, and investment returns in the medium and long run—in higher school performance, higher adult productivity, lower health and social rehabilitation costs, lower rates of poverty and crime. To keep focus on the longer term, the fourth ECECD Conference in Guyana in October 2002 again enlisted the CARI-COM Secretariat's assistance in “raising the bar” on the CPOA. Consultant Leon Charles and CCDCs Sian Williams first facilitated a delegate priority-setting exercise in relation to the next five years' CPOA implementation. These ranked priority areas of activities are as follows:

- **Capacity building** in ECD for Ministers, senior technical personnel, parents and practitioners;
- **Inter-sectoral collaboration** on matters related to children, including the establishment and functioning of inter-ministerial Coordinating Committees at both the national and regional levels;
- **Targeting of vulnerable and at-risk children**, including children living in poverty, children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, children with special needs with a special focus on the physically and mentally challenged, children from indigenous groups and children from migrant populations;
- **Strengthening and developing, where appropriate, of policy frameworks and relevant legislation** on issues related to children;
- **Strengthening and developing, where appropriate, research** on children's issues, data systems for monitoring and evaluation of children’s development in the early years, and data systems for monitoring and evaluation of programmes providing services to children;
- **Advocacy and public sensitisation** on the importance of strengthening programming for
children and the benefits to be derived thereof; and

- Initiatives for placing early childhood programming on a sustainable financial and programmatic footing in the medium to long term.

A report summarising the CPOA process, these current priorities, and a specific proposal for a Regional ECD Work Plan to operationalise these priorities, was presented to Ministers for Children one day before the official start of the October 2002 meeting of CARICOM’s Council on Human and Social Development. The Ministers meeting endorsed the Work Plan, inclusive of a proposed Regional Working Group to ensure implementation, to be composed of key regional institutions and funding agencies. This endorsement was in turn echoed by the plenary of COHSOD, thus giving official sanction to the CARICOM Secretariat to support and advance the work of the Regional Working Group.

It is premature at this writing to predict whether this attempt to push ECD higher up on the political/policy agenda of regional governments will succeed, or simply add another layer of frustration to the efforts of hundreds of ECD advocates within and outside governments. However, progress to date has underscored the importance of extensive consultative processes in developing collective ownership of a shared framework of goals and strategies, not only in mobilising multi-sector colleagues within countries but across the widely dispersed Caribbean States as well. The fact that colleagues still own the framework, despite frustrating setbacks in its implementation, speaks to its utility as an authoritative advocacy tool for continuing to remind policy makers, in a range of resourceful ways, of their long-standing obligations and commitments to young children.

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ENDNOTES

1. Delegates in 1997 wrangled over which acronym to use for the broad POA objectives; there is still no real consensus. However, the term Early Childhood Education, Care and Development (ECECD) was adopted in plenary to ensure that all biases were covered. Most now are more comfortable with the shorter ECD, but there has been no official regional agreement on moving to this use. We use it as the inclusive term for all the health, nutrition, education, family, and community inputs and supports necessary for healthy development in the early years.

2. Jamaica-based Parenting Partners, a group of organisations which developed parenting education/support materials and local and regional training programmes, had accumulated funds from the sale of its manuals, and wanted to host a second parenting conference for Caribbean colleagues. CCDC is a member of this group.

3. The Profiles Project (1997–2002) measured children’s health, cognitive, social/emotional status, and the status of their home and preschool environments at point of entry to grade one in a national sample, with a primary outcome that of monitoring indicators to be assessed periodically within existing/new government data systems in order to measure changes in both child and environmental status over time.

4. Adapting the Revised Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R, Harms, Clifford, and Cryer. CARICOM Secretariat (convener), UNICEF, Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC), UWI through CCDC, Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), Caribbean Early Childhood Association (CECA), and Bernard van Leer Foundation through the Caribbean Support Initiative (CSI).
The Background

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a pivotal part of our work at Teachers’ Resource Centre (TRC). Over the years of working with a range of pre-primary schools in the public and private sectors, and also in low-income schools in Karachi’s squatter settlements, we have developed an understanding of the various contexts and skills required to assist schools in the provision of appropriate ECE.

It was while working with government primary schools on a previous project (1992–95) that TRC’s project staff observed young children accompanying their older siblings to school. These children, mostly under five years old, were either left on a mat on the veranda unattended or were engaged in memorising the alphabet and numbers. There was no specific space for them, no teacher was allocated for them, and when there was, she often didn’t know what to do as there was no curriculum for the early years. The ad hoc nature of the arrangement assured that apathy set in early, leading to a high dropout rate.

Field visits to other provinces in Pakistan revealed a similar situation. Discussions with school and supervisory staff all pointed to a need for a Kachi (pre-primary/kindergarten) class in government schools.

It was with this concern in mind that in 1997, TRC secured a grant from the Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan) through the Pakistan Canada Social Institutions Development Programme (SIDP), in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The grant supported our ECE work in forty-five public sector schools over a five-year period.

The goals we hoped to achieve through the ECEP were manifold. The project aimed to introduce ECE classes in selected urban and rural government schools where there were no Kachi classes, and to improve the quality of provision where Kachi classes did exist.

At a wider level we also saw the project as a platform through which TRC could enhance the profile of ECE in Pakistan, eventually leading to a higher level of demand from parents and educators.
The Cycle 2 school heads, armed with increased competence and confidence, began to take special interest in the *Kachi* class, assisting in the preparation of display boards, advising teachers on their daily planners and assigning their “best” teacher to the *Kachi* class if the teacher was absent. Heads were now making decisions more confidently and began to mobilise resources for their *Kachi* classes through parent bodies. Many started to utilise previously untouched development funds and often dipped into their personal resources whenever the need arose. Heads from the urban and rural partner schools unanimously reported that admissions in their schools had increased dramatically.

In order to spread the impact beyond TRC’s partner schools, teachers who had successfully implemented the ECE programme and had effective communication and interpersonal skills attended a specially designed leaders’ course to enable them to train other teachers. These selected teachers who form a TRC-ECE resource pool converse confidently on ECE matters, and, with a little support, have successfully conducted workshops for teachers in other schools in their districts. Their supervisors and District Education Officers see the value of and take great pride in their very own “in-house expertise” and have organised workshops using their own resources to extend the ECE programme to additional schools in their districts.

TRC also organised forums for educators and parents to create awareness and raise the profile of ECE. The idea of meetings was a novel one for many parents, and was initially viewed with scepticism by some. As a head from a rural school reported “At first parents refused to come to the meetings because they were afraid they would be charged a fee for the high standard of education that they could not afford.” There had, of course been no change in the fee structure with the introduction of the ECE class, since these were government schools.

Soon, well-attended parent meetings became the norm for the *Kachi* class in partner schools. A majority of Pakistani parents equate going to school with highly structured formal work; that is, with homework that will occupy their children and with a focus on learning to read and write. Sending children for additional tuition (tutoring) after school is an integral part of the child’s day and an activity with which parents have become comfortable. It was therefore of critical importance to provide parents with an orientation to the ECE curriculum; we needed them to understand that their children would be engaged in play for a good part of the day and to recognise the important lessons they would learn through play. At the meetings,
teachers introduced parents to the activity-based learning methods they were using; teachers also discussed issues of no homework or after school tuition, eating and sleeping patterns, and health and hygiene.

Mothers unanimously favoured the ECEP approach because they were beginning to observe changes in their children. A mother shared that she thought working in *goshas* (learning corners) had helped her child become independent and responsible. The child was now working by herself and returning things to their place even at home. Another mother shared, “My daughter doesn’t even think of staying home anymore. We used to force her to attend school each day, but now she is so eager she insists on going even when she is unwell.” A mother from rural Shikarpur reported “My children are teaching me to wash my hands and say *Bismillah* before we eat.”

Awareness has also increased at the administrative level, especially among the “Nazims,” (elected representatives of local government bodies, with executive powers) and councillors who have visited the schools. One Nazim commented, “I cannot believe that this is a government school. Such results can only be seen when people work hard.” A head reported “The Nazim of my area gave special attention to the *Kachi* class. He was inspired by the children’s confidence and quick responses to questions.” The formerly ignored age group has become a priority.

### Advocacy at the National Level

It all began when TRC hosted a successful national level ECE seminar titled, *A Public Sector Initiative: From Awareness to Action* in November 1999, with the explicit purpose of raising awareness about appropriate ECE practice and sharing the outcomes of the Early Childhood Education Project (ECEP). The two-day, national seminar was hosted jointly by TRC and the Education Department (Government of Sindh) and became the platform through which we shared our learning from the *Kachi* class initiative.

On 23 and 24 November 1999, a range of 150 public and private sector educators gathered to learn about the provision of ECE in the different provinces, about TRC’s ECEP, and, more importantly, to discuss how the benefits of this model could be replicated on a wider basis in the public sector. Presentations from practitioners and stakeholders in the ECEP, as well as from educators from other provinces, indicated that there was a significant interest in making provisions for replication. The seminar’s interactive approach led to discussions, which resulted in the compilation of a list of recommendations for implementing the ECEP model in the public sector. The following recommendations were made:

- A phased programme for introduction of *Kachi* classes should be prepared, addressing issues of facilities, human resource development, financial resources, and community mobilisation. Model *Kachi* classes at district level should be set up as a starting point
- A cadre of ECE teachers should be developed, so that the inputs in training are not dissipated by frequent teacher transfers; a critical mass of human resources should be developed in this field
- Head teachers and supervisory staff should be trained to provide pedagogic leadership in monitoring ECE programmes
- Active involvement of PTAs/SMCs/VECs should be encouraged by schools to support and strengthen the *Kachi* components
- The physical environment should support children’s learning
- The age group for *Kachi* children should be four to six years
- Special skills for continuous assessment should be developed in *Kachi* teachers
- Coordination between the school health services and schools should be encouraged
- Teacher pupil ratio should be limited to 1:25, maximum 1:30
- Textbooks should be kept to a minimum in the *Kachi* class. These textbooks should be activity-based
- School heads should be authorised to spend a specified amount from school funds for purchase of stationery and teaching-learning materials
- The change from activity-based learning in *Kachi* to an academic focus in grade 1 should not be too rapid. The child-centred, activity-based learning should continue in grades 1, 2, and onwards
- Child-centred and activity-based teaching and learning methodology should be emphasised in pre-service training programmes

This was the impetus required to begin a formal policy dialogue with the provincial Ministry of Education to review and formalise the ECE Curriculum Guidelines, which had been developed as part of the project. The draft ECE curriculum framework was launched at the event.
Policy Dialogue: TRC's Journey in the Review of the ECE Curriculum

It was during a meeting on 8 June 1999 with Ms. Mehtab Rashdi, Provincial Secretary of Education, Government of Sindh (GoS) that a crucial breakthrough occurred. Impressed with the achievements of the ECEP in government schools, she shared with TRC the desire to introduce ECE in government schools in Sindh. She seemed receptive to policy changes. She recalled being in a Kachi class when she was little, and felt that the decision by a previous government to discontinue the pre-primary class owing to resource constraints had resulted in difficulties for children, teachers, and parents. After a gap of twenty-five years it seemed the time was ripe for the return of the Kachi class to government schools.

To initiate the process TRC was asked to prepare a presentation for the Directors of School Education (DSEs) in Sindh province. Soon after, TRC met and presented to the group of DSEs. The presentation became the impetus for an extensive discussion, which embraced issues such as required policy changes, teacher shortages, and lack of space. With these issues being debated, one thing came through clearly: that the decision-makers had been won over by ECEP and would support its formalisation and implementation.

The seminar mentioned above, A Public Sector Initiative: From Awareness to Action, was organised in November 1999 to garner more support from educators in the public and private sector at a national level.

In January 2000, a TRC team met the provincial secretary to follow up on the seminar’s recommendations. The review of the ECE Curriculum frame- work was high on the agenda at the meeting. The secretary recommended that TRC send copies of the curriculum to the Director of the Bureau of Curriculum (BoC), GoS and other practitioners in the field for review. Following this, the draft curriculum would be forwarded to the provincial minister for education who would chair a meeting to finalise the document. Just when things seemed like they had begun to move, a new provincial secretary for education and a new director at the BoC were appointed, and the draft ECE curriculum was put on the back burner.

In March 2000, TRC met the Federal Education Minister, Government of Pakistan (GoP) and Joint Education Advisor (JEA), Ministry of Education, Federal Curriculum Wing, Islamabad, to present the draft ECE Curriculum Guidelines and learning materials developed by TRC. An in-depth discussion of the curriculum ensued which touched upon the process of review, adaptation, and possible formalisation. The minister asked TRC to send in a formal request, following which the four provincial BoCs would revise the document before passing it onto the Federal Curriculum Wing. The Curriculum Wing would in turn give TRC its feedback and recommendations.

By June that year, feedback was received from two provinces and from the Federal Ministry of Education Curriculum Wing. By the last quarter of 2000, the last of the feedback was received from the remaining provinces. Feedback received, TRC contacted the JEA and was referred to the Director of the Technical Panel for Teacher Education to set a date for the joint national review. Ms. Kasuri was extremely responsive and a meeting was scheduled for 8 January 2001.

In January 2001, a National Review Team comprising of the Director, Technical Panel for Teacher Education, Directors of all four PITEs (Provincial Institute for Teacher Education), and directors from all the four provincial BoCs visited TRC. The review team was taken on a round of in-depth observation of project Kachi classrooms. TRC took a back seat while the project school children and their teachers were put through random informal tests by the team as part of the observation. Back at TRC, the observations were followed by an extensive question and answer session, to which teachers, heads, and their supervisors were invited. The Review Team, impressed with the progress that had been made in ECEP,
committed that approval for ECE would be sought at the Inter-Secretaries Meeting, one of the highest level meetings prior to approval by the Federal Education Minister. They also assured TRC that formalisation of the draft ECE Curriculum as a national document would be suggested at the meeting.

TRC was invited to make a presentation at the Inter-Secretaries meeting in Islamabad in February, but the process was in for another delay. The proceedings, which had been moving ahead fairly smoothly, came to a standstill following a major shuffle in the Ministry of Education. At TRC, yet another setback was encountered. This, after having come so close, brought with it a feeling of despondency. This feeling, however, did not last long. The belief and commitment in what we were doing pulled us through and we decided to wait until new appointments were made.

In June the same year, the TRC team met the Federal Education Minister, Ms. Zobaida Jalal again, this time at an education conference in Quetta. The minister reiterated her support to ECE and suggested that TRC get in touch with the newly appointed JEA, Dr. Haroona Jatoi in the Ministry. Dr. Jatoi, present at the conference, showed a keen interest in the ECE Curriculum.

On 10 September 2001 TRC met with the JEA in Islamabad to discuss the formalisation of the ECE Curriculum Guidelines. She assured TRC that her office would facilitate a formal national review of the draft. A little over two months later between 26–28 December the draft document was reviewed at TRC by a National Review Committee constituted in consultation with the Ministry of Education.

In the meantime TRC had been identified in current GoP documents, such as the Education Sector Reforms (2001–2004) and EFA National Plan of Action (2001–2015), as a resource institution for providing policy and professional support at the national, provincial, and district levels. This came as a huge surprise! After the initial elation at being acknowledged, we were a bit wary of the implications of this tremendous responsibility. We wondered how the government could have put this in the National Plan of Action without first negotiating our availability and capacity to undertake this task.

The Education Minister, Ms. Jalal, lent her visible support to ECE by visiting TRC unannounced while in Karachi on other business, during the ECE Curriculum review in December 2001. She voiced her support for the document, adding that ECE would become a part of the formal scheme of studies, and stated that this curriculum would be forwarded to all provincial governments for implementation. The National Review Committee worked hard over the two days following during which TRC reorganised and rewrote parts of the document in accordance with the format supplied by the Federal Curriculum Wing.

On 9 February 2002 a meeting of the Select Committee was held in the JEA’s office where the document was once again reviewed. The Select Committee was comprised of personnel from the Ministry and TRC. The committee’s spirited discussion, during which philosophies were argued and rationales for activities were offered, gave the curriculum its final shape. A letter formally recommending the approval of the draft ECE Curriculum as a national document was given to TRC. The document was finalised in view of the feedback from the Select Committee and was sent to the Ministry of Education for printing in the first week of April. Pakistan’s first National Early Childhood Education Curriculum was formally launched on 22 August 2002. The launch witnessed two firsts: the first National ECE Curriculum, and the first example of public-private partnership in the education sector.

The formalisation of the ECE Curriculum was the result of a number of factors. With the Education for All deadline set for 2015 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, the timing was right as there is increasing pressure on governments to meet targets: early childhood education and care is one of the EFA goals. The Education Ministry was receptive to the idea of an Early Years’ Curriculum which was necessary for wider implementation. The current thrust towards public-private partnerships also aided the process.

TRC’s belief in and commitment to quality ECE provision, and its determination and perseverance, combined with the support of Ms. Zobaida Jalal, a woman who had the requisite vision, saw the curriculum through to its formalisation. In addition, throughout the process, everyone involved—no matter what their agendas at the start, gradually took ownership of the curriculum as their understanding of ECE—evolved and their respect for TRC grew.

Seminar 1999 Recommendations and Update 2002

Now, in December 2002, looking back at the seminar recommendations formulated three years ago, it is truly heartening to observe that considerable progress has been made so far. Some advances have been made in terms of policy and others as
part of the planned implementation strategies. It is interesting to note here that the language used in the Education Sector Reforms (2001–2004) document reflects TRC’s language for ECE and in fact uses quotes from the TRC Annual Report (2000).

■ A phased programme for introduction of Kachi classes should be prepared, addressing issues of facilities, human resource development, financial resources, and community mobilisation. Model Kachi classes at the district level should be set up as a start—The National Plan of Action (NPA: 2001–2015) clearly indicates a phased programme for introducing Kachi classes in primary schools. Provincial EFA plans take into account the resources issue. The implementation of the Local Government Plan 2000 ensures a level of decentralisation of administrative authority and resource distribution to district level, which supports the recommendation to set up model Kachi classes at district level. The NPA reinforces the role of EFA planners at provincial and district levels.

■ A cadre of ECE teachers should be developed, so that the inputs in training are not dissipated by frequent transfers and a critical mass of human resources is developed in this field—Teacher training and education is an integral part of the NPA. The issue of frequent transfers still needs to be addressed.

■ Head teachers and supervisory staff should be trained to provide pedagogic leadership in monitoring ECE programmes—The ECE training TRC will undertake for various government schools in different provinces in 2003, supported by different donor agencies, ensures the above. However, in the hierarchical government system this aspect will take longer to accomplish.

■ Active involvement of PTAs/SMCs/VECs should be encouraged by schools to support and strengthen the Kachi components—Strengthening of SMCs and VECs and their role in monitoring and evaluation of schools is underlined in the NPA.

■ The physical environment should support children’s learning—The National ECE Curriculum ensures this will happen.

■ Age group for Kachi children should be four to six years—The age range is in fact three to five.

■ Special skills for continuous assessment should be developed in Kachi teachers—The National ECE Curriculum promotes continuous assessment. In order to implement the curriculum teachers will have to be trained in continuous assessment.

■ Coordination between the school health services and schools should be encouraged—Not much progress has been made on this recommendation.

■ Teacher pupil ratio should be limited to 1:25 maximum 1:30—The Government of Sindh, in their plans, have made provision for one ECE teacher and one co-teacher (teacher’s aid) in a class of thirty. This exceeds our expectations.

■ Textbooks should be kept to a minimum in the Kachi class. These textbooks should be activity-based—The Federal Education Minister in the preface to the National ECE Curriculum, states that there will be NO textbooks for the Kachi class. Learning resources for Kachi classes from TRC and others have been mentioned in the Education Sector Reforms.

■ School heads should be authorised to spend a specified amount from school funds for purchase of stationery and teaching-learning materials—This is already happening. Several government school heads have come to TRC to purchase the Pehla Taleemi Basta, a cloth bag with ECE learning resources.

■ The change from activity-based learning in Kachi to an academic focus in grade 1 should not be too rapid. The child-centred, activity-based learning should continue in grades 1, 2, and onwards—Dialogue on a change in the primary curriculum has been initiated with the Federal Curriculum Wing. This however, will be the next area TRC plans to focus on following implementation of the ECE Curriculum.

■ Child-centred and activity-based teaching and learning methodology should be emphasised in pre-service training programmes—This too is a future area of focus.

TRC’s success in introducing ECE in government schools and in policy dialogue resulting in the formalisation of the ECE Curriculum positions us to be a natural choice as partners for government and for international donor agencies. We have already made commitments to some with work beginning in 2003. The future also poses the challenge of quantifying quality...a daunting task indeed.

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The Madrasa Resource Centres (MRCs) are locally registered organisations in Uganda, Kenya, and Zanzibar, whose shared aim is to support poor Muslim parents and communities to address the early learning and development needs of their young children. MRC Kenya was established in 1986, MRC Zanzibar in 1990, and MRC Uganda in 1993. The MRCs promote community-based early childhood activities and services that are culturally and programmatically relevant and meaningful. Over the course of the years of their operation, diverse challenges, issues, and opportunities have emerged within each country context, related to the needs and constraints faced by communities wishing to establish a local community preschool. These challenges have also been linked to the evolution and development of the respective governments’ policies and programmes in the area of ECD.

In their work, the MRCs have learned to take on an active advocacy role and also to play a mediator role in order to work towards improved local and broader national programming and policy for ECD. These experiences serve as an example of the important role a local civil society organisation can play in shaping policy.

In bringing forward the concerns of parents and communities to appropriate government or other officials, the MRC staff in each country has, at different moments and for varying reasons, taken up the role of mediator/facilitator. They have also sought out or been invited to participate in key planning sessions and discussions related to policy and programme development. Increasing recognition of the impact that the MRC programmes have had in providing opportunities for access to preschool education among Muslim communities has helped their efforts on both fronts. The
following highlights the MRCs’ involvement in advocating and working with government. It also discusses how the MRCs have sought to address the issues raised by communities in dealing with government.

In general, the three East Africa governments have or are developing policies related to ECD programmes. Preschool education is most prominent, given the link to the Ministries of Education and their efforts towards EFA goals. In all three countries—though perhaps particularly in Uganda and Zanzibar—the governments, while including early childhood education (and development) activities under the auspices of the Ministries of Education, indicate that their role in this field is primarily to provide the overall policy framework related to curriculum, training, and registration of ECD/preschool centres and monitoring those implementing on the ground. Across the board, the governments have asked for and, in some cases, promoted strongly the participation and leadership of civil society organisations. They encouraged them to work with communities to assist in the implementation of efforts on the ground, through seeking additional funds from donor agencies or local philanthropists and businesses. What this has actually meant for the operations of each MRC has varied over time, depending on the particular opportunities and timing of wider ECD policy development in each country.

In Uganda, MRC Uganda staff has participated in the ongoing development of ECD guidelines for training of teachers and trainers, as well as the creation of a new national learning framework for ECD. It has also participated in various fora intended to inform the broader policy development of the ECD sector at national and local levels. The Madrasa approach has informed the development of the national strategy including:

- the approach of working with communities to organise services for young children;
- the building of capacities of families and communities for ECD services; and
- the piloting of ways to work towards sustainability of the community ECD efforts through income generation and providing community grants and incentives.

MRC has offered its work as a “case study” for others through steady participation and engagement in policy and programme discussions and debates. Perhaps as importantly it has also facilitated visits to the Madrasa Resource Centre and to many of the Madrasa community preschools. These visits have illustrated community based programming and active, culturally relevant learning to government officials, staff from other NGOs, teacher trainers (i.e., from the Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo University), and donor agency staff, including staff from the Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (NECD) project supported by the Government of Uganda and the World Bank.

In Tanzania and Zanzibar, there is goodwill on the part of the government to work further and develop appropriate ECD policies. In 2001, the Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sports challenged all ECD stakeholders to work together in developing an integrated multi-sectoral ECD policy in Tanzania. The Ministry supported the formation of a new national Tanzania ECD network, which is comprised of various government ministries, NGOs, religious organisations, private providers, community-based organisations, and individuals.

The Zanzibar MRC is an active member of this network, and has been acknowledged in Ministry documents as one of the few initiatives to support communities to establish their own preschools (Zanzibar Education Master Plan, 1996–2006). A recent mid-term review of Zanzibar education notes that the MRC programme has helpfully supplemented Government efforts around raising awareness about preschool education in Zanzibar. The curriculum and training materials have been shared with the Zanzibar Ministry of Education, which is using them for the development of its own national curriculum—with relevant adaptation. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MoECS) in Zanzibar has also involved ZMRC in a workshop for writing of a five-year “Action Plan for Preschool Education” in Zanzibar. The Government of Kenya recognises the impact that the programme has had in marginalised communities and encourages further partnerships with local and international NGOs in
similar programmes. MRC staff have been invited along with others to assist in the development of preschool curriculum and training materials over the years with the National and District Centres for Early Childhood Development. This has included input on the government “Integrated Islamic Preschool” programme, which operates in selected areas. Government support to the programme is manifested through collaboration by Government officers in the field who are officially attached to the programme, as well as through the use of the MRC curriculum by public institutions.

The MRC Kenya has been recognised as operating within the government framework on poverty reduction strategy and the target of basic education for all. The MRC in Kenya was involved in the implementation of the Government of Kenya ECD project funded by the World Bank, their efforts to look at the impact and effectiveness of community support grants and mini-endowments have generated much interest by NGOs, government, and the World Bank. The MRC is also a member of the Mombasa branch of the Kenya NGO Consortium on ECD, which is an information and coordination network of NGOs working on early childhood care and development initiatives, and is also a member of the District ECD Committee.

The MRC contributions to and involvement in government policy development on ECD mentioned above have often directly called upon MRCs to play a mediating role between communities and the governments in the following significant ways:

**Registration of Community-based Preschools**

The mechanisms for registration of preschools in the three countries create a range of barriers for poor communities. One barrier relates to the amount of time and money required for travel to designated registration locations. Often repeated visits are necessary due to long waiting times, lack of clarity in application processes, and the appropriate government officials not being available.

A second problem is the registration process itself, which is highly bureaucratic. The key issue has been the limited categories allowed for registering a preschool. There is no “community-based” category except in Kenya. In most cases, the only option is to register these community-owned preschools as private preschools (which tends to imply profit making). The other option is to register as a government preschool, which is usually not acceptable to communities, since it implies other levels of control over decisions regarding the management and delivery of the preschool service by government. In Zanzibar and Uganda, therefore, the Madrasa community preschools were put into the private category and were asked to pay the same registration fees (tax in the case of Uganda) as paid by the private for-profit preschools owned by individuals.

Worse still, government responsibilities for early childhood services are divided between several ministries, which makes coherent policy difficult and confusing for communities. The MRCs have played a key role in facilitating the registration of the Madrasa preschools. In Zanzibar, they have successfully argued for a new category of preschool registration under the “private” category—a category for non-profit schools owned and managed by communities. In Uganda, the MRC has raised the issue with Ministry officials and has been able to provide inputs into new proposed policies around registration. While some progress has been made, more needs to be done so that at every level, the policies and practices are clear and transparent.

Madrasa programmes emphasise cleanliness and sanitation as important for children's health and development.
Training of Preschool Teachers

Government guidelines across the region require that a preschool teacher should have certain minimum qualifications to qualify for training (the specifics vary in each country). However, the MRC teachers, who are young women identified for training by the communities, may not always meet the minimum requirements prescribed by the governments. In addition, the content, type, and length of training do not conform completely to guidelines provided by governments. It would therefore appear almost impossible for the governments to recognise the MRCs as “credible” institutions, and to recognise the Madrasa community teachers as well qualified for the job.

However, the MRCs involvement in government policy dialogue, as well as the development of training manuals that spell out the competencies, has brought about recognition that there is room for flexibility to accommodate different cadres in the preschool teaching profession and to train them to a level where they can perform effectively.

The Madrasa Preschool Curriculum

The Madrasa preschool curriculum is designed to encourage active learning and also to build on local communities' cultures and values. This is different from the government-designed curriculum, which is quite formal in approach. The effectiveness of the Madrasa preschool curriculum has encouraged governments to discuss how they might accommodate different curricula, addressing the needs of different cultures and local circumstances. Across the region, at different times and to varying degrees, the governments have involved MRC staff in developing their own preschool curricula borrowing heavily from the MRC design and approach.

Government Contribution to Community Preschools

A more recent area of advocacy by the MRCs with government is related to how government can provide some levels of financial support to community preschools, most often under their own Plans of Action. In Uganda, the government has in principle agreed to top up the Madrasa community preschool teachers’ salaries. This has come as a result of the involvement of MRC Uganda and its primary donor, Aga Khan Foundation, in the education sector review process, where the issue of the government recognition and support of non-formal preschool education was addressed and eventually agreed to as policy.

In Kenya a few local government authorities are also contributing to MRC community preschools by paying some teachers’ salaries. This has largely come about as a result of the MRCs’ involvement in District Development Committees. With the increasing pressure being put forth on governments to increase their financial commitment to preschool education, it is foreseen that government support to the Madrasa community preschools will gradually increase; this should significantly increase the likelihood of these community-owned preschools’ longer-term sustainability.

Quality Assurance

Governments have the responsibility to ensure quality in education at all levels. As the MRCs have become recognised institutions for preschool education, a number of the Madrasa community preschools have been visited by government officials in their capacity as school inspectors. In the process, these preschools have been recognised as model institutions that could be replicated elsewhere. In addition, the model of a local “Resource Centre” working intensely with communities to establish, manage, and maintain their own preschools has been examined by others who seek to replicate or adapt the approach. In Uganda for example, under the World Bank programme, fifty government resource centres that have been developed in twenty-five districts have adopted the MRC approach/model and MRC Uganda has been invited to discussions on how the resource centres should be used. This has been seen as a form of validation by the Uganda government of the MRC and its work with communities.

In Zanzibar the Government has set up a preschool Teacher Centre which offers in-service training to preschool teachers. This was after the MRC started to offer training to practicing teachers and after MoECS officials visited Madrasa preschools to observe performance.

Transition to Primary Education

The issue of children’s transition into primary education has become of great concern to parents and the MRCs. Upon completion of preschool, a good number of children who proceed to primary schools either drop out or drop back to preschool, while others do not proceed on to primary education. Among the reasons contributing to these problems are: unfriendly learning environments (high pupil-teacher ratios, teaching
methods that are not friendly—e.g., no active learning, lack of teaching, and learning materials that lead to “talk-and-chalk”); curriculum that does not integrate religious and cultural values; and long distances for children to travel to primary schools. Communities have taken the initiative to expand their Madrasa preschools to include lower primary classes. In Uganda, thirty-six Madrasa preschools have expanded to lower primary schools and are seeking the MRC assistance in getting government support within the framework of basic education for all. The MRC provides information to the community members concerning the different options for government support and what the government requirements are for each option. Although this kind of mediating role is not part of the agreed contract between the MRC and communities, there has been demand for such assistance. The MRCs are currently considering how far to move at the primary level, which would mean further work and need for mediation, especially in areas of curriculum, teacher training, and material development.

Submitted by Juliana Nzomo (AKF East Africa ECD Programme Officer) in collaboration with staff from MRC Kenya, MRC Uganda, MRC Zanzibar. This is based on an earlier presentation by MRC U’s Director, Ms Hajarah Ndayidde, at an AKF and World Bank organised ECD Roundtable in Brussels with the EU/EC in November 2001.

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A more recent area of advocacy for the MRCs is to work with governments to provide some level of financial support to community preschools, most often under National Plans of Action.
Introduction

Pueblito is a Canadian NGO working in partnership with local organisations in Latin America to enhance the well-being of young children. Recognising the need to advocate for children’s rights in both Canada and Latin America, Pueblito has worked almost for almost fifteen years with the Movimento de Luta Pró Creches, MLPC (Movement for the Promotion of Child Care Centres) in Brazil.

MLPC is a coalition of 113 community child care centres that provides services to over 15,000 children under six in the poor bairros of Belo Horizonte in the state of Minas Gerais, and a prominent advocacy organisation for the rights of children. For the last twenty-three years, MLPC has been a leader in the movement for high-quality childcare centres in Brazil.

Advocacy for Access to Child Care

In the late 1970s poor people living on the outskirts of Belo Horizonte began to organise around finding solutions for the community’s lack of electricity, water, sewers, schools, health centres—and childcare. The first community childcare centres in Belo Horizonte were temporary, unequipped spaces staffed mainly by women volunteers set up to support and liberate women to work outside the home, as well as to prevent children from being left unsupervised or in the often unsafe homes of caregivers. The centres grew up with the support of churches, bairro associations, and women’s groups.

By 1979, three community childcare centres had banded together to form the MLPC. By the 1980s, the centres had become an important reference point for the bairros in which they were situated: places where food or health programmes were set up and which provided an opportunity for poor people—particularly women—to make a change in their daily lives.

The people (mainly women) who were associated with the community childcare centres initially had met to talk about shared problems and later began to take part in larger policy discussions in assemblies, meetings, and workshops with representatives of childcare centres from other municipalities and states. They discussed health, early childhood education, professional training, legislation, and financing, and they held protests, rallies,
and demonstrations. A number of international NGOs, including Pueblito, began to support MLPC activities. In 1988 MLPC acquired a small house with Pueblito funding that now serves as headquarters for two full-time coordinators and a fundraiser.

In the 1980s the childcare centres developed a range of services for children from birth to six and MLPC lobbied the municipal government for funding to pay the workers. The MLPC also lobbied for the formulation of public policies focussed on early childhood. Eager to ensure that federal, state, and municipal governments fulfilled their obligations, the MLPC created two work groups: the Commission of Federal and State Issues and the Commission of Municipal Issues. MLPC representatives took part in the First Meeting of Early Childhood Education in Mexico in 1989, a groundbreaking intercontinental exchange.

MLPC’s continued struggles on all of these fronts began to produce some important victories. In 1988 the Second Congress of Community Child Care Centres of Minas Gerais designated childcare workers as educators rather than as caretakers. In Belo Horizonte, the municipality introduced new early childhood policies that recognised the importance of childcare workers and increased their salaries. The municipality also established professional standards to increase educators’ skills and improve the quality of childcare programmes, provided a significant increase in funding, and agreed to supply daily lunches to the centres.

MLPC played an important role in the drafting of the 1990 Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA), which rapidly became a model for the rest of Latin America in terms of the defence of children’s rights. The ECA is one of the most advanced in the world, but there have been great difficulties in its implementation due to lack of political will and lack of funding, as well as to differing conceptions of the rights of young children and adolescents on the part of government, judges, police, educators, NGOs, and the public. Although the law became an integral component of government social policy and was used by the voluntary sector to lobby for improved health and education services for all children, the majority of programs created in response to the law have benefited children and youth, neglecting young children from birth to six years.

MLPC was also active in the discussions and forums leading to the adoption of the 1996 National Law on Education, which recognised early childhood education as the first phase of basic education. MLPC has since used this new law to promote early childhood education as a distinct post-secondary specialisation.

**Advocacy for Quality Child Care: The Arts and Education Project**

The advocacy work of MLPC greatly improved funding and access to childcare in Belo Horizonte. By 1999, the next step was clear: to strengthen day-to-day activities in the childcare centres and reinforce the educators’ training. MLPC identified this need and asked Pueblito for its support. Pueblito invited Ryerson University in Toronto to join the initiative, and the Arts and Education Project in Belo Horizonte was born.

The focus on arts and education comes from MLPC itself. Project Coordinators Cynthia Paixão Mendes and Cristina Ferreira Alves note, “We believe that if young children are given the opportunity for artistic and playful expression and discovery, it will help them not just in their schooling, but will prepare them for life itself, strengthening their ethical, moral, and human values, and freeing up their creativity and critical thinking.”

Concentrating on the birth to three age group, the project uses the theory and practice of arts and education to train MLPC staff, pedagogic coordinators (centre supervisors), and child care educators from twenty-five of the centres, using a “train the trainer” model. The Canadian team is made up of five Early Childhood specialists from Ryerson with complementary expertise. Already 320 educators from the centres are applying the new ideas, which have been passed on very quickly.

MLPC is pushing strongly for high-quality child care modelled on this arts-based curriculum, using teacher-made materials and resources available in local markets. Not only are the MLPC coordinators planning excellent child-centred programmes, but they can also explain why they are important. And this is where advocacy comes in.

While it has been easy to explain the importance of working with young children to Brazilian educators and pedagogic coordinators, it is often difficult to win over the childcare administrators. But by documenting very carefully how children learn—keeping track of what has and what hasn’t worked—and developing programme portfolios to record child progress, the coordinators are managing to win over the administrators as well.

In a workshop with the MLPC coordinators on developing portfolios, Donald McKay, Project Coordinator for the Ryerson University team, said he mentioned photos as a useful add-on. He returned to Brazil a few months later to find that...
some of the coordinators had integrated the use of photos to make them a central part of the portfolios. Moreover, they were using them as advocacy tools to demonstrate exactly what was meant by quality care.

The MLPC coordinators’ ability to effectively apply the new knowledge and theory within their social and economic contexts continues to be a positive outcome of the project. Mendes and Alves describe how the coordinators are learning to programme for the unique needs of children aged birth to three, based on their observation of children’s skills, interests, and needs, the learning relationship between teacher and child, and the use of the creative arts. They recognise the important process of documenting a child’s experience, both for parents and for future planning. And MLPC, which had been viewed mainly as an important advocacy organisation, is now also a resource centre for information on childcare programming for institutions such as the Municipal Secretary of Education, which has asked MLPC to develop curriculum from the Arts and Education Project for its own educators’ training.

**Partnerships Go Both Ways**

Pueblito and the Ryerson team have benefitted greatly from the Brazilian experience. Pueblito has experienced firsthand how the stakeholders’ identification of their needs and participation in the design of a project at every step produces a dynamic and successful project, one that has already had an impact on advocacy for early childhood services in Brazil. As Denis Marcheterre, Executive Director of Pueblito, notes: “We have proven that the concept of reciprocal South-to-North exchange is not just an ideal in international cooperation, it is an attainable goal. Advocates in the North can now build on this experience.”

One of the important things the Ryerson group is learning from the Brazilians is how to explain to government what quality education is—to demonstrate the benefits to children of high-quality programming. “They [the Brazilians] are so effective at painting pictures of children’s needs,” McKay says. Other Ryerson faculty members credit the project with increasing their capacity to jointly design, implement, and evaluate culturally appropriate ECD projects.

**New Directions**

MLPC has demonstrated the effectiveness of a two-pronged approach to advocacy. The first component, providing services to meet the needs of children, allowed parents and communities to see the benefits and push for more and better services. The second component involves advocating with governments at all levels— influencing public policy, government budgets, and use of resources—to ensure that they meet their obligations to children and communities. Mentoring other NGOs along the way, MLPC has served as a model for childcare centres all over Brazil to fight for their rights. Now, with its new capacity development programme, it has become a pedagogical model and resource centre, developing information and learning materials relevant to the Brazilian context.

The idea that childcare centres should rely on charity for their income has gradually given way to the recognition that they are in fact an obligation of the state, signalling a new era in the history of early childhood education in Brazil. But there are still many challenges ahead. MLPC is continuing to advocate for the redefinition of the role of government in childcare and for secure government funding for ECD, as well as for professional recognition of childcare educators, for establishment of a childcare curriculum, and for the insertion of ECD into the Municipal Education System.

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In early December, 2002, Tanzania was host country to a conference planned by UNESCO to bring together Ministers of Education from across Africa to report on their progress to date and on future plans for achieving the Education For All goals committed to in the Dakar Framework of Action, 2000. This conference, called MINEDAF VIII, gave The Tanzania ECD Network of government and non-governmental organisations the opportunity to facilitate national, regional, and international collaboration on issues regarding ECD EFA. Working in partnership with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa’s (ADEA) Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECd) and the Consultative Group during the latter half of 2002, the secretariat of the network, AMANI ECCD, learned some important lessons about advocacy in the African context.

Although the first EFA Goal calls for “Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children,” the conference programme did not include attention to ECD. However, windows of opportunity were opened by the ADEA WGECd, and conference organisers agreed to include ECD in the main programme session on universalising basic education, by offering a slot for a two-hour ECD Special Session.

Given the comprehensive nature of the expanded first EFA Goal, those of us who are advocates for ECD in Africa considered this conference to be a prime opportunity to stress the importance of integrated multi-sectoral approaches to supporting ECD. Through the Tanzania ECD network forming an ECD EFA Advocacy Group, regional and international electronic networking, and coming together face-to-face at the World Bank-sponsored ECD Conference in Eritrea in October 2002, we were able to draw up collaborative advocacy statements and commitments. As the host country was Tanzania, AMANI ECCD developed a range of strategies for leading up to and during the conference and planned an ECD Special Session, titled Learning Begins at Birth: From ECE to ECD.

What Was Planned?

The advocacy materials

ECD Advocacy Statements and Commitments (see Figure 1 p. 50) were developed through collaborative processes including Early Child Development Virtual University (ECDVU) by participating students from across Africa. Links across Africa were also activated by the ADEA WGECd, which culminated in discussions at the Eritrea ECD Conference in October 2002. International networking was mobilised through the CGECCD.

The Statements and Commitments of the ECD advocates were printed as a high quality, full-colour brochure and a poster with the caption, Learning Begins at Birth: Invest in Early Childhood Development (see above) and very positive feedback was received from conference delegates. In particular, many commented how valuable and important it was to bring the mother/child image for ECD into an education forum.

The advocacy strategies

Leading up to the conference in Tanzania, a number of strategies were planned. These included radio interviews and a TV panel discussion with ECD resource people, contact with senior government representatives, newspaper articles, and the distribution of the brochure with ECD statements and commitments, together with an invitation to the ECD Special Session to all delegates and Tanzanian invitees.

The radio programmes were a very successful strategy because they provided wide coverage. Although the TV panel discussions had to be postponed due to a technical glitch, nevertheless, there was strong interest from both TV and radio professionals to continue programmes focussing on
LEARNING BEGINS AT BIRTH: INVEST IN Early Childhood Development

_IF_ we believe that education is the key to poverty reduction,
_THEN_ we must acknowledge that learning begins at birth.

“A child’s experiences in the first months and years of life determine whether he or she will enter school eager to learn or not. By school age, family and caregivers have already prepared the child for success or failure.”

—Dr. T. Brazelton, Children’s Hospital Medical Center, Boston

_IF_ …by the time a child reaches school age, most key brain wiring, language abilities, physical capabilities and cognitive foundations have been set in place,
_THEN_ invest in holistic approaches to Early Childhood Development (ECD), linking health care, adequate nutrition, water and sanitation, stimulation and early education, as the fundamental first steps in human resource development.

_IF_ “…children from poor families disproportionately fail primary school and are therefore unable to clear the first hurdle out of poverty”

—Inter-American Development Bank

_THEN_ educational planners must acknowledge and invest in the fact that ECD programmes have been shown to improve disadvantaged children’s equitable access to and success in school, especially for girls.

For the optimal development of ALL young children, we call for COMMITMENT to the development and resourcing of integrated ECD programmes that

■ Recognise ECD as the foundation of human development and therefore, poverty reduction;
■ Are realised through multi-sectoral collaboration;
■ Shift our thinking, planning and implementation of ECD support, from Early Childhood Education (ECE) in isolation, to a focus on holistic Early Childhood Development (ECD)—their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development, in the cultural context of families and communities;
■ Support capacity development for the critical role of parents and caregivers, especially women, in Africa’s human resource development;
■ Assess, analyse, and prioritise concrete ECD support through locally appropriate services for the escalating number of vulnerable and disadvantaged children due to poverty and HIV/AIDS; and
■ Are realised through partnerships between all stakeholders—families, government, and civil society organisations.
ECD issues in 2003. The planned newspaper articles did not make it into print, however, due to the late changes to the Special Session (see below).

We found that it made no sense to try to include ECD material into already overloaded conference bags. Therefore, we decided to try to get brochures and invitation letters more directly to conference delegates and provided them as handouts on the tables of all delegates prior to a morning plenary session.

Our plan was to attract delegates to the Special Session via personal invitations and through displays of the advocacy poster and invitation signs throughout the venue. We also planned to use t-shirts worn by Advocacy Team members throughout the week at the venue. Materials planned for distribution at the Special Session included the poster, the “Asmara Declaration” (the outcomes document from the ECD Conference in Eritrea in Oct. 2002), and ADEA WGECD brochures and newsletters.

Rallying participation in the Session was successful, with eighty-seven attendees. Although the plan for printing t-shirts did not materialise, the posters were very well received. The Asmara Declaration was focused on by the Eritrian Minister of Education in his panel discussion, but the document was not available for distribution. ADEA WGECD brochures and newsletter were widely distributed.

The ECD Special Session

**Title** Learning Begins at Birth: From ECE to ECD

**Format** Two-hour session, with a brief ten minute presentation, panel discussions, and debates around the advocacy statements and commitments, followed by an open forum discussion.

**Planned Participants** Chairperson: The Tanzania President’s representative to the 2002 Special Session for Children meeting in New York City was committed to take the role of chairperson of the Session, having already participated in the ECD EFA Advocacy Group.

One Presenter: A senior representative from Tanzania's Ministry of Health, who has also been an active ECD Network member.

Six Panelists: Ministers of Education from Eritrea, the Gambia, and Tanzania, as well as invited panelists from Tanzania, namely, the Minister of Community Development, Women’s Affairs, and Children, and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, as well as an NGO representative.

**How Did It Go?**

The planned multi-sectoral session was not able to go ahead due to a combination of factors regarding last minute logistical problems, such as the fact that conference organizers had to work around uncertain dates of Eid public holidays. In addition, at the last minute, UNESCO conference organizing staff on location at the conference venue introduced regulations and recommendations unfamiliar to the Tanzanian-based team who had planned the Special Session. Therefore, given that the efforts that had been made in Tanzania to nurture commitment to a multi-sectoral Special Session, combined with the uncertainties regarding a confirmed venue for the Session, the decision was made that it would be more fruitful for ECD in Tanzania to re-direct the positive energy generated to date into a national ECD Forum in 2003.

Commitment was maintained to a “modified” ECD Special Session, involving delegates only, as a venue for the session was only confirmed twenty-four hours in advance. Nevertheless, there was very significant momentum for maintaining the emphasis on integrated multi-sectoral approaches to ECD by the Ministers of Education from the Gambia and Eritrea. After much on-the-spot juggling on the part of all involved throughout the week, the MINEDAF VIII ECD Special Session attracted eighty-seven participants, and involved the Deputy Minister of Education in Mozambique as Chairperson. Unfortunately it included only one French speaking rapporteur, instead of the agreed-upon two (French and English), therefore, the challenge remains whether an official report will be produced. Two presentations were given by a) an ADEA representative (prepared by Mary Eming-Young, World Bank Washington), and b) UNICEF Tanzania. Five panelists gave presentations: conference delegates from Eritrea, Gambia, Nigeria, and Tanzania, and one NGO representative.

The Open Forum that followed the panel highlighted two key issues for conference participants: a participant from Uganda asked “…if ECD is a multi-sectoral issue, then why do we only have the education sector represented here?” and the Deputy Minister of Education, Namibia observed “this conference has fulfilled my worst fear. ECD is being discussed at the last session on the last day, when it should have been the first priority on day one.”
Lessons Learned

The advocacy materials

- Collaborative processes in developing advocacy materials and strategies are enriching—far beyond the end products themselves.
- Good quality printing made the advocacy materials very marketable; therefore it was not difficult to get permission to display them in various places at the venue.

The advocacy strategies

- Having a small team of ECD advocates on location throughout the conference is critical to scouting for opportunities that might arise and being available to talk with delegates informally.
- Through our experiences in Tanzania we have learned that media personnel are very eager to have opportunities to be sensitised to ECD issues, and to explore ways of ongoing coverage of ECD as a national development issue.

The ECD special session

- Despite all the planning and preparation, a creative and resilient team must be prepared with a combination of Plans A, B, and beyond.
- Collaborative processes demand the clarification of roles and responsibilities at all levels. Although the Tanzania ECD Network’s ECD EFA Advocacy Group developed very clear working guidelines for itself, it was clearly an oversight that we did not formalise similar guidelines with the international partner organisations. While common understanding is vital for all involved, from the point of view of a local organisation, it is also very important that the integrity of the local context is upheld by all involved.

The processes involved

- The backbone of advocacy work is a creative and resilient advocacy team with a diversity of backgrounds and skills. For example, in Tanzania, this advocacy work has been greatly facilitated by having a media person involved with the team from the beginning.

- Advocacy work depends so much on relationship building. When things seem impossible, it is the relationships that we have nurtured, both over time and in the immediate short term, with organisers and venue staff on location, that will come to the rescue when need be! It can be very surprising to realise that positive relationships can sometimes transform the impossible to the possible.
- Electronic networking with a specific focus has proven to be very fruitful. The challenge remains how to make this more of a reality at the regional level. Given time and personnel, we need to design and pilot strategies for linking up with the voices of those not connected electronically.
- How much have we considered the need for ECD sensitisation in our own organisations—no matter how large or small we are? If, as the expanded first EFA goal outlines, we are advocating for approaches to supporting comprehensive ECD, are our own organisations reflective of the integrated, multi-sectoral approaches we are calling for? Or do our organisational structures still dictate compartmentalised thinking, planning, and support?

Onward and Upward: What Is to Follow?

The status of ECD in the context of EFA remains an ongoing challenge for us all. As the Deputy Minister of Education in Namibia pointed out at the MINEDAF VIII, ECD Special Session, we urgently need to address all that we can collectively do to ensure that in all future EFA meeting agendas, ECD is the “…the first priority on day one.”

Toward this end, we trust that ECD colleagues in the region will continue to join hands in ongoing ECD advocacy work. Meanwhile, the idea of a multi-sectoral National ECD Forum in Tanzania in 2003 is already gathering momentum, as a very positive outcome from the processes involved in the ECD EFA advocacy opportunity at MINEDAF VIII.

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The I Am Your Child Foundation is a national, non-profit, non-partisan organisation that was founded to raise awareness about the importance of early childhood development and school readiness in the U.S. IAYC develops a wide variety of resources for parents, early childhood professionals, child advocates, health care providers, policy-makers, and the media. IAYC also promotes public policies that help ensure that children have the physical well-being and the social, emotional, and cognitive abilities they need to enter school ready to succeed.

The Campaign
In the spring of 1997, a unique partnership of researchers, policy-makers, and communications experts launched a national public engagement campaign called “I Am Your Child,” with the aim of focusing attention on taking advantage of opportunities during early childhood to improve results for children. The campaign founders included individuals from the entertainment industry (spearheaded by actor/director Rob Reiner), foundations, media, business, and early childhood organisations.

The I Am Your Child campaign built on the substantial work that had taken place in the early childhood field throughout the 1990s. In particular, it drew inspiration from important work supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York, synthesising an expanding body of knowledge on early social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of young children. In the sphere of communications, the campaign benefited from extensive analysis of the work done by other public health-oriented campaigns, such as those aimed at reducing smoking, improving preventive health care, and protecting the environment.

I Am Your Child was uniquely successful in bringing early childhood issues to the forefront of public attention: campaign founders worked with Newsweek magazine to create the best-selling special issue, “Your Child: Birth to Three,” they helped to develop two White House conferences on early brain development and childcare, and they also created a prime-time special for ABC Television on the importance of the early years. Nearly thirteen million people watched the ABC special, which was hosted by actor Tom Hanks and directed by Rob Reiner. The campaign successfully engaged the public at the national, state, and local levels. Throughout the country, state and local coalitions shared information and materials, called on officials and business leaders to take action, mobilised the media, and created public-private partnerships to address early childhood challenges in the field of early childhood.

The Foundation
To sustain and expand the campaign’s capacity to meet its goals, the I Am Your Child Foundation (IAYC) was created in 1997. IAYC has used mass media, community mobilisation, public education, and policy outreach to help millions of parents and caregivers learn how they can positively affect the lives of young children.

The Foundation works with existing organisations and new coalitions throughout the country to create state and local early childhood campaigns, with materials and public engagement strategies tailored to each community. IAYC also promotes stronger societal investments to support parents and caregivers who are working hard to make the most of their children’s first years. The Foundation has worked with the White House, Congress, the National Governor’s Association and numerous state and local officials to support policies that promote healthy childhood development and build state and local public engagement campaigns to raise awareness about the early years.

Parenting Materials
IAYC is well known for its seven-video series on early childhood development. The videos are hosted by popular celebrities and include parenting advice from the nation’s leading development experts. The videos include information on the importance of early bonding and attachment, quality childcare, early literacy, discipline, health and nutrition, and child safety. IAYC’s goal in producing its parenting materials is to translate today’s
best understandings of young children’s needs and development into a form that can reach and engage new parents and caregivers to help to close the gap between knowledge and practice. Research shows that this gap is wide in several areas, including health and prenatal care. For example, the University of California at Berkeley has reported that, although breastfeeding has been shown to confer lasting benefits to children, more than a third of California’s mothers do not breastfeed. In addition, immunisation is crucial to children’s health, but California ranks fortieth among states in coverage. Researchers have found that the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) can be cut in half when babies are put to sleep on their backs, but many parents remain unaware of this information.

Researchers at Berkeley surveyed parents who received the IAYC videos as part of a “Kit for New Parents” in California, and reported “parents appreciated, used and made many positive changes because of the Kit.” The overwhelming majority (94%) of parents who received and used the Kit found it to be helpful, and nearly half of the participants said that using the Kit had changed their thinking or behaviour with respect to subjects such as breastfeeding, child development, and nutrition. The researchers stated that their survey results “strongly suggest that Kits should be distributed to all new parents statewide—especially during the prenatal period—and to parents of young children.”

Reaching out to the Latino Community

All of IAYC’s materials are available in English and in original Spanish. Interestingly, Berkeley’s researchers found that Spanish-speaking parents were even more likely to watch the videos than were English speakers (95% vs. 84%). In addition, Spanish speakers were more likely to report changing their thinking or actions because of the Kit (54% vs. 41%). In focus groups, providers noted that the overwhelmingly positive response to the Kit among Spanish-speaking families reflected a significant unmet need for educational materials in their language.

Spreading the Word

IAYC works with community organisations, government agencies, libraries, hospitals, Head Start sites, and child care centres in the United States and fourteen additional countries to ensure that the valuable information in IAYC’s video series, accompanying parenting booklets, and resource guides reach as many people as possible.

The Foundation also works with states and cities to develop and coordinate parent education and health promotion programs through various training and outreach efforts as part of statewide and local parenting, preventive health care, and school readiness initiatives.

**California**

In 2001, for example, the California Children and Families Commission launched an initiative to distribute *I Am Your Child* videos as part of a “Kit for New Parents,” to all of California’s new and expectant parents (approximately 500,000 children are born every year in the state). A major press event to introduce the initiative was held in Los Angeles, with celebrities including Rob Reiner, Jamie Lee Curtis, and Andy Garcia, and parents who received the Kit in the pilot distribution.

**Pennsylvania**

IAYC also worked with Pennsylvania to launch a statewide parent education campaign called “*I Am Your Child in Pennsylvania*.” This was one of former Governor Ridge’s last acts before he took on his new responsibilities as Homeland Security Advisor. The Governor was able to identify over $6 million in funding for the initiative, raise public awareness, and educate parents and caregivers about the importance of the early years of a child’s development.

Over the course of eighteen months, the campaign is expected to initiate over eight million “encounters” with parents, health professionals, and parent educators in which the content of the campaign’s messages are discussed. Every parent of a newborn (170,000 per year in Pennsylvania) receives a letter and greeting card from Hallmark, promoting the campaign. The campaign also provides for the creation of over 7,000 distribution points for IAYC parenting materials (including local libraries and family and child service organisations), as well as the production and initial distribution of a Pennsylvania Resource Guide for Families. The Resource Guide provides parents with a quick reference to emergency phone numbers, childcare centres, and important information about their child’s development. The initiative also provides professional training classes to parent education providers, using a curriculum that is based on the IAYC video series. Training institutes are offered across the state to improve the quality of home visiting and parent education programmes.
**Kentucky**

In December 2001, IAYC worked with the Kentucky Governor’s office to launch a statewide health information initiative, called the “Healthy Babies Campaign,” to educate women of childbearing age and new parents about the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices during pregnancy and the first years of life. The Healthy Babies Campaign is part of a much larger statewide initiative to ensure that all young children in Kentucky are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened by their communities.

Through the Healthy Babies Campaign, Kentucky spent $1 million for a paid advertising campaign targeting pregnant women, and through *I Am Your Child* the state provides every new parent (approximately 50,000 per year) with IAYC videos. The entire series of IAYC videos is also made available to all parents of young children in Kentucky through thousands of distribution points including hospitals, public libraries, family resource centres, youth centres, and doctors offices, and will also be used through home visiting programmes. The Kentucky Hospital Association purchased videos through a donation.

**Customising the Message**

In an effort to reach out to targeted audiences for its campaigns, IAYC customises its materials, giving officials and community leaders the opportunity to add personalised messages. *I Am Your Child* videos distributed in Pennsylvania are marked with the governor’s name, and videos distributed in Kentucky feature photographs of the governor on the video sleeve. In Wyoming, IAYC partnered with the state’s Early Childhood Development Council to create a special edition of the “Ready to Learn” video, featuring an introduction from Wyoming’s First Lady. The video, which focuses on the importance early literacy, was distributed to thousands of parents in Wyoming.

The Foundation continues to work on developing statewide initiatives, such as those in California, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky, in an effort to urge state and local officials to demonstrate their continued commitment to their youngest citizens, and to build public awareness that what parents and caregivers do during the early years makes a profound difference in a child’s healthy development and later success in school.

**Contact:**

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Activities of the CG Secretariat

Upcoming Coordinators’ Notebook issue:
CN Issue No. 28 (Winter 2004): “ECCD: Rights and Investment”
Articulates the arguments and advocates for ECCD Rights and Investment as well as how these arguments further the goals of EFA, World Fit For Children, and the Millennium Goals, and also work on the ground.

Follow-up on Coordinators’ Notebook No. 26 (2002) on “HIV/AIDS and Early Childhood”
As reported in CN No. 26 (2002) the impact of HIV/AIDS on young children (under the age of 5/6 or prior to school entry), their families, and communities is an area of high priority to the Consultative Group. At our annual meeting held in September 2002, a Working Group on HIV/AIDS consisting of various CG members was developed to:

– Systematically compile and disseminate information and lessons learned around the work on HIV and the young child within and, most importantly, beyond the CGECCD consortium
– Place “Early Years” issues on the agendas of International meetings and National level planning meetings related to HIV/AIDS and visa-versa
– Develop proposals to take the work forward (joint action by the CG consortium and other interested organisations/networks)

The overall aim of the work is to build up momentum during 2003–2004 through a series of coordinated and linked meetings, discussions, and dissemination/communication efforts by the CG consortium and others to possibly, and ideally, culminate in a major, high profile meeting in late 2003–early 2004.

Current and proposed activities for 2003–2004 include:

– Synthesising and disseminating information (through a general mailing list but also to a key list of donors and advocacy groups) around work on HIV/AIDS and the young child, beginning with Coordinators’ Notebook No. 26 on ECD and HIV/AIDS: (http://www.ecdgroup.com/Issue_26_HIV_AIDS_and_early_childhood.asp)
– Developing sets of tools to be used to gather ongoing information from the field on community-based initiatives underway and to assist those implementing projects with initial ideas for gathering information for planning, programming, and monitoring
– Creating a database, list serves, calendars, key contact people, etc. for dissemination and ongoing collection of information
– Identifying upcoming international events either focused on HIV/AIDS or ECD in order to focus on Early Years & HIV/AIDS issues
– Developing and setting-up a set of strategic meetings with key advocacy targets (donors, governments, networks) over the next 12–15 months
– Organising a series of regional working sessions in regions (with an aim to link to planned conferences)
– Developing an advocacy packet (CN issue, brief highlighting key points, special button on ECD and HIV/AIDS issues) to share at key meetings (CG consortium members will be primary disseminators of these packets through their participation at different meetings designated as strategic for our joint effort)
– Linking with other groups working on issues of HIV and the young child
– Reviewing how to use CG website: specific space for HIV/AIDS and ECD advocacy, networking, information sharing, etc.
– Identifying key risks and vulnerabilities for young children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS
– Developing/revising (existing/new) proposals for joint action by the CG

Please see: www.ecdgroup.com/HIV_AIDS.asp for ongoing updates on our work related to HIV/AIDS. E-mail us at info@ecdgroup.com and tell us about the work that you are doing as it relates to policy, research, and programming.
4th Annual Central/Eastern Europe ECCD Regional Meeting

“Partnership and Linkages”
November 25–27, 2002, Belgrade

The 4th Annual Central and Eastern European Early Childhood Care and Development Regional Meeting was held in Belgrade, 25–27 November 2002. The meeting, organised by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS)/Serbia & Montenegro Programme, UNICEF/Belgrade Office and Bernard Van Leer Foundation included 33 participants from Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Albania, Estonia, Ukraine, Macedonia, Slovakia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Participants included members and staff from professional institutions, universities, local NGOs, country Step-by-Step organisations, CRS/Europe, CRS/Albania, CRS/Montenegro, CRS/Macedonia, Save the Children UK Belgrade, and International Plan Albania. Participants from Serbia were from: Belgrade University, Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia, preschool teacher training colleges (Belgrade and Novi Sad), local NGOs, State preschools, experts’, and professional organisations.

The meeting was opened by Thomas Garofalo, Country Representative CRS/Serbia and Montenegro, Dr. Mary Black, Programme Coordinator UNICEF Belgrade Office, Dr. Tinde Kovac-Cerovic, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia, and Marta Korintus, Secretary of the CEE Regional network.

Background
In the past few years, there has been a broader understanding of partnership among parents, schools, and local community. Instead of the term “parental involvement,” which often signifies the cooperation between preschools and parents, a more comprehensive definition of partnership describes the collaboration between schools, family and communities. In that sense, partnerships refer to the overlapping influences and shared responsibilities of families, preschools, and communities for the education and development of children. These three contexts are important influences in every child’s life.

ECCD programmes include a large number of active participants at different levels including community, local, regional, and national governments, as well as non-governmental partners in every phase of its realization—from planning to concrete implementation. Their active participation becomes more significant when an ECCD programme is
being realised. However, experience in this field shows a different rate of participation and engagement among potential partners.

According to the opinion of many practitioners, in order to develop partnerships in ECCD programme, the following demands should be respected:

■ Raise the cognisance of ECCD in the community and at the level of the state;
■ Develop a holistic, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary approach to partnership;
■ Learn from each other (networking, open doors, more meetings);
■ Identify areas of strength and need;
■ Document and share monitoring/evaluation methods and other information;
■ Take on responsibility as spokespersons among colleagues and beyond;
■ Work together to unify philosophy and standards within each country;
■ Find the human resources to develop ECCD programme; and
■ Consider new ECCD models and home-based approaches.

For the Central and Eastern European region, the understanding of partnerships and linkages in ECCD in diverse contexts was one of the significant challenges identified in discussions and reports at the 3rd Regional Network Meeting (October 2001).

The general goal and key theme of the 4th Regional Meeting explored *Partnerships and Linkages in ECCD* and included case study presentations and discussions mainly aimed at 3 broad themes:

■ Partnerships with parents
■ Community development of partnerships
■ Linkages among provisions/services

Through keynote speeches, presentations, and focus groups, participants:

■ Explored existing concepts, trends, and challenges of developing partnerships with different kinds of partners (parents, local communities, government, organisations, preschools, etc);
■ Identified, analysed, and exchanged information on the existing partnerships and networking modules in the child-centred programmes in the region, and their advantages and constraints;
■ Defined components and features of a comprehensive child-centred programme in the context of working with partners (setting up the programme, strategic planning and decision making, scale/size/range of the programme, sustainability, networking, selecting new partners).

To view the full meeting report, see: http://www.ecdgroup.com/eastern_europe_current_initiatives.asp

**News from the International Secretariat**
The South Asia Network continues to be a loose-knit group of individuals and organisations within countries in the region that value the chance to share experiences, materials, and approaches and develop an active and shared understanding of their work within a larger framework. It functions as a complex web of interaction and exchange. The group continues to develop in an organic way as individuals and organisations hear of the network. It includes all Save the Children members in the region (10 different organisations in numerous countries), national NGOs (both small and large), representatives from UNICEF, UNESCO, PLAN, AKF, and government representatives.

Key activities include the development and exchange of papers on particular topics, the sharing of materials and methodologies, research designs and findings, advocacy strategies, exchanges/trainings with partners in the region, exchange of information on Conferences/meetings, etc., and representation at regional workshops/meetings.

Two key initiatives have been central to much of the network ‘traffic’ over the last year. However, it must be said that a major challenge is the lack of:

1. a co-coordinator with at least 15–20% of his/her time allocated to supporting the development of the network;
2. an institutional base such as a regional university or a regional NGO which would be a more ideal base rather than an international organisation; and
3. funds.

Note: One of the challenges of the network is that in order to really develop an identity, a regional multi-agency network needs the opportunity to meet. With no available budget this simply does not happen, except when a few people attending the same meeting get together or when there is a bi-lateral exchange which pulls in multiple agencies from the same country together with the visiting group. As a result, one has to capitalise on whatever opportunities emerge. The initiatives described below developed out of a Programme Learning meeting that brought together representatives from Save the Children organisations and national NGOs from 10 countries. While the initiatives described below started off as priorities of Save the Children and national NGOs, the themes of transitions, parenting, and child rights have all had resonance with many agencies, e.g., UNICEF, PLAN, and their partners, thus the potential to develop into a CG initiative. However, the ideal would be to develop such initiatives from a multi-agency ECD meeting bringing together selected key personnel from a wider variety of international as well as national organisations. Discussions regarding support for broader inter-agency initiatives are ongoing with UNICEF present.
Common strategic approaches and core principles

A clear commitment to Rights-based approaches with special attention to:

- Keeping the best interests of the child centre stage
- Fighting discrimination—whether this be on the basis of gender, ethnicity, caste etc. and working for inclusive systems which provide a supportive environment for all children
- Advocating for children’s participation—encouraging active learning methods and support to the development and application of life skills—recognition of children as social actors
- Engaging with all levels of duty-bearers—family, community, local institutions, partners, district level, national policy, and Strategic collaboration with specific partners in order to take forward advocacy agenda for policy and practice influence
- Creating partnerships as a principle, for effective programming, sustainability and scaling-up
- Increased emphasis on programme learning and documentation—to both strengthen programmes and enhance advocacy efforts
- Emphasising links between programmes for different age-groups

Specific priority areas

Transition Programmes—moving into school. The term “Transition” refers to children’s transition from either home or ECD centre into Grade 1. Given that the worst dropout and repeat figures in the region are from Grade 1, the group agreed to further develop its initiatives in this area to include and deliberately link both activities, which help prepare the child for school, and, equally important, activities which help prepare the school for the child! (See below for more information on the Nepal ECD Impact Study). The transition period is very neglected and a time when children are most vulnerable—and when systems and duty-bearers are most likely to fail them. It is also an area where potentially we pull in a lot more interest and support from the education sector and governments as well as influence the formal school system to adopt the more child-centred teaching/learning methods so central to quality ECD programmes.

Across South Asia (in which 1 of 3 children of the relevant age-group is not in school), as in other parts of the world with very poor education achievements, by far the worst dropout and repeat figures are from Grade 1. (For example in Nepal 58% of children either drop out from or repeat Grade 1).

Note: Many of our organisations have rightly shied away from the idea of “school preparation” as it is easy for this to become distorted into an over-emphasis on formal learning activities and the introduction of inappropriate formal school methods into early years curriculum. However, the experimental work underway has not found this a problem—indeed is starting to do the opposite—pushing up the more activity-based, participatory methods into Grade 1.

Activities include

- Short-term programmes within ECD centres and parenting programmes (including Reading for Children initiatives) to introduce children and their parents to some of the activities, skills, and themes they will encounter in Grade 1 along with opportunities to visit the school and meet their teachers before they start at the school. (This is in addition to the central contribution ECD programmes already make through their emphasis on building
children’s confidence, communication skills, and enthusiasm for learning).

Initiatives with Grade 1, which build on acknowledged ECD expertise and introduce more supportive, nurturing, and appreciative developmentally-appropriate teaching methods. This includes basic literacy, language, and life skills development, which uses activity-based enrichment activities connecting directly to government curriculum and textbooks.

Work with the neglected lower grades of primary school taken together with support to the development of children’s confidence, communication, cognitive, and social skills, as well as their health and nutrition before they ever enter school seems an important area for increased attention. Once the efficacy of more child-friendly methods is demonstrated in lower grades—where resistance is usually less—this may lead to improvements in higher grades also.

**Parenting/Caregiving programmes and Reading for Children**

Many organisations in South Asia support parenting/caregiving programmes. These programmes recognise that home is by far the most significant influence on the young child. New commitments made include the following:

- Expand the age range which these programmes cover—from before birth to adolescents—this has come as a demand from parents who want to discuss their concerns for all of their children—not only the young children.
- Renew efforts to work in close cooperation with health programmes to ensure integrated attention to children’s health, nutrition, and psychosocial development.
- Introduce a component, which will enable neo-literate parents/siblings to borrow simple, illustrated storybooks to read to young children thus linking ECD and literacy/post-literacy and school support programmes.
Further develop the dialogue base, flexibility, and creativity of parenting programmes based on what has been learned from the Nepal childrearing study and experience from programmes across the region. (Breakthroughs have been made in the development of stories and video illustrating both positive and negative examples of how everyday activities can be used as opportunities to support children's development.)

The above is seen as critical in moving beyond legal approaches to children’s rights. Much of the best work being done is concerned with developing effective participatory methods for getting into discussion and dialogue on key issues for children. This enables effective attention to the sort of dialogue, interpretation, and negotiation necessary for the internalisation of the Convention’s core principles—at all levels of society.

**Child rights framework**

A key area of interest for the network has been continuing to improve our articulation of the critical connections between ECD programmes and child rights and presenting our perspective on this whenever possible (at national Child Rights and Early childhood conferences and meetings, in policy consultations, EFA meetings, and task groups, regional and global meetings of child-focused agencies etc.).

ECD programmes at their best are essentially an integrated set of actions for ensuring young children’s rights to grow up healthy, well-nourished, protected from harm, and with a sense of identity and self-worth and opportunities for learning. Like the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) they are uniquely concerned with the whole child. ECD programmes had previously been “pigeon-holed” in many of the network members’ organisations, seen only as a “piece” of education. While ECD is indeed about opportunities for learning, it is also about the much broader scope of children’s rights. Within the child rights framework, ECD programmes are called upon therefore to occupy the very position that the best of them have assumed as a responsibility for many years. With the impetus of the CRC this broader interpretation of the role of ECD is increasingly being taken on board by agencies and governments. As well as ensuring that we think in terms of the whole child rather than getting stuck in “sectors,” the rights framework has necessitated attention to the different levels which effect children’s well-being—family, community, local infrastructure, and policy. The Consultative Group’s ECCD Indicators Project allowed us to take work in this area further in terms of using a rights framework for the development of indicators.

**Quality and quality indicators**

The network is also committed to addressing quality issues in terms of programmes working for the kind of experience that will foster children’s overall development and learning. The emphasis is on age-appropriate active teaching/learning; a supportive, nurturing environment which builds confidence and communication skills; relevance and connectedness with the child’s life and family; inclusiveness —countering discrimination. The aim is to develop a series of simple, illustrated, user friendly publications which identify key indicators with regard to the physical environment, the children (observations of their status, activities etc), the teachers/caregivers, and the relationship with the parents.
and community (such as the UN/Save the Children/National NGO publication from Myanmar).

The concern is not only to bring about improvements in quality at reasonable cost but also to demonstrate that reliable assessments can be made about changes in quality, based on what children actually experience, and determine which types of inputs lead to improvements.

The Nepal ECD impact study

The importance of the early years in the formation of intelligence, personality, social behaviour, and physical development has been acknowledged. Not surprisingly, therefore, investments in the early years have been demonstrated through numerous studies as bringing high returns—in terms of educational gains, health status, and economic productivity. A joint Save the Children (Norway and USA) study and report explores the impact of participation in ECD programmes on school enrolment, achievement, and retention, specifically looking at an early childhood programme in Nepal and the dramatic effects it has had over just a few years, not only for young children and especially for girls, but also for their families and communities. The study, which used both qualitative and quantitative methods, looks in particular at the impact the programme has had on children’s transition to school, a significant issue in a country where many children never start school and where those who do start drop out in large numbers during the first and second year.

Further analysis of the data will allow us to assess whether these programmes also assist in addressing caste and ethnic minority issues. Certainly data from other countries (e.g., Vietnam, where a government study showed much more marked gains for children from remote rural areas than their urban counterparts) makes it seem likely that this will be the case.

The qualitative component of the research highlights some subtler aspects, which we suspect, may be of great significance in the long-term. One key finding is that parents whose children have been in ECD programmes are much more inclined to engage with (and even challenge) their children’s schools—an unanticipated yet highly significant outcome.

Another striking finding was the level of commitment from communities to providing a good start for their children. Parents who two years ago complained that their children “only played” in the centres and were not at all enamoured of child-centred teaching methods are now making the comparisons with Grade 1 methods. There is conviction that their children learned much more in the centres and an inclination to discuss this with the school. These findings, which demonstrate a clear shift in terms of families’ engagement with their children’s rights, are some of the most important to us as researchers and as a network.

We will doubtless continue to use arguments regarding reductions in dropout and repeat rates, improvements in internal efficiency of the primary system etc to convince the sceptical and to untie the purse strings to benefit children. However, for child rights agencies we need to remember that OUR commitment to young children is not based on “returns on investment.” Young children have a right to a good start in life whether or not we can prove a payback.

For more information on the Nepal ECD Impact Study, see: http://www.ecdgroup.com/south_asia.asp
South East Asia ECD Regional Network

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Background: Building partnerships through shared learning experiences

The ECD regional network in Asia is very loosely organised as compared to the Latin American and Caribbean networks. Various organisations in different countries take a leading or supporting role depending on an activity. The regional representative (Feny de los Angeles-Bautista) works closely with the different organisations, which, in turn, work in partnership with governments who are hosting or organising specific activities. From 1989 to 1999 there were regional workshops, conferences, or seminars (at least once a year, sometimes twice) which were co-organised by the active ECD practitioners within the region. These were usually held in collaboration with UNICEF and/or members of the Save the Children Alliance (USA, UK, France). UNICEF (New York) was involved in these initial years of organising and supporting these regional workshops, which brought ECCD practitioners from different countries together.
In 1995, UNICEF-EAPRO (East Asia and Pacific Regional Office) became a very active supporter and facilitator when the Regional Education Advisors (Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer followed by Dr. Jim Irvine) prioritised ECCD, actively collaborated in planning and then supported these activities with resources. These regular activities provided the government agencies concerned with ECCD (education, social welfare and development, health) and national non-government organisations with many opportunities to work together. The regional conferences leading up to the End of Decade Education For All conference were also maximised both for information and experience exchange (ECD panel presentations and discussions were organised as well as “working” side meetings). Participation as resource persons in national workshops or activities by ECD colleagues from other Asian countries was also one way of supporting one another.

It was clear that across the region there was a need to invest in advocacy efforts with our respective governments to seek and ensure broader and deeper commitment to public support for ECCD programmes. Such advocacy and mobilization efforts continue to be necessary so that expanded access to quality ECCD programmes can be achieved, policies can be effectively implemented, and the provision of all necessary resources sustained.

**ASEAN ECCD Working Group:**

**Strengthening governments as ECCD policy makers and service providers**

The organisation of an ASEAN ECCD working group composed of multi-ministry-government agency teams for each member country is an important result of the ten-year period during which there were opportunities to study and document the status of ECCD in selected East Asian countries, share programme experiences, and jointly assess current strengths and emerging needs. As representatives of government agencies participated in regional capacity-building activities with partner NGOs and ECD practitioners, who served as resource persons and organisers of many of these regional activities, they also came closer to a shared understanding of ECCD. At the very least, what has been achieved is a shared framework for comprehensive and integrated ECCD policy and programming that is anchored on a child rights framework and supports families as caregivers.

The first two ASEAN ECCD working group meetings (Singapore, 1999; Philippines, 2000) were well attended by government delegations composed of representatives from their respective ECD-focused agencies instead of only one representative. These meetings were also supported by UNICEF-EAPRO. At the first meeting, member countries each presented a status report on ECCD in their respective countries, identified priority areas for work, and assigned specific countries to take the lead for these. The second meeting focused on these identified priorities:

1. Setting standards for ECD centres (Malaysia);
2. Training of ECCD workers (teachers, childcare workers, community-based child development workers)—including framework, content, and requirements for accreditation;
3. Implementing developmentally appropriate practices for 0–6 year olds in ECCD programmes (Philippines);
4. Creating a conceptual framework for ECCD policy and programming in ASEAN (Philippines); and
5. Consolidating information from member countries and preparation of a directory of ECCD programmes and resources for training (Thailand).

The third meeting held in Bangkok in March 2003 focussed on Assessment of Child Development and ECCD Indicators. Meeting reports can be seen online at: http://www.ecdgroup.com/south_east_asia_current_initiatives.asp

**Inter-country and cross-country partnerships for ECCD**

**Organisational, Academic and Health Partnerships**

Recent and ongoing activities to develop and nurture organisational, academic, and health linkages include:

– Complementary efforts involving organisations, i.e., PLAN International and Save the Children (US, UK, France) with country offices that have ECCD programmes. By supporting their country offices through regional and international ECCD workshops and other capacity-building activities they are enhancing the quality of the programmes that are implemented by their country offices and community partners.

– Organisation of study visits which have become a regular feature of COLF's (Community of Learners Foundation) work with partners in the region as well as beyond to learn and adapt community development processes anchored on ECCD and education, i.e., to the "Pinatubo" ECCD Programme Study visits, in particular, to "Kinder Plus," an ECCD pilot project for the new national law, "The Early Childhood Care and Development Act," an example of how local government units in partnership with an NGO (COLF) work to develop better quality ECCD programmes, such as home-based playgroups with parent volunteers as facilitators that are more responsive to under-three's and parents.

Further work on a proposal for a special graduate degree programme on ECCD at the National University of Singapore, which would be offered to UNICEF programme staff, one of several options being explored to respond to the need within UNICEF for ECCD specialists among the programme officers in different countries.

– efforts to involve paediatricians in providing support to parents in their roles as caregivers by giving them appropriate information about nutrition, brain development, and play in the early years, i.e., a special project of Mead Johnson involves paediatricians in selected Asian countries in developing and promoting the "Smart system" for enhancing early childhood development.

– in conjunction with the 3rd ASEAN ECCD meeting, the National Institute for Child Development in Mahidol University organised a national conference for paediatricians in Thailand as continuation of a previously organised regional initiative involving the CG and some partners in the region to study existing tools used for assessment of child development, early learning, and the context for their use.

– ongoing work with paediatric associations in the region to focus more on ECCD, e.g., parent education, developmental screening, and training of medical students and nurses. It is hoped that this kind of partnerships for ECCD (already evident in Philippines and Indonesia) involving health professionals, educators, and child development specialists can be replicated in other countries in the region.
Looking back and looking forward

The Asian ECD network has managed to strengthen linkages and provide support for ECCD colleagues and practitioners from both the public and private sector. For a region which has a very large young child population (and still growing at a fast rate!), the urgent challenge remains: many more children are not yet reached by basic social services for young children and parents, e.g., health, early education, and parent education. In addition:

- The quality of programmes in most countries also needs to be improved to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate and not structured programmes narrowly focused on preparing children for their entry into the formal schools. While some countries (like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines) may have national early childhood development programmes and policies in place, the coverage of these programmes needs to be expanded both to cover the younger age groups (under 3’s) and provide for prenatal care and parent education as well as reach all the 4- and 5-year-olds. Programme quality standards also need to be effectively monitored. Capacity-building programmes for ECCD practitioners and trainers need to be sustained and the impact on programmes also needs to be monitored.

- Most of the countries have yet to define ECCD indicators and establish or improve existing monitoring and information systems. The Philippines’ country case study on ECCD Indicators (Coordinators’ Notebook No. 25, 2001) was shared with the ASEAN members and the Philippine government has decided to build on the recommendations of the country case study, consolidate work related to ECCD indicators, and systematically address the selection of key indicators and the corresponding monitoring and reporting systems at the national and local levels.

For many years now, Vietnam has shown relatively high levels of interest and enthusiasm in learning about ECCD and improving and expanding various forms of ECCD service provision. The government of Vietnam has worked well with partners like UNICEF and Save the Children and this has clearly worked in terms of expanding their ECCD programmes particularly in the rural areas. Other countries, like Laos PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Brunei have been actively participating in regional workshops, conferences, and organised study visits with their respective partners. They continue to slowly expand their programmes and establish the basic infrastructure for ECCD. Brunei does not have a problem with a lack of material resources shared by Laos PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar. But there is more work to be done in terms of inter-agency collaboration and programme development.

The initial work done within the ASEAN ECCD working groups is important to sustain because these working groups consist of the government agencies in member ASEAN countries who are responsible for national ECCD programmes and policies. There is still a need to invest in advocacy with the ASEAN secretariat and Foundation so that they will fund the activities of the working group. It can still be expanded to involve more non-government organisations in the work before and after the annual meetings, compared to the current levels of participation. UNICEF, UNESCO, and the international NGOs who are active in the region need to appreciate the significance of sustaining this regional ECD formation because there is much that can be done to further improve national policies and public programmes.
An important step to take is to establish national (and local) as well as international ECCD indicators and effectively monitor these. The only way that agreements reached regarding conceptual frameworks, developmentally appropriate practices, standards for childcare centres, and training will have any impact on the quality of care for young children and the working conditions of the ECCD “sector” is if each member country is able to account for both how and how well they have implemented the above. There are ways that international pressure as well as the collegial relationships developed among inter-agency delegations and across countries can be made to work for improving the quality and expanding the reach of ECCD programmes in the region. These both will complement the investments that UNICEF and other international NGOs are making at each country level through their respective country programmes with their own priority areas.

There is need for an expanded regional communications strategy—key for building networks. At this point, the lack of resources for sustaining some key regional activities is a problem that needs to be faced. The creation of a regional E-news was welcomed by many but needs to be revived. In addition it is important that the communication strategy involves expanding the reach of ECD focused international publications such as the CG’s Coordinators’ Notebook and Bernard van Leer’s Early Childhood Matters to more ECCD practitioners in the region. This requires consolidating an updated ECCD directory for the region which COLF will try to seek support from UNESCO as one of their Cooperating Centres for ECCD. For those with Internet access, online versions of these publications are available on the CG (www.ecdgroup.com) and BVLF (www.bernardvanleer.nl) websites. In addition, the CG website offers updates on regional ECCD activities in their expanded section on Regional ECCD Networks. http://www.ecdgroup.com/s_e_asia.asp.

Other opportunities to network and communicate include organising regional meetings and workshops linked to other activities, such as the Effectiveness Initiative and the Paediatric Societies’ activities; through members of professional ECCD associations (usually educators) in Asian countries attendance at conferences, such as the World ECCE Forum; and the organisation of occasional meetings and workshops focussed on issues and processes that are intended to improve national policies and programmes for children whose families cannot afford to pay for services.

Finally, there is a need to identify new participants and invest in “second-liners” among ECD practitioners in the region who can assume leadership roles in their own countries as well as in the region. UNICEF-EAPRO can hopefully resume its facilitative role as it has done for many years in the past, and which has contributed greatly to the development of the ECD network in Asia and has translated into more country (national) support for ECCD.
Activities of the Partners

Working Group on Early Childhood

The Consultative Group welcomes the Association for the Development of Education in Africa’s (ADEA) Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) as a new partner!

Recognising the importance of the early years for the development of a child, and acknowledging ECD as an integral part of basic education, the Association for the Development of Africa (ADEA) created the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) in 1997 with UNICEF as the lead agency. In 1998 the leadership of the Group was moved to the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) focusses on developing partnerships between Ministers of Education and funding agencies in order to promote effective education policies based on African leadership. ADEA’s working groups were created to devote more particular attention to relevant and topical issues for education in Africa.

The WGECD is guided by consultative meetings made up of representatives of African countries who have demonstrated interest in ECD and international agencies and sub-regional organisations with a strong commitment to ECD. The Working Group provides an informal platform to enhance cooperation and collaboration among organisations (national, regional, and international) that are actively engaged in ECD promotion in Africa, such as national governments, regional networks, and multilateral and bilateral organisations. The Working Group on ECD also seeks opportunities to work with other ADEA Working Groups. In the long-term, the Working Group intends to hand over its
leadership to an African organisation, institution, or network. The goal of WGECD is to encourage and support national governments in Africa that commit to and invest in ECD.

The Group’s work is underpinned by the following principles:

– All aspects of a child’s development—emotional, social, cognitive, physical and spiritual—are interdependent and of equal importance (holistic child development).
– The critical stage of ECD begins before birth and continues into the early years of formal schooling.
– For the maximum development of children, as much attention needs to be given to the support of the parents/caregivers and the family as to provision for children.
– ECD interventions should respect the practices and cultural beliefs that are part of the development of children in each society.
– Involvement of parents and communities is crucial to the development of ECD policy and to the provision of ECD services.
– National government commitment is essential for the development and expansion of ECD policies. Distinctive and cross-sectoral policies supporting holistic ECD are likely to be the most effective.

With these principles in mind, the Working Group aims to promote the development and implementation of an integrated and holistic approach to ECD by acting as a facilitator and catalyst to:

– promote advocacy and mobilisation of political and public support for ECD in Africa;
– stimulate policy review and development at the national level;
– motivate partnership-building and networking among all ECD stakeholders;
– facilitate capacity- and knowledge-building and exchange around relevant ECD issues.

The Working Group’s activities cover areas of research, information dissemination, advocacy, networking, and capacity building in order to enhance the capacity of policymakers to make informed decisions where it concerns the rights and development of children under eight years of age. In October 2002, the Working Group was involved in organising, with the State of Eritrea and in collaboration with UNICEF and the World Bank, the 2nd International Conference on Early Childhood Development in Asmara, Eritrea. The central theme of the conference was “Early Childhood Interventions: What Works and Experiences Learned.” Issues related to policy development, integrated ECD planning, effective community approaches, disadvantaged children, and indigenous knowledge and child upbringing were discussed. At the end of the conference, participants reached consensus on basic recommendations and a framework that could be used as a reference for action, collaboration, networking, and future follow-up to lead up to the 3rd International ECD Conference. ADEA’s Working Group on ECD is mandated to initiate the follow-up on the Asmara recommendations to further the ECD agenda in Africa.

In addition, in December 2002, the WGECD, in partnership with the Tanzania ECD Network (AMANI) and the Consultative Group (in the latter half of 2002), worked to advocate for the inclusion of ECD on the agenda of a UNESCO-planned conference—MINEDAF VIII—which brought together Ministers of Education from across Africa to report on their progress to date and on future plans for achieving “Education for All” (see case study on page 49).
Other ongoing initiatives include:

**Policy Studies Project**

The Working Group initiated a policy-studies project aimed at getting a better insight in what would be required to enhance governments’ commitment and involvement in ECD. Three countries, Ghana, Mauritius, and Namibia, which have made steps toward a distinct and cross-sectoral ECD policy and which acknowledge the importance of holistic child development, carried out case studies analysing the processes involved in the formulation and implementation of their ECD policies. WGECD and UNICEF provided financial and technical support. Concurrent with the case studies, the Working Group carried out a survey of ECD provision and policy in all African countries through a questionnaire sent to ministers of education.

On completion of the case studies and the survey, WGECD, together with the teams from each of the three countries, carried out a meta-analysis of the findings and produced a report that provides guidelines for African countries interested in developing their own ECD policies.

Based on the experiences with the policy-studies project, a set of guidelines have been prepared to support African countries interested in developing or improving their own ECD policies. The main purpose of the guidelines is to provide information and to stimulate discussion among ECD policymakers. Whenever appropriate, additions and amendments will be made.

Current initiatives related to policy studies are underway in West Africa, a collaboration between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ADEA WG/ECD, UNICEF Regional Office, and UNICEF Offices in Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Senegal.

**HIV/AIDS and the Young Child**

The effects of HIV/AIDS on very small children are devastating, and the growing group of children who are infected through mother-to-child transmission have slim chances of surviving past the age of five years. WGECD is committed to enhancing the work of partner organisations in this area by supporting action research and facilitating partnerships and information exchange. Countries will be encouraged to develop strategies to help young children affected by HIV/AIDS.

For more information and a list of publications, please see: http://www.adeanet.org/workgroups/en_wgecd.html or contact:

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**International Save the Children Alliance**

Welcome to the International Save the Children Alliance, a new partner of the Consultative Group!

Save the Children US was one of the founding members of the CG, and various Save the Children members continue to play active roles. However, internationally Save the Children Alliance members most frequently choose to participate in such networks as the Save the Children Alliance, thus representing and reaching a broader group. The
International Save the Children Alliance is the world’s largest independent movement for children. Within the Alliance there are 30 national Save the Children offices, and programme work is carried out in more than 120 countries. Save the Children fights for children’s rights and delivers immediate and lasting improvements to children’s lives worldwide.

Children’s rights are central to all of Save the Children’s work. Key areas of work are education, countering exploitation and abuse, HIV/AIDS, and children in conflict and disaster.

Within education, the approach is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC.) Programme and advocacy work in education is based on five key issues:

– The critical importance of early years
– The quality of children’s school experience
– The inclusion of disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups
– The education of children in emergency situations
– The consequences for education of macro-economic policies and practice

Within all of these areas, Save the Children believes that support to education must be based on understanding of the local context.

Save the Children’s commitment to Rights-based approaches means special attention to:

■ Keeping the best interests of the child centre stage, necessitating increased attention to quality, purpose, and relevance issues.
■ Fighting discrimination—whether this be on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, caste, disability, etc., and working for inclusive education systems which provide a supportive environment for all children.
■ Children’s participation—both in terms of encouraging active learning and participatory teaching/learning methods, and providing support to child-run initiatives, which expand opportunities for them to participate in meaningful activities, and be recognised as legitimate social actors within their communities.
■ Engaging with all levels of duty-bearers—family, community, local institutions, partners, district level, and national policy makers.
■ Strategic collaboration with specific partners in order to take forward advocacy agenda for policy and practice influence.

Save the Children’s ECD task group undertook a mapping of Save the Children’s ECD programmes worldwide in 2002. This maps programme interventions and also looks at core values and principles and ways in which ECD programmes work within and across sectors, among others.

For 2003–2004 the transition from home/ECD programme into primary school has been identified as a priority for increased attention.

The transition period (before children enter and as they enter school) is very neglected, as well as a time when children are most vulnerable—and when systems and duty-bearers are most likely to fail them. Around the world in countries where schools are seriously failing children the worst dropout and repeat figures are from Grade 1. The transition period is also an area where potentially ECD pulls in a lot more interest and support from the education sector and governments, as well as influence the formal school system to adopt the more
child-centered teaching/learning methods so central to quality ECD programmes. Yet few agencies pay attention to the transition period.

Transition initiatives support children so that they are ready for school and schools so that they are ready for children, and demonstrate the effectiveness of attention to the transition period. Children are ready for schools through ECD programmes which build confidence, communication skills, enthusiasm for learning, and basic concepts and forging deliberate links with the schools the children will go on to. Getting schools ready for children involves initiatives with Grades 1 and 2, which build on acknowledged ECD expertise and introduce a more child-friendly environment and more developmentally appropriate teaching methods.

Objectives of the Save the Children Alliance Transition Initiative include to:

2. Document examples of programmes which demonstrate impact of ECD programmes on school enrolment, retention, and achievement—with particular attention to impacts for most disadvantaged groups.
3. Use findings to strengthen advocacy linking ECD with the achievement of universal primary education and advocacy for uptake of transition programming as central to enhanced student achievement.
4. Develop, share, and promote use of simple tools for tracking children's progress through school.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

For a current calendar of ECCD events around the globe, please see: http://www.ecdgroup.com/eccd_events.asp

Please send us your events related to ECCD and we will post them on our website.

June 21–26, 2003

Second World Congress on Family Violence
Prague, Czech Republic

For more information, see: http://www.wcfv.org

September 3–6, 2003

13th Annual European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA): "Quality in Early Childhood Education-Possible Childhoods: Relationships and Choices"
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland

For more information, see: http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/PrimaryEd/eecera/

October 5–11, 2003

Kübadasy, Turkey
Organised by the Association for the Development of Early Childhood Education, Turkey

For more information, see: http://www.omep2003.com/

November 5–8, 2003

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Annual Conference

For more information, see: http://www.naeyc.org

December 6–7, 2003

Zero-to-Three, Annual Conference

For more information, see: http://www.zerotothree.org
Poverty and Investment in ECCD
How are early childhood care and development, human capital formation and national development linked? Does it make good economic sense to invest in the care of women and children? Who should invest in ECCD? Who benefits? A large number of national and international speakers and papers addressed the theme, ECCD: Best Investment for the Future at the 2002 Aga Khan University, National Health Sciences Symposium. A number of papers, posters, workshops and plenary discussions combined to reinforce the key messages of invited speakers:

■ Experience Based Brain Development
Keynote speaker, Dr. Fraser Mustard, from the Founders’ Network, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, argued the need for more serious attention to brain development in the critical prenatal period and the early years.

■ Foeto-Maternal Nutrition
Dr. Zulfiqar Bhutta, Department of Paediatrics, AKU, linked Pakistan’s poor progress in human development indicators to the lack of investment in health, education, and social development, highlighting the life-long cost of inadequate attention to the nutritional status of women and their unborn children.

■ Child Nutrition
Based on a long career within government, championing improved nutritional status of children, as well as adults, Dr. Mushtaq Khan, from the Centre for Research on Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution (CRPRID), Islamabad, argued measures that will improve the nutrition of mothers before and during pregnancy, and of infants and young children, reduce morbidity, improve the effectiveness of expenditures on education, reduce the cost of health care, and increase the work productivity of adults.

■ The High Cost of Low Quality Education
Using data from the Education for All (EFA) Year 2000 Assessment, Dr. Jim Irvine from the AKU-Human Development Programme, argued that lack of attention to readiness for school has its legacies in significant primary school enrolment and completion disparities throughout the region. Furthermore, because issues of quality have not been adequately addressed, repetition and dropout rates remain high. It would be more efficient and cheaper to address readiness rather than remediation.

■ The Economics of ECCD
Development economist, Dr. Jacques van der Gaag, University of Amsterdam, linked integrated programmes of ECCD that improve the nutrition, health, cognitive development, and social interaction of children in the early years, to human development—education, health (including nutrition), social development, and growth—but at the scale of a nation.

■ Child Mental Health
Child psychiatrist, Dr. Syed Arshad Husain, from the University of Missouri, noted that children are the conscience and future of a nation. He reviewed the history of
childhood, assessed the state of children’s health, mental health and educational opportunities in Pakistan, and argued for commitment of more resources to child mental health.

■ ECCD Programme Outcomes in the Context of UN Resolutions  Several global UN-led commitments to a stronger focus and greater investment in ECCD were reviewed by Dr. Femida Jalil, from King Edward Medical College, Lahore. In a World Fit for Children, leaders have pledged resources and committed support to ECCD initiatives. The lack of internationally comparable data on the psychosocial status of infants and young children has been a recurring weakness in the case for increased investment.

■ ECCD Leaders and Integrated Programmes  Integrated approaches to ECCD combine best practices from a number of perspectives, such as health, nutrition, community development, psychosocial development, environmental hygiene and sanitation, and early education. ECCD advocates argue that an integrated approach is more effective together than interventions applied separately. But
where are the programmes to educate the new ECCD leaders who must break down the traditional disciplinary, donor, and ministerial boundaries or ‘silos’? A critical gap and, indeed, a growing area of real concern for many who have been advocating for quality, effective ECCD programmes, research, and policies is the very limited resource base of ECCD ‘leaders’ across countries who are experienced and well-grounded, and who also understand the holistic and integrated nature of ECCD.

Dr. Bartlett from the Aga Khan Foundation, Geneva, outlined some key ECCD capacity building developments and approaches in South Asia and other regions, (e.g., the ECD Virtual University), and endorsed plans for the AKU-Human Development Programme (AKU-HDP) to combine research, education and training, community ECCD model building, and advocacy and constituency building as inter-dependent components. The HDP aims also to build ECCD leadership capacity in Pakistan and in the wider region.

■ Targeting the Message and the Evidence  ECCD may well be an expanding area of investment globally, but far too many South Asian mothers and babies continue to die of preventable causes. Too many children are malnourished and irreversibly stunted before their second birthday. Too many schools are poorly prepared to make early learning rewarding.

Is national development “irreversibly stunted”? When there is money for rockets and big armies, but not for family support and ECCD, the problem cannot be due to shortage of resources, but rather, lack of political will. To the “converted”, the ECCD messages may be clear, but they are not getting to the right mailboxes. The challenge of advocacy rests on the converted presenting hard evidence that ECCD is a demonstrably good investment.

Readers wishing to access the full text of the above-mentioned presentations and other AKU ECCD Symposium Proceedings, or who wish to contribute further information on this critical issue are invited to visit the Symposium entry on the AKU website: www.aku.edu/news/seminars/eccd and contact the Planning Coordinator, Human Development Programme, AKU, Stadium Road, Karachi 74800, Pakistan, through rehan.tejani@aku.edu with information that can be shared with ECCD advocates throughout the region.
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THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT (CG) is an international, inter-agency group dedicated to improving the condition of young children at risk. The CG grounds its work in a cross-disciplinary view of child care and development.

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 includes a broad-based network of agencies and regional representatives who each represent (or are involved in developing) broader regional networks of early childhood planners, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. The CG operates through an International Secretariat, which draws on the consortium and the regional representatives to actively identify gaps and emerging areas of need and interest related to ECD, and to seek out new partners. The Secretariat is housed at Ryerson University in the School of Early Childhood Education. Administrative support is provided by the Ryerson Office of International Affairs.

The Coordinators' Notebook is produced by the Secretariat in collaboration with partners and regional networks and with support from the Academy for Educational Development, Aga Khan Foundation, Bernard van Leer Foundation, Christian Children's Fund, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pan American Health Organization, Pueblito, Save the Children Alliance, UNESCO, and UNICEF.

**GOALS**

**TO INCREASE THE KNOWLEDGE BASE**  The CG gathers, synthesizes and disseminates information on children's development, drawing from field experiences, traditional wisdom and scientific research.

**TO SERVE AS A CATALYST**  The CG works to increase awareness of issues affecting children, developing materials and strategies to help move communities, organisations and governments from rhetoric to practice, from policy to programming.

**TO BUILD BRIDGES**  The CG fosters networking among those with common concerns and interests, working across sectoral divisions, putting people in touch with the work of others by organising meetings, by disseminating information through publications, and by serving as a communications point.

**TO SERVE AS A SOUNDING BOARD**  The CG engages in dialogue with funders and decision-makers about developments in the field, providing the base for policy formulation, planning, programming and implementation.

Members of the Secretariat occasionally provide technical assistance to individual organisations in programme design, implementation and evaluation, and in the writing of technical papers and reports.

The Coordinators' Notebook is produced twice annually. It is one of our networking tools. Each issue focuses on a particular issue or topic, as well as offering network news. We try to provide information on the most appropriate research, field experience and practices to benefit individuals working with young children and their families. We encourage you to share this information with the other networks you take part in. Feel free to copy portions of this Notebook and disseminate the information to those who could benefit from it. Please let us know about any programmes or efforts benefitting young children and their families in which you may be involved.

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