

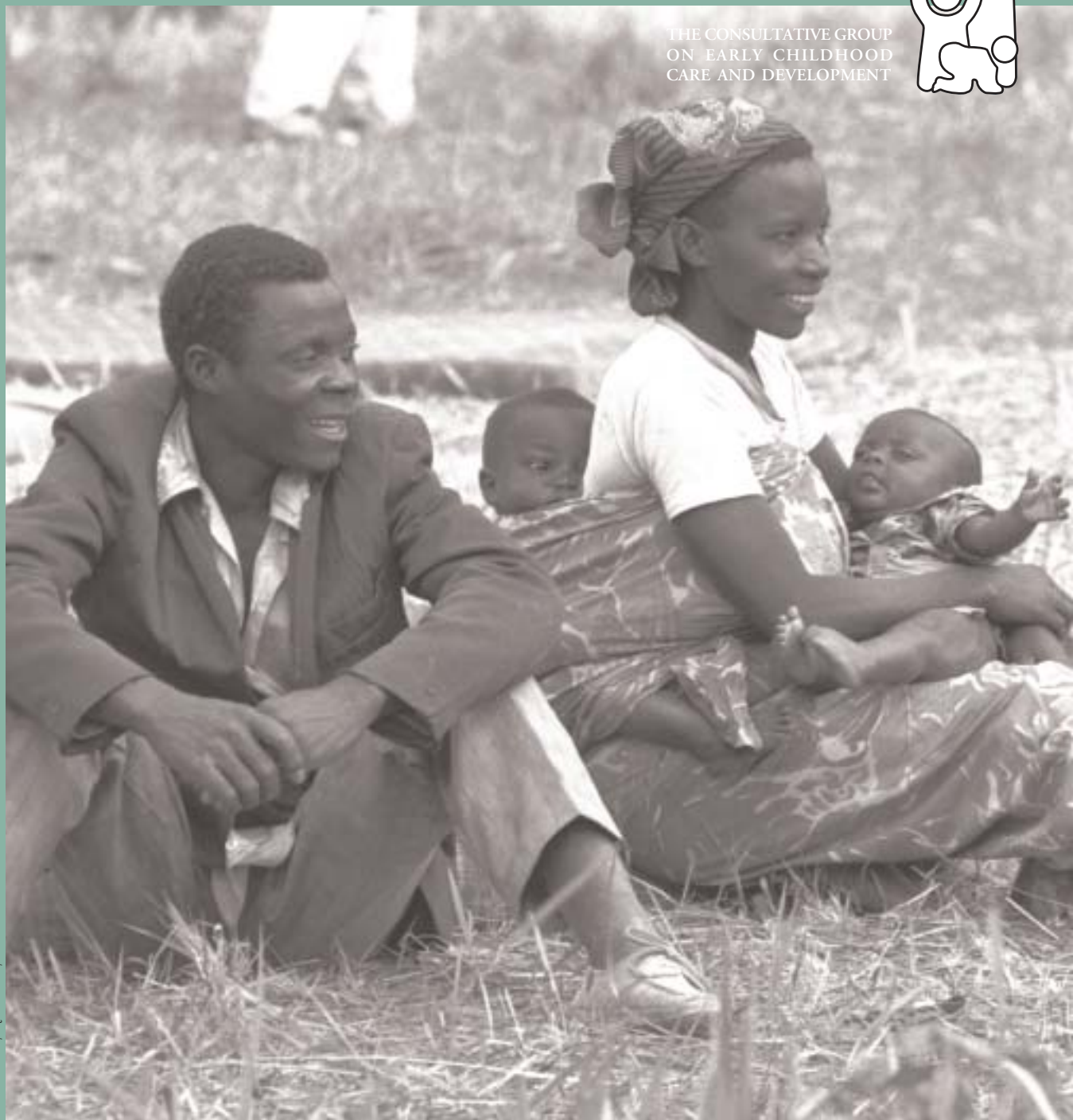
Coordinators' notebook

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THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP
ON EARLY CHILDHOOD
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Positioning ECCD in the 21st Century

CAROLINE ARNOLD

As advocates for young children, we have seen and rejoiced in an increased interest in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) around the world, amongst international organizations and within national contexts and governments as well. Over the last decade we have also seen an increase in investment in ECCD, including larger-scale projects, such as the World Bank lending of over \$1.2 billion for ECCD projects. However, despite such optimistic signs of success, ECCD is still struggling to obtain the levels of financial and other types of support needed to guarantee every child a good start in life. To those of us working within ECCD the arguments are irrefutable.

ECCD is an investment that offers outstanding returns—both in human and financial terms. However, in most parts of the globe, the political will to put children at the centre, to provide adequate supports for young children living in poverty, and to make sure that all children are ensured their rights from the start is nowhere near adequate as yet.

A quick review of young children's access to early childhood care and development programmes in the world's most impoverished areas tells the story.¹ In most Majority World countries less than 1% of the total education budget is allocated to early childhood programmes and even when health expenditures are included, the allocation remains small. In most African countries the allocation for ECCD is even lower—"less than 0.01% of the Ministry of Education budget" (Kabiru and Hyde 2003). As Myers points out in his review of progress within the Education for All initiative, in the main, enrollment increases can be characterized as "small and marginal [representing] a kind of inertia and a failure to give priority to ECCD in often difficult economic conditions (2002)." For the poorest African countries (per capita gross domestic product (GDP) below \$775), the gross enrollment gains amounted to only 1.4% over the whole decade ending in 2000. Even if enrollments everywhere increased by 2% a year from now until 2015, in the poorest countries more than 60% of children would have no opportunity to participate in an ECCD programme (Mingat and Jaramillo 2003).

The story is similar in the reports of the other dimensions of early childhood care and development: health, nutrition, birth registration, caregiver support, social and gender equity, family economics, etc. The inspiring efforts of individual programmes and initiatives are offset by the sheer magnitude of child poverty, inequitable social conditions, and violence, depriving the majority of the world's children of the chance to develop adequate physical, emotional, intellectual, and social foundations.

Therefore, in this issue of the *Coordinators' Notebook*, we want to re-visit ways that we can *position* ECCD, to make a stronger push to put young children at the centre of all development efforts and investment. In particular, we want to pull together the arguments, research, and experiences that show that ECCD does indeed make a difference and that suggest how we can work more effectively toward our goal of helping young children to fulfil their rights to become healthy, competent individuals able to participate in their social and cultural contexts.

In this article, we will explore a three-pronged set of arguments and efforts in support of ECCD that may be effective in diverse contexts:

1. Promoting ECCD as key to achieving children's rights and key to individual governments fulfilling the legal obligations to which they committed in ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. Advocating for ECCD as a good investment, and in particular, as an instrumental, frontline strategy for achieving poverty reduction goals.
3. Arguing for ECCD as a significant entry point within, and foundation for, diverse broad educational, social, and health movements.

Taken together, these three types of activity help us to get beyond the specifics of curriculum development, or service delivery, or parenting education, to a view of ECCD as *the work required to re-position young children and their families within particular settings and contexts, so they are able to participate, thrive, and obtain their human rights.*

Why is this shift in how we position ECCD necessary? Because we need to shift the perception of ECCD from being viewed as a luxury item, an unaffordable add-on to the education or health system, to its rightful place as the first and perhaps most necessary phase of all efforts to ensure the healthy growth, education, and development of a nation.

If we want to end the 21st century seeing poverty reduced or eradicated, and children and adults participating productively and effectively in their societies, then we need to be successful in convincing nations, decision makers, and investors in this world that attending appropriately to children from the beginning, and strengthening the contexts within which they spend their crucial early years, is a necessary prerequisite to any and all further social restructuring success.



Dominican Republic: Pueblito/D. Alexopolous

ECCD ensures the healthy growth, education, and development of a nation.

We hope this issue will prove useful in:

- Summarizing some important information which we should all have at our fingertips
- Sharing case studies of effective examples
- Helping us think through what we may need to be doing differently—how we may need to hone and adapt our arguments so that there is a tighter fit with specific conventions, declarations, formal international goals, or individual government policies and plans
- Acting as a catalyst for us to develop new and potent arguments that will help ensure increasing commitments from governments and donors

The Reality of Children's Lives

Before going into the various different approaches to and arguments for early childhood programmes let us start by taking a brief look at the situation for young children.

Within every country there is a massive imbalance between rich and poor. A child born today in the Majority World has a four out of ten chance of living in extreme poverty (UNICEF 2000). International economic and political trends, such as migration for work, the move away from extended families and toward nuclear families, the increasingly heavy workloads of girls and women, globalization, the transition from planned to market economies, armed conflicts, and HIV/AIDS affect every aspect of young children's lives. Even positive trends like the increasing enrollment of girls in school can have serious impacts for young children in countries where adequate family supports are not in place.

Too many young children are growing up without the basic nutrition, health care, stimulation, and interaction needed to promote healthy growth and development. Many poor children are either denied the opportunity to go to school at all or enter unready to learn. These children do poorly, repeat, and drop out at high rates. They are at a disadvantage when they enter the labour force, earning little, and when they become parents they pass their poverty on to their children.

During peak agricultural seasons or busy production periods, small children may be left unattended for many hours a day, or may depend for their care on older siblings, themselves still young enough to need supervision. In a life of grinding poverty, adults feel little sense of agency or control, and it is not surprising that the most disadvantaged families feel powerless to promote their children's best interests. Families surviving in poverty tend to focus on keeping children fed.

There are many factors that determine children's futures. The development of language and a sense of

self-worth are just two examples—and ones that often receive inadequate attention. Language is the basic tool for thought, communication, reasoning, and making sense of a rapidly changing world. A sense of self-worth enables a child to learn and participate more effectively. The first few years, long before the child goes to school, are absolutely critical for developing both of these capacities. Too often, families underestimate their ability to support their young children's learning, language, and sense of themselves. Parents often lack the understanding that simply talking more with children while involved in everyday activities can help develop children's understanding of their world and support the confidence and communication skills children need to interact effectively with the world. Yet these are the very capacities that have the greatest significance in enabling children to thrive at school and break the cycle of poverty (Arnold et al. 2001). A family's poverty, fatigue, general frustration, as well as the results of overworking, impact negatively on building all of these capacities.

Hart and Risely's 2003 study provides a timely reminder that these issues are not confined to developing countries. "Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children" is one of the most thorough studies ever conducted. Three groups of children from welfare families, working class families, and professional families were tape-recorded throughout their first years. The differences in the experiences of the three groups are startling.

By the age of four, fifty million words will have been addressed to a professional's child, thirty million to a working class child, and just twelve million to a welfare child. At the age of three, the professional's child had a bigger vocabulary than the parent of the welfare child. At three years old the professional's child has had 700,000 encouragements, more than eleven times as many as the 60,000 experienced by the welfare child. The professional's child has had only 80,000 discouragements, whereas the welfare child has experienced 120,000 (double the number of encouragements s/he has received). When the children in the study were measured at ages nine and ten, the authors, with an uncharacteristic slip from their stern academic terminology, conclude: "We were awestruck at how well our measures of accomplishments at 3 predicted language skill at 9 to 10" (Hart and Risely 2003, 11). In other words, school had added little value after the age of three; it was already too late. This statement also applies in other areas of children's development. Similarly, if the child is malnourished for the first three years of life, later attempts to make up for this have limited impact.

Young (2002) puts it this way: "For children who are malnourished and have never had a book read to them, the playing field is certainly not level when they enter primary school at age 6, and they have little chance to succeed."

Fortunately, well conceived early childhood programmes can be a highly effective way to address these issues, and we will now look at just how they do this—from a variety of perspectives.

The Rights Perspective

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

A right may be defined as *that which a person is entitled to have, to do, or to receive from others, and which is enforceable by law*. Rights are widely characterized as legitimate claims that give rise to corresponding obligations or duties.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) addresses all aspects of a child's life, covering human rights for children in the civil, political, social, economic, and cultural realms. It establishes a set of legal norms for the protection and well-being of children and is an integral part of the broader human rights system. A separate Convention from the The United Nations Convention on Human Rights was needed for children because they often lack a voice in public fora, they fall through the cracks of government and development planning, and they need additional attention and protection.

All the countries of the world, except for the USA and Somalia, have now ratified the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Signatories are legally bound by its provisions and make regular reports to a special commission² on their progress toward making the rights of children that are detailed within the CRC a reality.

The CRC builds on four general principles:

1. Best interests of the child (Article 3)—all actions concerning the child shall be in his or her best interests.
2. Survival and development (Article 6)—children have the right to survive and to develop and fulfil their human potential.
3. Non-discrimination (Article 2)—all rights apply to all children without exception. It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination (whether based on race, gender, culture, religion, abilities, political affiliation of their parents etc.) and to take positive action to promote their rights.
4. Participation (various articles)—children have the right to participate in their society and in the creation of the shared social fabric, and have their opinions respected in decisions affecting them.

The CRC has more signatories than any other international convention, and it is important for us to recognize the legal implications of this achievement in

how we position our work. Countries are legally bound to honour children's rights, and this gives us a strong basis for initiating public dialogue and action on behalf of young children. It also provides the basis to demand that governments be more accountable to young children and their families. On the other hand, in many signatory nations, there is still a long way to go before political will, local laws, and practices conform in both spirit and fact to the tenets of the CRC.

There has been much discussion about the difference between a child's needs and a child's rights. In reality though, there is an overlap between these, since the articulation of children's rights was based on the recognition of certain needs of all children—no matter what the conditions or context. Needs are broader than rights, but rights are more powerful as they are linked to obligations. The rights dimension adds to our understanding of children's needs a clear expression of what legal and ethical obligations the State and the child's caregivers must fulfil to address and respond to the child's needs. Put very simplistically: Rights = Need + Obligations.

Children's Rights detail fundamental needs (for good health, for learning opportunities, for care, for protection from harm etc.), and the obligations of adults to meet these. This includes the obligations of the State and of all adults to both protect the individual child and to create the conditions in which all children can develop their potential.

Rights from the Start

Early childhood needs to be seen as an important time in its own right, not just as a preparation for school or citizenship. As de los Angeles-Bautista (2003) says, early childhood programmes are "about addressing the child's rights now and not for some future time." Yet too often implementing agencies, governments, and monitoring groups simply ignore the younger age group or give attention only to survival rights and focus primarily on older children. This effectively excludes nearly one third of all children at a time when they are most vulnerable, most in need of adult support, and when the payoff for meeting their needs and rights is greatest in both economic and developmental terms. One critical contribution of early childhood programmes to child rights work is quite simply the fact that they push for adequate attention to all the issues affecting young children.

The CRC covers all children. Young children have inherent rights—and the younger the child the more dependent they are on adults to ensure those rights.

We need to keep the following message in the public eye: *children's rights start at birth*, with a child's right to grow and develop appropriately within a context that is supportive of that development. Without this foun-



Quality ECCD programmes ensure that children have opportunities to explore, discover, communicate effectively, get along with others, and play an active role in their environment.

ation, a child's later participation and inclusion in her/his society is severely hampered.

The CRC is a major framework central to the way many agencies and governments address children's issues. Therefore, we must also make sure that we are a vital part of the CRC dialogue and thinking that takes place within our agencies, so that the youngest children do not remain invisible in planning.

Early Childhood Programmes and Children's Rights

Quality early childhood programmes aim to ensure the conditions in which children's rights are honoured and met.

The CRC states that ensuring children's rights includes the provision of support programmes for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development, enabling children to grow to their fullest potential. The upbringing and development of the child is viewed as primarily the responsibility of the family, with appropriate assistance by governments to parents and legal guardians, including the development of institutions, facilities, and services for the care of children (see Preamble and Articles 5, 6, and 18).

We will look at the contribution of early childhood programmes to ensuring children's rights in three sections—corresponding to three of the most fundamental features of a child rights approach:

- Attention to the whole child
- Working at multiple levels to meet our obligations to children
- Addressing discrimination and exclusion

ATTENTION TO THE WHOLE CHILD: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Quality Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programmes aim to ensure that children grow up healthy, well nourished, and protected from harm, with a sense of self-worth and identity, enthusiasm, and opportunities for learning. They make sure children have opportunities to explore, discover, communicate effectively, get on with others, and play an active role in their environment. In short, they provide good supports for children's overall development.

This holistic view of children's well-being, while by no means new, has been validated and encouraged by the CRC. With the impetus of the Convention, this interpretation of the role of ECCD is being increasingly taken on board by many agencies and governments, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Nepal, Jamaica, Kenya, the UK, and France.

This contrasts with the unfortunately still prevalent approach to addressing the needs of early childhood populations with limited problem-fixing programmes: nutrition projects aimed exclusively at remediating Vitamin A deficiency or delivering food to children without addressing the "care" component; preschools provided with the limited goal of jump-starting



Rwanda: UNICEF/H097-1034/Giacomo Pirozzi

children's academic skills (but which fail to address a child's holistic developmental needs); childcare programmes that do not really have curricular components; birth registration efforts that are focussed more on numbers than on the opportunity to make sure that the conditions into which the infants are born are adequately supported.

If we wish to address the rights of young children, we must (collectively) do three things:

1. Make sure we are present and in dialogue with all the sectors and divisions responsible for these areas, rather than ECCD being perceived as a separate sector or an issue apart
2. Keep building people's appreciation of how these efforts contribute to the larger goal of ensuring children's rights
3. Encourage the use of more holistic planning frameworks

WORKING AT MULTIPLE LEVELS TO MEET OUR OBLIGATIONS TO YOUNG CHILDREN

The CRC is legally binding for state parties and, as such, is an immensely powerful tool.

A rights approach emphasizes the necessity to be working at multiple levels if we are to achieve the sort of fundamental value changes and shift in social mores that we are seeking. A rights framework ensures not only that we pay attention to young children, but also that we place increased emphasis on influencing government policy as a key to sustained change (whether through delivery of services or the protection of children through the legal system). However, moral obligations to children long precede any treaty and

extend throughout society. This means that civil society's role is central. It also means that the government's role is not always to provide for all rights, but rather to ensure that rights are realized.

As ECCD proponents, we need to be concerned with influencing the contexts in which children are growing up so that they are supportive of children's overall development. When we say contexts we mean all the different environments that impact on young children—families, communities, health centres, ECCD centres, schools, district bodies, national policy-setting bodies, and donor policy-setting meetings. ECCD programmes need to influence these contexts if they wish to effectively address the issues that impede and damage children's development.

A wide range of initiatives is included under the ECCD umbrella, from working directly with families to changing systems that marginalize or exclude some children. They have modelled a variety of supports for families and communities to strengthen their abilities to support their children's overall development and ensure their rights. Building capacity at all levels is central.

Early Childhood development programmes are concerned with:

- *Interactions within the family*, promoting the understanding that learning begins at birth, that the home is the most important influence on the child, and that parents and other family members are the child's first and most important caregivers and teachers
- *Provision of services in ECCD centres*, whether these be day-care centres, home-based childcare, preschools, or workplace childcare focussing on

providing safe, healthy, and stimulating environments for young children

- *Community planning*, working with communities to make the environment safer for young children, and ensuring ECCD provision, providing health services, etc.
- *Influencing the early years of primary education*, providing consistent, sustained support for young children's development, so that schools take up the child-centred, active learning methods characteristic of ECCD programmes
- *Strengthening national resources and building capacity*, enabling countries to provide good supports for young children's overall development
- *Advocacy*, promoting legal, policy, and systemic change, or increased social and economic allocations for programmes for young children

These six types of ECCD activity, taken together, provide vehicles through which the goals of the CRC can be realized for children 0–8, and can provide models for integrative CRC work for all children.

DIALOGUE AND JOINT PLANNING WITH PARENTS AS A PATH TO REALIZING RIGHTS

Families are the frontline for ensuring that their children will get the love, protection, food, health care, and learning opportunities to which they are entitled. ECCD provides a natural platform for participatory discussion and dialogue with parents on key children's issues. This is what assists in making sure the Convention's core principles are enacted at the family level, even if the discussions are not focussed on rights or on the Convention.

The effort to help parents internalize core child rights principles was integral to the dialogue phase of

the childrearing study undertaken in Nepal. The study developed, and has adapted for widespread use, methods to facilitate collaborative discussion with families and communities around children's overall development (Arnold et al. 2001). Such discussions form the basis for practical joint planning for interventions, ensuring better gains for children. Such dialogue also helps programmes to root themselves in the culture and to consider how to ensure children's rights within the context of local childrearing practices and strengths.

Societies vary greatly in their understanding of the importance of the early years, and indeed of childhood in general. While no one group has a monopoly on understanding how to raise children, there are some basic principles that need to be understood if we are to meet our obligations to children and provide effective support for their development. In reality these principles are sometimes in potential collision with dominant local ideas, either because of cultural beliefs or because communities are under pressure. We have to recognize that some cultural beliefs can be damaging and in direct contradiction to the rights of the child (e.g., beliefs that girls should not be educated or that children should be beaten). Programmes have to find ways to challenge such beliefs, but from within the culture or community. It is important to remember that culture is neither static nor homogeneous and that there are always many different beliefs within a given culture.

Examples

- Parenting programmes such as those developed by the Bangladesh Child Development Unit³ or Seto Gurans National Child Development Services and Save the Children in Nepal⁴ or the

Newer approaches to parenting programmes include providing parents with knowledge and strategies to change systems that marginalize/exclude certain children.



Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway

Community of Learners Foundation's Pinatubo project in the Philippines⁵ take as their starting point the existing knowledge, skills, and beliefs of the caregivers and the cultural context in which children live. The whole approach is based on the premise that mothers and other caregivers know and achieve a great deal. Programme interactions focus on drawing this out from them, building their confidence, and providing important additional information and opportunities for discussion and debate. This type of approach is perhaps especially important in societies where girls and women are made to feel of little value from birth and where their opinions are not sought. As one participant from a remote village in Bangladesh said: "I never knew I was doing so much to help my daughter grow up strong and clever. Now I know I can really help her have chances I never had."

- The importance of programme approach and mothers' empowerment was also emphasized by the renowned Turkish study (Kagitcibasi et al. 2001). The study demonstrated the dramatic effects of a mother-training programme on school attainment and retention for children from a poor urban area. Seven years after the programme began, 86% of the children whose mothers had participated in the Mother Training Programme were still in school compared to 67% of those who had not. The study concluded that "Mother training has had long-term effects because it focussed on the overall development of the child as well as the well-being of the mother and the family through empowering the key person, the mother, for multiple positive outcomes" (35). The process, which involves not only home visits but also bi-weekly group discussions, changes not only the developmental outcomes for the child but also the context in which the child is raised as well, through the changes that are taking place in the mother (her confidence, communication skills, improved family relations, and status within the family). "Thus at the end of the intervention children are not left in the same old context, but rather continue in a context which has changed with them and thus can provide them with continued support" (30).
- Colombia's PROMESA project provided a powerful example of a programme whose approach ensured that it was really owned by the parents and community. It began by encouraging groups of mothers to stimulate the development of their preschool children by playing games with them. Gradually the mothers started identifying other issues such as nutrition, environmental sanitation, income generation, and cultural activities. Over time PROMESA expanded into an integrated community development project.

The degree of parental involvement and empowerment, both in supporting their children's development and managing programmes, appears to be strongly correlated with programme success.⁶ In studies worldwide that look at home and centre-based programmes, the greater the level of parental involvement the better the outcomes tend to be for children.

CHANGING PARENTS OR CHANGING SYSTEMS?

For many years parenting or parent education programmes tended to focus in essence on changing the parent. Programmes were developed to assist families in increasing their knowledge, skills, and confidence in their abilities to support their children's overall development. And indeed they are centrally concerned with this. However, a rights analysis makes it clear that changing practices within families is not enough. As Evans (2000) points out, systems are set up in ways that exclude or marginalize certain children. Health services can be inaccessible or unaffordable. Education and employment opportunities can be closed to certain groups as well. In such situations parenting programmes may also need to help to change these kinds of systems.

What does this mean in practice? If a parenting programme provides information regarding what provisions are supposed to be available locally and provides adequate supports, parents can take action accordingly. For example, if they know there is budget at the district level for one full-time and one part-time health worker at the local health post, they are in a much better position to organize and put pressure on the appropriate authorities to recruit if the health post has been operated only part-time for the last six months. If the parenting programme gives them opportunities to evaluate local options for their children, they are in a better position to articulate their needs for services for their children and to press local government and NGOs to provide these.

In sum then we are beginning to see a shift in the approaches used in parenting programmes. They not only seek to enhance parents' direct efforts to provide for, protect, and support their children's overall development, but also to emphasize helping them hold other duty-bearers accountable. Such programmes ensure that parents have critical information regarding locally available provision for children and build parents' confidence and ability to press for supports and services.

Addressing Discrimination and Exclusion

Looking at the reality of children's lives, we touched on the often disastrous effects of poverty and discrimination that are linked to exclusion, affecting both children's development and the development of nations. Fortunately, well-conceived early childhood programmes can be a highly effective way to work

against deep-rooted patterns of disadvantage and marginalization:

- Parenting programmes strengthen families' abilities to support their children's overall development from a young age. They also encourage parents to have a sense of their children's entitlements and work to obtain whatever is available.
- Centre-based programmes can be critical for hard-pressed families. They provide a range of immediate benefits (safe, healthy, stimulating environments for children and childcare for parents). They often also serve as bridges for children and families, enabling the children to do better in school and families to improve their economic status.

There is ample worldwide evidence that the most disadvantaged children—whether because of poverty, ethnicity, gender, rural isolation, or disability—experience the most dramatic developmental gains from ECCD. Those who need it most get the most out of it.⁷ Thus, ECCD becomes a major tool in achieving several key CRC and Human Rights goals.

The Evidence

- The Padeco/AED (2001) analysis for the World Bank for a large-scale project in Egypt compared the benefits of ECCD according to socio-economic status. As the authors put it, "The benefits for children from the poorest families with the least educated parents can be extremely high. In contrast children from middle income or richer families usually enjoy a home environment that is relatively conducive to healthy child development. This is not to say that ECCD programs will not support all children, whether rich or poor. However, it does mean that the impact will be more impressive for the poorest."
- The North Carolina Abecedarian study demonstrated that an intensive intervention could compensate for the disadvantages of poverty and undereducated parents. Many of the parents in the Abecedarian study had very low IQ levels and these high-risk children were able to achieve at the same level as their more affluent peers (Campbell, Helms et al. 1998).
- The Hararyana study in India found that participation in the ICDS programme did not have an impact on dropout for high-caste children, but the lowest castes showed a subsequent reduction in dropout rates of 46% (Chaturvedi et al. 1987).
- South African children from low-income families who attended an intensive early learning programme obtained scores equal to their middle-class peers attending a traditional preschool programme (Short, 1985).
- A study in Guinea and Cape Verde had similar findings. Preschool compensated disadvantaged

children for the lack of supports available in the home environment (Jaramillo and Tiejien 2001).

- Grantham-McGregor's 1991 Jamaica study, as described in Young (2002), demonstrates that nutritional supplementation combined with stimulation for stunted children from a poor population brought these children up to the level of a normal control group within two years.
- The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project is the first large scale longitudinal study in the UK to provide detailed, hard evidence on the effects of preschool education on children's social and intellectual development at the start of school. It has revealed the way learning experiences at home combined with good quality education provide a boost to the development of all children—especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁸
- The Nepal study (Bartlett et al. 2003) demonstrated dramatic gains for *dalit* (untouchable) children who are still socially ostracized despite



Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway

The most disadvantaged children experience the most dramatic developmental gains from ECCD.

discrimination on the basis of caste being illegal. In a district that has some of the worst education indicators in the country and where the District Education Office estimates only 30% of *dalit* children are in school, more than 95% of the *dalit* children with ECCD programme experience enter school. Their dropout and repetition rates were extremely low—e.g., Dropout rates in Grade One were half the national average and remained low through Grade Five. (See case study on page 53 for details.)

According to Kabiru and Hyde (2003), “The opportunity for additional nutritional, health and educational inputs at an early age can address the developmental delays that are more likely to affect poorer children.... ECCD programmes can promote equity, for not only can the children benefit when they are young, but the benefits continue throughout their school careers.” Giving children a good start not only addresses the worst effects of poverty, it may also be the most effective way of breaking the relentless cycle of poverty transmitted across generations.

Indeed for the poorest, or for families or societies in crisis, or for marginalized groups, programmes supporting their youngest children’s development are of critical importance. Evaluations of strong parenting programmes emphasize how parents improve their feeding and hygiene practices and also talk more with their children; they also see the value of their questions and play and use everyday activities and materials to support their children’s learning. Children with a good start in the early years develop a sense of self-worth, the capacity to take responsibility, and retain a flexible, enhanced ability to learn—even more necessary for children denied access to adequate formal schooling than for those able to get it. Far from being “luxuries,” these are survival skills.

The bottom line is quite simply this: where resources to provide positive learning experiences are limited, children will benefit most from having those experiences early.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY

ECCD interventions can promote gender equity by compensating for gender biases in nutrition, health care, or stimulation that may occur in the home. When, for example, young girls participate in ECCD programmes, parents’ attitudes toward their girls shift: they see that their girls are active individuals, capable of learning, of participating in their early childhood settings, and of developing a wider variety of social and intellectual capacities. In addition, older girls who have been the traditional child-minders while their mothers and fathers worked outside the home are freed by ECCD programmes to pursue their own educations.

The Evidence

- A number of studies, including the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study and a comprehensive Irish study, have indicated that the benefits of early childhood programmes tend to be greatest for girls.⁹
- Myers (1995) points out that in both India and Guatemala, girls who participate in ECCD programmes are much more likely to join school at the appropriate age (Jaramillo and Tiejien 2001).
- The Nepal study repeated this finding and also found that the ECCD programme was extremely effective at getting and keeping girls in school and dramatically improved boy-girl ratios in the early grades (see Nepal case study for data details).

In sum, whatever the factors underlying exclusion or marginalization—gender, poverty, ethnicity, caste, and religion—early childhood programmes are remarkably effective in countering disadvantage.

The Investment Perspective

The importance of the early years in the formation of a person’s intelligence, personality, social behaviour, and physical development is well understood, but does this recognition lead to investment?

Numerous studies have demonstrated that investments in the early years bring high returns in terms of children’s educational gains, health status, and future economic productivity.

This has implications at different levels:

- At the individual level, children who get a good start do better in school, are healthier, and do



Botswana: UNICEF/HQ01-0113/Giacomo Pirozzi

Promoting gender equity through ECCD interventions

better as adults in terms of their income, social adjustment, and ability to participate socially.

- At the local institutional level, such as the school, it means increased enrollment, decreased repetition and dropout, and better achievement and completion levels by children who have ECCD experiences.
- At a national level it means a better "Human Development Index," as measured by education, health (including nutrition), social development, and growth indicators (UNDP).

In other words, ECCD programming leads to a better educated, healthier populace, increased productivity and higher Gross National Product (GNP), reduced gender and class inequalities, and reduction in poverty and related effects such as violence and crime.

Economic arguments, like child rights arguments, can help to frame people's understandings of why ECCD is essential to achieving both economic and humanistic goals. An investment perspective is not narrowly concerned with only the "future productivity" of the child, but also with broader social savings, such as potential savings to formal education, health and penal systems, higher earnings for parents able to enter the labour force, and higher GNPs. Economist Robert G. Myers describes the breadth an economic model can embrace as follows:

a discussion about investing must, of necessity, be a discussion about what kind of world we want to live in. That discussion must include, in addition to a world with greater material benefits and higher GNPs, a world that is more open, just, equitable and caring. A better world, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is one in which children have a right to survival and integral development, broadly defined to include physical, mental, social and emotional development. They should be treated equitably. They should have a right to be heard and to participate, to the extent of their capabilities. (Myers 2004)

As Cleveland and Krashinsky (2003) state, "Since the objections to childcare programs are often phrased using economic principles, it seems appropriate to meet these objections on the same ground." Thus, we need to learn to frame economic arguments as part of our push for ECCD. Economic arguments bolster our advocacy for children's rights. After all, in a financially constrained environment, we need to show how ECCD interventions can compete favourably with other programmes and projects, such as secondary education, irrigation works, or feeder roads.

Benefit-to-Cost Analysis

Research shows that well-targeted, high-quality early childhood interventions can yield very high economic returns.

The well-known High-Scope Perry Preschool Study (Schweinhart, Barnes, and Weikart 1993) included a benefit-to-cost analysis that found a return on investment of 7 to 1 (7:1). This means that for every dollar spent, there were seven dollars of savings or benefit to society. The study tracked a group of children who had participated in an ECCD programme and a carefully matched control group living in a greatly disadvantaged community in the United States.

Information was collected over a twenty-seven year period. It included information on children's IQ (Intelligence Quotient) scores, school performance, employment and earnings, home ownership, criminal behaviour, dependency on welfare programmes, and other aspects of well-being and social behaviour.

The findings revealed that:

- The programme children outscored the control group in reading, math, language, and total school achievement
- Eighty-four of the programme girls finished high school (versus 35% of the control girls)

At age twenty-seven the programme children:

- Were better informed on health issues
- Were better at problem-solving
- Had markedly higher earnings
- Were more likely to be homeowners
- Had formed more stable relationships and marriages

The control group was:

- Twice as likely to be on welfare
- Twice as likely to have been arrested
- Five times more likely to have been arrested more than five times

The benefit-to-cost analysis of 7:1 has drawn perhaps the most attention of all these findings.

Calculating the monetary value of the benefits in any project analysis is complicated and involves many judgement calls, as World Bank economist van der Gaag (1998) emphasizes. It is necessary to decide which outcomes of the programme should be included and how to "monetize" these. The specific circumstances of the programme need to be taken into account every time. In the High/Scope Perry Preschool study, authors Schweinhart, Barnes, and Weikart included a range of items such as savings for the criminal justice system, as well as savings through fewer welfare payments and a lower need for special education programmes. They also calculated the difference in earnings between the two groups and childcare benefits (what families would have spent on childcare if their children had not been in the programme).

Most benefit-to-cost analyses have not had the advantage of such a rich and reliable database and have looked at a much narrower range of benefits specifically related to children's years in school and their projected future earnings. ECCD programme participation has a significant effect on future income



because a child who attends an ECCD centre or preschool is more likely to enter into and complete primary school, to go on to secondary education, and to achieve higher performance levels than children who do not attend preschool. This better educational performance is associated subsequently with higher incomes. We have sufficient research evidence to affirm that every year of added education improves a person's later income.

The economic literature on education estimates that one extra year of primary education will increase a person's future productivity by 10–30%, varying country to country.¹⁰ This is done by estimating a wage equation that relates differences in wages to differences in years or levels of education. The researchers then use an age-to-earnings profile to estimate the increase in productivity. Data are used that document the increases in primary enrollment, related to participation in ECCD programmes. Data are also used that document the impact of ECCD participation on the total number of classes completed in school. The models factor in the improved retention and promotion, progression by more students to post-primary education, and sometimes even include data on the reduction in under-five mortality, fertility rates, and other social indicators.

In situations where data are not available (as is often the case) assumptions are sometimes made. For example, taking into account the costs of the education system, the "net present value" is calculated. This is an approximation of what the value of a year

of education is worth monetarily. In this way society's profits from the investment are calculated and economists can then quantify the benefits of increased lifetime productivity as a result of ECCD.

There are disadvantages and advantages in this approach. On the one hand, in a model that turns life factors into numbers, how can we ever know which factors really influence the growth of something as complex as children in a social context? On the other hand, we live in a world that bases much of our social decision making and spending on statistics and numbers, and so it is important for us to make sure that we understand and can explain the economic models that are used to calculate the "return on investment" in ECCD.

Van der Gaag and Tan (1998) compared the quantifiable benefits of the Bolivia PIDI ECCD programme with its costs and obtained benefit-to-cost ratios between 2.4 to 1 and 3.1 to 1. The benefit-to-cost ratios are greatest for the group with the worst social indicators (high infant mortality, high malnutrition, low school enrollment). Studies by the World Bank and other agencies in Colombia and Egypt have tended to estimate returns on ECCD programming of around 3:1 (three dollars or euros or pesos return for every one spent). The returns become as high as 5.8:1 in Egypt if programmes are targeted to children most at risk. This is because the most disadvantaged children benefit the most from ECCD. The impact in terms of reducing school dropout and repetition is much greater for children from poor families than it is

for children from better-off families. This is a powerful economic argument for investment in ECCD that is targeted to children most at risk.

Economists who have undertaken these types of analyses are clear that ECCD programmes result in a large increase in the accumulation of human capital.¹¹ ECCD programmes, as an investment, compare favourably in terms of economic rate of return with investments in the so-called “hard” sectors such as road and infrastructure projects. Benefit:cost ratios for most industrial and agricultural projects, for example, are often less than 2:1. For example the Hill Forest development project in Nepal estimated a benefit-to-cost ratio of 1.18 to 1.

Most of the existing benefit-to-cost analyses require some rather strong assumptions that weaken their usefulness as advocacy tools. It will be invaluable over time to undertake similar analyses in countries where more complete data are available and fewer assumptions have to be made. Unfortunately, in the poorest countries that need programmes the most, data are still inadequate and detailed benefit-to-cost analyses are fraught with difficulties.

Despite the fact that detailed benefit-to-cost analyses are challenging, the conclusion from existing research is clear. As van der Gaag and Tan (1998) state, “Societies cannot prosper if their children suffer. ECCD programmes are a sound investment in the well-being of children and the future of societies. By breaking the intergenerational cycle of deprivation, ECCD programmes are a powerful tool for obtaining the ultimate objective of development to give all people a chance to live productive and fulfilling lives” (1998).

ECCD as a Preventive Measure to Save Society Money: The Importance of Using Both Analysis and Common Sense

Often the economic analyses address the concept of “efficiencies,” such as those of the school system. Are schools cost efficient? Are monies being spent with the greatest “bang for the buck”? However, a look at efficiencies sometimes focusses narrowly on limited variables, such as the numbers of children being educated relative to costs. But this narrow view can miss the larger truths that common sense and a broader type of analysis makes clear. Providing low quality or no services to those most in need and most in danger of failing to thrive is inefficient. Building prisons to house troubled youth and adults from money saved through cuts to health and education is inefficient. Doryan, Gautam, and Foege (2002) refer to this kind of social myopia as “Inefficient and with heart-rending and society-rending effects.”

A too-narrow investment perspective can cause programme implementers to experience great frustration and even blockage at times. For example, if a donor is

overly focussed on school enrollment and retention as an outcome, other crucial outcomes get lost or swept aside. When programmes are put under pressure to show financially motivated “deliverables” (from a donor’s investment perspective), this sometimes seriously hampers programme implementation and use of resources. Programmes are strongest and most effective when the investors, donors, and politicians can get on the same page with implementers and focus on trying to increase the quality and breadth and integration of services from the perspective of the child and the family within the specific timeframes, contexts, and circumstances that affect them.

We need to be able to cite the economic research, but also serve as the voice for common sense.

We need to keep common sense at the forefront of any discussion on ECCD, and remember that the numbers can both bolster and limit the discourse about how to ensure young children their rights.

Economists analysing ECCD programmes acknowledge that although programmes are indeed concerned with broader social dimensions such as equity, justice, conflict resolution, and a caring society, it is difficult to assign a numerical value or put a price on many of these critical benefits of ECCD. As Myers points out, Common sense suggests that the early years—when the brain matures, when we first learn to walk and talk, when self-control begins and when the first social relationships are formed—must be regarded as important. Common sense suggests that children whose basic health, nutritional, and psychosocial needs are being met will develop and perform better than those who are not so fortunate. Common sense also suggests that a child who develops well physically, mentally, socially



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and emotionally during the early years will be more likely to be a good and productive member of society than one who does not. (2004)

While research on ECCD confirms common sense in both specific and generalized ways, we need to re-frame the discussions on investment in children, moving beyond topics such as grade retention or annual cost per child of preschool to encompassing broader (and sometimes not-yet-measured) outcomes of integrated inputs.

It is possible, and possibly morally imperative, to draw common-sense conclusions about sensible investments before doing detailed benefit-to-cost analyses, as Brazil's government has done. Brazil's "Atencao a Crianca" programme is focussed on overcoming poverty and social exclusion and includes a significant early childhood component. The project will look closely at the economic gains from inclusion. As they point out, a child in preschool costs no more than \$100, a child on the street \$200, and a child in the penal system \$1000. "The costs of exclusion are high" (Aduan 2000; Young 2002).

Initial investments in young children are far less costly than programmes that seek to remedy deficits incurred in the early years. Much of the savings represented in the High/Scope Perry Preschool study support the idea of investing in ECCD as a preventive measure. Indeed the largest percent of their 7:1 returns come from savings to the penal system. The Economics Nobel Laureate Heckman (1999) argues that investments in disadvantaged young children are superior to investments in low-skill adults.

A recently published study in Mauritius bolsters this contention. Mauritius is a multi-ethnic, democratic island in the Indian Ocean. Researchers there found that high quality preschool education can reduce lifelong aggressive and anti-social tendencies. The study, reported in *Preschool Matters* (December 2003), a

publication of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), explored whether a programme that offered both educational enrichment and proper nutrition might play a role in reducing violence and crime.

The researchers worked with children from two separate villages in Mauritius, matching 100 children assigned to an enrichment programme with 400 of their peers who ranked similarly on temperament, family situation, parental employment and education, and the age of the mother at birth of the child. By the age of ten, the children who attended the quality preschool showed better social skills, more organized thinking, and had more friends than the children who received no such enrichment. By the ages of seventeen and twenty-three, the programme children were found by the researchers to still show pronounced positive effects. The young adults were more socially adjusted, calmer, and better able to get along with peers. As young adults, the children who attended the enriched preschools were up to 52% less likely to commit a crime.

However, when results from low-cost community-based programmes are as dramatic as they often are in the poorest countries, it doesn't take complex economic or longitudinal analysis for policy-makers to see that the ECCD investment makes sense. In Nepal they saw the halving of the dropout rate, and grade repetitions reduced to less than one fifth of the former rate. In Brazil, there were dramatic increases in the grade completion rate, from 2% to 40%, as a result of a community-based ECCD programme. In many developing countries it may take an average of 1.4 years for a child to complete a grade. It does not take complex analysis to see that reduced repetition—a benefit of ECCD programmes that is easy to demonstrate—increases the efficiency and decreases the costs of schooling.



High quality ECCD programmes offering both educational enrichment and proper nutrition might play a later role in reducing violence and crime.

Influence within Ongoing Movements

In a recent meeting of representatives from diverse sectors within an international agency, who were all trying to integrate their efforts on behalf of young children, a long discussion revolved around what to call the new integrated early childhood approach. Early Childhood Development was not considered acceptable by health proponents because it evoked, in their minds, a more psychosocial focus. Integrated Early Childhood Care for Development was rejected as too vague. Early Childhood Care for Survival, Growth, and Development was rejected as too clunky. In the end, the group settled on simply using the term "Early Childhood."

The fact is that each term under which ECCD has been categorized conjures up associations that can pigeonhole the work done in that particular area, and cause people working in different young-child-relevant sectors to dismiss or compete with one another. As one old timer put it, "ECCD has nothing to do with nutrition." From his point of view, this was correct. His department was focussed on vitamin supplementation programmes, and ECCD, as he understood it—an integrated care approach for young children—did not particularly relate to his work. The fact that nutrition is a crucial issue in the early years of a child's life became lost in the realities of the organizationally entrenched approaches to nutrition and ECCD.

Clearly, in addition to winning people's support of ECCD as we conceive it, we also need to find ways to enlighten our colleagues to look at how their work impacts upon young children, how our work can be supportive of their work, and how their field or sector might more effectively address the issues relating to young children in the context of larger goals they are pursuing in their field.

For many of us our goal is to put children at the centre of the social agenda and ensure that all children grow up with supports for their overall development. While we will continue to work to persuade everyone to embrace this goal, we need at times to draw out very specific linkages between different groups' interests and the way ECCD contributes to these.

For example, the gender equity implications of ECCD may seem self-evident to us. However, many of the gender relations' specialists are barely even aware of ECCD. We need to identify specific interest groups, for example, education specialists, gender specialists, health specialists, UN groups, the development banks, business associations, etc., and become more strategic in our advocacy. This may involve drawing on relevant portions of International Conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and collective commitments, such

as the Dakar Education For All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and spelling out how ECCD contributes to the achievement of the goals each of these treaties/pacts promotes.

It is not within the scope of this paper to address all the international movements and contexts that impact upon young children's lives. We have already addressed how to work within the CRC movement. Related to the investment discussion above, there are groups working on Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals, which can and should be linked to ECCD. In addition, we will look a movement in which ECCD has been identified as one of four key pillars—the Education for All initiative—and we will discuss the fit of ECCD within Education planning and thinking.

Working within a Global Investment Context

As we have emphasized throughout this article, ECCD does not exist in a bubble. In very real terms, programmes for young children are often set up to compete for funding with primary education, health or nutrition efforts, and other community development priorities. We need to regularly reach out to people working in these sectors and emphasize the far-reaching benefits of using ECCD programming as a tool within their work, and the benefits not only for disadvantaged young children but also for families, communities, and society as a whole. We need to be able to articulate how a fair start for all children will have an impact on a wide range of poverty, social equity, health, nutrition, and education indicators.

All over the world, poverty interferes with the realization of children's rights. Within families and communities and countries, a lack of resources undermines the capacity to provide adequately for children and to afford them opportunities. Economic pressures are a fundamental obstacle that families face in raising their children. Health care, education—even children's day-to-day interactions—are constrained by the lack of resources. ECCD programmes need to work with broad-based poverty reduction programmes to ensure that more account is taken of the impact of such programmes on young children. Children can too easily get lost in the face of more immediate, crisis-oriented, adult-focussed solutions. A classic example is the way that achieving increased food production (or delivery) does not automatically translate into better-fed, better-nourished children.

POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPERS AND MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 1999, The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) framework for national poverty reduction planning. PRSPs are prepared by governments

through a participatory process involving civil society and development partners. They are intended to be:

- Country-driven—involving broad-based participation
- Results-oriented—focussed on outcomes benefitting the poor
- Comprehensive and addressing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty
- Partnership oriented—multi-lateral, bi-lateral, NGO
- Based on long-term perspectives

PRSPs avoid a purely economic view of poverty; instead, they stress the need to address social and political disempowerment on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, and age as well. Critical work is being done on key aspects of poverty such as lack of access to health and education services. This is an important development for us as advocates for young children. For many years the social aspects of under-development were seen by some as merely a by-product of poverty rather than as part of the cause. Now that there is openness to a broader view, we need to bring home the fact that ECCD helps reduce the social and economic disparities and gender inequalities that divide societies and perpetuate poverty. Therefore, we need to find ways to participate in our National PRSP dialogues—see Case Study on Page 41 which describes a consultation process facilitated by the Tanzania ECD Network and includes key ECD recommendations for inclusion in Tanzania's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) II—and to communicate all the evidence that shows a successful programme for young children can be an entry point for responding effectively to many of the factors underlying poverty.

How can we do this? We may start by using the traditional economic analyses of ECCD that have focussed on the potential of ECCD programmes to enable the children themselves to break out of poverty through improved school achievement and future earnings. However, we also need to focus attention on other important impacts of ECCD, directly relevant to

poverty reduction, that have yet to receive adequate attention. We need to document and convey the ways that effective ECCD programmes in the region have been particularly effective in giving parents and caregivers an increased sense of control over their lives—providing them with information and building their confidence and sense of agency to act on their own behalf and on behalf of their children. We also need to document the ways that ECCD programming, in all its diverse forms, has strengthened the abilities of families and communities to cope with difficult situations that both lead to and emerge from poverty.

ECCD has a multiplier effect that has not been adequately assessed.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are seen as the main instrument for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the poorest countries and are usually well aligned with these. The Millennium Development Goals summarize the development goals agreed on at international conferences and world summits during the 1990s. At the end of the decade, world leaders synthesized the key goals and targets into the Millennium Declaration (September 2000), which all 191 UN Member states have committed to achieving by 2015.¹²

Five of the eight Millennium Development Goals in the UN Millennium Declaration relate to the health, nutrition, and education of young children, as Mingat and Jaramillo (2003) point out in their assessment of what it would take to meet the ECCD related MDGs. These include:

- Halving the percentage of children who suffer from hunger
- Reducing by two-thirds the death rate for children under five
- Cutting the maternal mortality rate by three quarters
- Ensuring all children have the chance to complete primary school
- Eliminating gender disparities in schooling opportunities

ECCD is a first and essential step towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals for the world's poorest countries. Our job is to make sure people working on the MDGs understand and embrace this.

As the World Bank economists Van der Gaag and Tan (1998) state, "Providing ECCD programs is a powerful way to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty." Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are a major driving force for individual countries as they create development policies. Therefore we need to undertake analysis of these documents within the context of our own settings in order to make explicit and communicate to decision-makers the key contributions that ECCD can make.



ECCD is a first and essential step towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.



The ECCD field needs to address how other fields and sectors might more effectively ensure that children are at the centre of the social agenda.

We need to become adept at using economic analysis regarding the very considerable returns on investment in ECCD, such as that done by Mingat and Jaramillo, when making the case for ECCD with regard to achieving Millennium Development Goals (and EFA goals) within our own settings. Using data from twenty-four African countries Mingat and Jaramillo estimate that the impact of ECCD on student flow (the number of years it takes for a child to complete the primary cycle) would result in a gain of 20% in the efficiency in resource use. Twenty percent of a six-year cycle amounts to a gain equivalent to 1.2 years of schooling. This means that if a year of preschool costs anything up to 1.2 times what a year of school costs, there would still be a net saving just within the education system (let alone looking at the broader and longer-term benefits as the other economic analyses we have looked at have done). Using these kinds of figures helps policy-makers to see the implications of ECCD for:

- Realizing primary completion objectives
- Increased efficiency of resource use

The authors looked at the African unit cost figures they are able to obtain from more formal preschools. These indicate that preschool costs 1.37 times the cost of a year of primary schooling. Even in such a case, the cost of preschool is still offset by 87%. However, the authors emphasize that the costs of ECCD programmes vary greatly and community-based services are a highly efficient option—costing much less than the more formal approaches, while producing results that are as good or better. The authors estimate that the community-based programmes would pay for themselves three times over. These sorts of calculations are very persuasive—and all the more so when done locally using data from within the country.

A good example of effective economic advocacy is how the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) (see case study on page 39) presented its ECCD model at an April 2003 World Bank-NGO consultation. ECCD was presented as a poverty reduction programme approach. It was later included in the World Bank's World Development Report 2004 and the presentation was also shared among development agencies in Washington through Interaction, an NGO umbrella organization.

Countries attempting to ensure poverty reduction in the context of all-pervasive market reforms face particular challenges. Assets such as land, physical capital, information, and, most of all, education become more valuable. As Young (2003) points out, individuals who already have these assets come to the game equipped to play. But some players, all too often including the children of the poor, arrive at the game without any assets to play well. "They may not have the proper tools or even the uniform for taking the field." The conclusion is simple. The more poor families there are, and the more unequal a society is, the greater the need is for a country to channel public resources to early childhood intervention programmes in order to set effective Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper goals and achieve Millennium Development Goals.

Education for All (EFA)

The Framework for Action adopted at the Jomtien Conference in 1990 stated, "The preconditions for educational quality, equity and efficiency are set in the early childhood years, making attention to early childhood care and development essential to the achievement of basic educational goals" (Article I.3). This commitment was re-affirmed at Dakar in 2000 with an emphasis on ensuring that early childhood programmes reach disadvantaged and vulnerable children. But have we done enough to really drive home the connection between EFA's 1st goal and the attainment of other goals—especially those concerned with the completion of basic education and those addressing gender and quality issues?

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS TO CORE EDUCATION INDICATORS

Sometimes our emphasis on a holistic approach may work against us. When we hone in on education aspects we may feel under pressure to bring in all the other aspects and by doing that we may lose the interest of formal education decision-makers. We need to be comfortable with being focussed in our advocacy—especially initially—and the opportunity to bring in the other aspects (which are indeed

relevant to formal education) will emerge later. Ministries of Education worldwide have to make hard choices about where to allocate resources. More are recognizing that investment in ECCD programmes is crucial in increasing primary school completion rates and especially in improving retention and achievement for girls and disadvantaged groups.

We would do well to remember that it is this connection that will influence these Ministries. They are held most accountable for enrollment and completion rates. Therefore, calculations like those done by Mingat and Jaramillo (2003) using data from 133 countries are directly relevant for them. And all the more so in instances where these are combined with related data from their own countries. Mingat and Jaramillo (2003) looked at the correlation between preschool Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and survival rates to Grade Five, as well as correlation with repetition rates in primary school (data from 133 countries). The figures are impressive. They found completion rates of 50% in the absence of preschool, and around 80% completion where half the population has access to some sort of preschool or ECCD centre. Absence of preschool experience correlated with 25% repetition; preschool GER of 45% correlated with a reduction of repetition to 12%. It might be thought that these findings simply reflect the fact that richer

countries are more likely to have both higher ECCD enrollment rates and better completion rates. However, this is not the case as controlling for per capita Gross Domestic Product makes very little difference.

Focussing on School Readiness and Children's Transitions from ECCD to School

For many working in ECCD there perhaps has been an historical wariness of emphasizing the connections of ECCD to the formal school system. There is a fear that ECCD programmes can become hijacked by the system and develop essentially into a downward extension of uninspiring primary schools. We fear that active learning methods in which children learn by doing, manipulating concrete objects, talking with others, and discovering things for themselves in an atmosphere of encouragement and success might be replaced by an emphasis on rote learning, where the child is seen as a passive recipient.

There are plenty of examples, which illustrate that such fears are well founded. For example, we see many preschool centres in countries worldwide using developmentally inappropriate methods in a misguided attempt to give children an academic edge when they enter school. This is done through pushing reading, writing, and math activities for which

GOVERNANCE OF THE FIRST GOAL OF EFA

THE FIRST GOAL: EXPANDING AND IMPROVING COMPREHENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION, ESPECIALLY FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

“Governments, through relevant ministries, have the primary responsibility of formulating early childhood care and education policies within the context of national EFA plans, mobilizing political and popular support, and promoting flexible, adaptable programmes for young children that are appropriate to their age and not mere downward extensions of formal school systems. The education of parents and other caregivers in better child care, building on traditional practices, and the systematic use of early childhood indicators, are important elements in achieving this goal. All young children must be nurtured in safe and caring environments that allow them to become healthy, alert and secure and be able to learn. The past decade has provided more evidence that good quality early childhood care and education, both in families and in more structured programmes, have a positive impact on the survival, growth, development, and learning potential of children. Such programmes should be comprehensive, focussing on all of the child's needs and encompassing health, nutrition, and hygiene, as well as cognitive and psychosocial development. They should be provided in the child's mother tongue and help to identify and enrich the care and education of children with special needs. Partnerships between governments, NGOs, communities and families can help ensure the provision of good care and education for children, especially for those most disadvantaged, through activities centred on the child, focussed on the family, based within the community and supported by national, multi-sectoral policies and adequate resources” (2000, 15).

During the Consultative Group on ECCD's 2003 annual meeting, participants emphasized the importance of doing more to address the “governance” issue of the first goal of EFA. The Consultative Group agreed to approach the EFA steering committee within UNESCO to raise the profile of ECCD on the EFA agenda. In addition, the Consultative Group committed to take a lead in promoting the first EFA goal (ECCD) as an essential core of the basic educational goals. We committed to ensuring that within five years the influence and impact of ECCD efforts on achieving EFA goals is more clearly understood and articulated by helping people see the connections and providing the evidence. The *Coordinators' Notebook* for 2005 will focus on this effort and we welcome correspondence on any work or thinking readers might have done in this realm.



There is now no doubt. Young children who participate in early childhood programmes do better in school than those who have no such opportunity.

children are not yet ready, rather than laying firm language, learning, and interaction foundations. However, understanding of what “school readiness” means has increased greatly in recent years. According to Young, “The child who is ready for school has a combination of positive characteristics: He or she is socially and emotionally healthy, confident, and friendly; has good peer relationships; tackles challenging tasks and persists with them; has good language skills and communicates well; and listens to instructions and is attentive” (2003, 5).

Indeed initiatives that have deliberately linked ECCD and primary school (such as the preparatory year established in the Solomon Islands) have often been able to ensure that rather than creating a “push down” of primary methods, good ECCD practice “pushes up” into the formal system.

The transition from ECCD programmes into the formal education system may be an effective way to strengthen the connections between ECCD and other EFA goals. Transition initiatives respond to the fact that the major crisis in primary schools (at least in Asia and many parts of Latin America) is in Grade One. Across Asia the worst drop out and repetition rates are in Grade One. In Nepal and Pakistan more than half of Grade One children either drop out altogether or repeat. Transition initiatives consist of deliberately linking ECCD and

early primary components, so that children are ready for school, and equally important, schools are ready for children. What this means in practice is an emphasis on making the school a more child-friendly, welcoming, and appreciative environment, and introducing the more active learning so characteristic of ECCD programmes into Grades One and Two—and, as the efficacy of these methods is demonstrated, adapting them for higher grades also.¹³

This is now a key emphasis for a number of Save the Children and Aga Khan Foundation programmes in Asia. Initial results are promising and are generating government interest. Where successful early childhood development programmes are linked to primary schools they can have a powerful positive influence on the opportunities for learning, discovery, and participation that children are offered in primary schools. Work with the neglected lower grades of primary school, taken together with support for children’s development as confident, capable, and responsible people before they ever enter school may be an invaluable entry point for pulling in more interest from the education sector.¹⁴

LIFELONG LEARNING

Another entry point for advocacy work with educators in the context of the EFA is to help build understanding of the concepts of lifelong learning and non-institutional learning as a central strategy for building human capital. Non-institutional or non-formal learning is learning which is flexible and can take place in diverse settings. It can be organized to fit specific learners, and can be adapted to diverse learning styles. The phrase lifelong learning implies that people continue to learn and grow throughout their lives. The traditional paradigm of learning is based on formal educational institutions, which assume the central role as the main producer of human capital. The movement for lifelong learning also emphasizes the informal, non-institutional sources, beginning in early childhood. Non-formal learning is important from an ECCD perspective because the determinants of lifelong success, which begin in early childhood, are found in the many environments where children grow, live, and learn within their families, homes, and communities. Therefore, nonformal educational opportunities for parents, caregivers, and children themselves are more likely to promote the contextual learning that promotes success.

IMPACT OF ECCD IN RELATION TO EDUCATION: SOME KEY FINDINGS FROM STUDIES

Learning occurs faster in the early years than at any other time, and patterns are established during this time-period that have far-reaching implications. Education is the great equalizer, but only if all



children have had the opportunity to develop the attitudes and skills to make the most of the learning opportunities available in school. Even more so than previously in history, education will determine future job options and earnings.

There is now no doubt. Young children who participate in early childhood programmes do better in school than those who have no such opportunity.

Originally, longitudinal studies in the U.S. and Europe were focussed on narrow cognitive measures, which were often seen to fade out. By the mid 1980s, evaluations that had followed children through to adolescence showed mounting evidence of significant and sustained differences between groups. ECCD programmes are associated with higher levels of achievement, lower rates of grade repetition, and better adjustment in school.¹⁵ Studies in India across five states indicate a sustained and cumulative impact right through primary school.¹⁶

Studies have attributed these differences mainly to differences in attitude and motivation. Significant reductions in school failure, repetition, absenteeism, and drop-out rates were found in the vast majority of the studies looking at the effects of ECCD in USA and Europe. ECCD programme children had greater interest and motivation, were more committed to doing homework, were able to work independently, and participated more in extra-curricular activities. They had greater confidence in themselves and higher

aspirations for their futures.¹⁷ As Schweinhart, Barnes, and Weikart (1993) observe, ECCD programmes seem to produce their long-term effects through “engendering the dispositions in children that enable them to achieve greater success as they begin school. This early success breeds higher motivation, better performance, and higher regard from teachers and classmates.”

Interestingly the Nepal study (2003)—within a very different context—has some key similarities in findings to those of the Western studies. It attributes the children’s success to the impact on the children themselves, and the effects that this has on both parents and their teachers when the children go to school. The children are identified by their parents, teachers, and other children as being self-assured, capable, articulate, and highly motivated, as well as respectful and helpful. The children’s enthusiasm for life and learning rubs off on both their parents and teachers. The parents describe the increased interest they take in their children, and the teachers appreciate their students as eager learners and sometimes enlist their help in assisting other children in the class.

What are all the many studies really saying? These children are growing up as capable, confident, and caring people with an optimistic sense of future possibilities. They are enthusiastic and resourceful learners, have a sense of self-worth, have good communication skills, and get on well with others.

The Evidence

- Myers’ review (1992) of fourteen longitudinal studies—from countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America—found lowered primary school repetition rates among the children who had participated in ECCD centre-based programmes in ten of the studies. One of the cases in which no difference was found followed an automatic promotion system so no child repeated a year.
- The India Village Preschool study (Zaveri 1994) looked at the impacts of the Gujarat Day Care Centres and included both a programme group and matched control group. By the end of the second year programme, children showed significant gains in cognitive ability, confidence, and ability to relate to others, as well as sustained weight gain. The programme children were twice as likely to enrol in school and scored significantly higher than the control group on language, math, and environment tests conducted during the first and second year of primary school.
- In Peru, a recent study found that nearly 60% more poor children who participated in preschool completed primary school as compared with poor children who did not have access to preschool (Aldaz-Carroll 1999).

- A 1999 World Bank study in Brazil found that poor girls who had attended preschool were twice as likely to reach Grade 5 and three times as likely to reach Grade 8 as girls who did not. The benefits for boys were even more dramatic. Forty percent finished primary school compared to only 2% of those who had not participated in an early childhood programme (World Bank 1999).
- Cuba's early childhood programme reaches more than 98% of children in the 0–6 age group. The system has had measurable success in increasing the educational achievements of Cuba's children. Cuban third graders score significantly higher in math and Spanish than their counterparts in eleven Latin American countries, many of them far wealthier than Cuba (Casassus et al. 1998).
- A new study from Myanmar (Lwin et al.) using matched pairs to compare children with and without ECCD opportunities found high levels of significance in the gains for the ECCD children when they went to school. These included: higher enrollment rates, enrollment at the appropriate age, better scores on both regular school tests, and independently administered individual assessments (first three grades of school).

(See also the examples from the Addressing Discrimination and Exclusion section on page 8) which demonstrate the profound effects of ECCD programmes on education indicators for disadvantaged children.) These findings are of critical importance to countries in their attempts to achieve the EFA goals because it is the traditional failure of children from disadvantaged groups (ethnic minorities, girls, poor children) to stay in the system that makes it difficult to attain universal completion goals.

WHAT ABOUT QUALITY?

In many ways it seems strange that we would ask if quality makes a difference because the early childhood movement is based on the fact that we know that quality is key. This applies whether we are talking about what is happening in the home or in an ECCD centre. The positive relation between childcare quality and virtually every facet of children's development is the basis of advocating for increased attention to the early years. It is also "one of the most consistent findings in developmental science" (Shonkoff and Philips 2000).

Quality has probably become a hot topic because of the fear that high quality = expense. The very high costs of some of the American programmes that have been studied so carefully have probably added to these fears—even though these programmes have also demonstrated excellent benefit-to-cost ratios. For those in developing countries who bear first-hand witness to the remarkable triumphs that very low-cost programmes are able to achieve this is less of a

concern. This does not mean that we are not concerned with quality or with the continuing struggle to access adequate resources to ensure quality, but that there is probably a minimum level of investment (different for each context) below for which quality is hard to achieve.

Ensuring quality experiences for children is a challenge in rich and poor countries alike. However, we know that low-cost programmes can provide quality learning and development opportunities for children.

A recent review of U.S. research is very interesting in this context. It indicates that programme quality correlates strongly with children's development and well-being (Love et al. 1996). However, the research shows that the interaction between the facilitator and the children is associated more strongly with enhanced well-being of children than are structural features such as class size, staff-child ratio, and staff training. In other words, it is the dynamics that really count. This is heartening for those of us working in situations where many of the structural features are hard to address. Similarly, a study of preschool education in Chile (Myers 1993) shows that good lesson planning, appropriate learning materials, clear learning objectives, and parental participation have a greater effect than factors such as a teacher's background or teacher-child ratios.

The EPPE study (mentioned on page 9) found that the quality of the preschool experience as well as the quantity (attendance over a longer period, not necessarily more hours per day), including the separate and significant influence of the home learning environment, influenced children's intellectual and social behavioural development up to entry into primary school. Further analyses will explore the progress of the children who attended a preschool centre as well as the home group, which will help to establish whether the positive impact of preschool on young children's development remains significant as children progress through their first years at primary school.

It is important also to remember that concepts of quality vary, reflecting values promoted by the different cultures. For example, Boocock's 1995 comparison of a U.S. programme with programmes in Japan and China indicates a distinct difference in the importance that Asians place on group life. In Japan, "Parents send their children to preschool not just for childcare and not just so the children can learn to conform to the demands of society, but more to facilitate the development of a group-oriented, outward-facing sense of self" (Boocock 1995).

There is a great need for more studies from the Majority World that collect the hard data which speaks so loudly and which also undertakes more qualitative analysis of what dynamics underpin the data. What is it that is really making the difference?



Low cost programmes can provide quality learning and development opportunities.

Interestingly, some studies suggest that ECCD programmes yield long-term benefits regardless of the level of support in school, and even when the quality of schooling is low.¹⁸ The highly regarded Abecedarian study (1999) mentioned earlier in this article, using a two by two crossover design, looked at not only programme children and a control group, but also at the effects of intensive supports during the first three years of school. Researchers concluded at the fifteen year point that the ECCD programme had been almost as effective alone (in terms of children's achievement) as combining it with the enhanced primary school experience, and was definitely more effective than the primary school enhancement alone. This is an interesting finding that has not received adequate attention. From a pure investment point of view, it argues for greatly increased resources to be allocated to ECCD programmes.

Barnett (1998) points out that even when the quality of schooling is poor, the persistence of the benefits of ECCD is consistent with our understanding of the active role children play in their own learning. A child who enters school better prepared is likely to do better even without subsequent support. It is interesting that those studies that have compared more formal didactic instruction and active learning approaches have tended to find high achievement in the early primary years among the didactic programme children,

while the children involved in programmes emphasizing more active learning continue to show a wider range of gains over a long period.¹⁹

Van der Gaag and Tan (1998) conclude from analysis of their data that well-targeted ECCD programmes cost less—and produce more dramatic and lasting results—than education investments at any other level.

Many of the studies that have looked at this—the Turkey study cited above being a notable exception—have focussed more on centre-based programmes, albeit emphasizing the importance of parental involvement in predicting success. However as Carneiro and Heckman point out, “families are just as important, if not more important, than schools in promoting human capital” (2003).

The Challenges We Face in the 21st Century

Why Isn't More Happening?

This section will provide an overview of just some of the challenges, influential factors, and reasons why we have not managed to attract more recognition and pull in more investment for ECCD. It also touches on some of the issues programmes face as they expand. It looks, therefore, at a hierarchy of challenges:

- Macro-economic realities
- Failure to understand the significance of attention to young children for human development and poverty reduction
- Failure to reach the most disadvantaged children
- Practical problems in delivering integrated services
- Difficulty in getting the balance right—building on the strengths of families and communities, and at the same time addressing issues or providing services

It is followed by a section that examines some strategies, in addition to the ones already described in earlier sections, which might help us to more successfully position young children and families within the international agenda.

MACRO-ECONOMIC REALITIES

Many of the answers to why more isn't happening for young children are enmeshed in global macro-economic trends that together conspire to marginalize social services. Despite the potential that globalization offers for the dispersion of knowledge and wealth, it appears in fact to be increasing the gap between rich and poor. Economic growth has failed to reduce poverty in most nations.²⁰ More and more children are being born into poverty. Structural adjustment programmes have resulted in tremendous spending constraints. These have had dire consequences for the poor, especially poor children, because of the cuts in social spending. Loans that were meant to lift countries out of poverty have instead dragged them further into debt. In the poorest nations, money that is needed for education and health is spent on debt repayment. Many countries spend more on debt servicing than on basic social services. For example, in Tanzania nearly 50% of the budget goes to external debt and 10% to social services. Debt relief (the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative) has progressed slowly.



Azerbaijan: UNICEF/H097-0858/Roger Lemoyne

Basic social services, essential for poverty reduction, are often not translated into increased investment.

According to UNICEF (2002), little attention is given to the aspects of poverty that most affect children (e.g., lack of access to basic social services), although these are essential for poverty reduction. International development aid continues to decline in real terms.²¹ The share given to social services remains small. Within that, how well are children's priorities taken into account? For ECCD programmes to be successful requires the commitment of governments to allocate sufficient resources to fund basic social services, and it requires donor agencies to do the same. There is much critical work being done to better understand the multi-dimensional nature of poverty (and its many non-monetary aspects, including lack of access to education and health services, social exclusion etc.). While there is increasing recognition of the central importance of basic social services in the fight against poverty, this has often not translated into increased budgets.²² The 20/20 initiative is an agreement between donors and recipient countries requiring both parties to allocate 20% to social services. In reality, few countries invest the amounts needed in social services and few donors direct more than 10% of their aid budget to these services.

The macro-economic factors account for a great deal of the failure to provide adequate supports to young children. But within existing government and donor social services budgets, why is the percentage allocated to services benefitting young children so low?

FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ATTENTION TO YOUNG CHILDREN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION

In many parts of the Majority World care and education during the early years continue to be viewed almost exclusively as the responsibility of the family, with little support from government beyond a strictly limited health service. A large proportion of formal and informal ECCD programmes are operated by NGOs. In most countries governments are not concerned legally with education support at the preschool level.²³ The fact is that many governments and major donors pay little attention to young children. While "poverty reduction" may be repeated like a mantra in policy discussions, there is often lack of attention to the aspects of poverty that most affect children—and this is at its most extreme when it comes to young children. There is little understanding of the significance of attention to the early years from an economic and social development perspective. The significance of ECCD as a key strategy in, for example, achieving Education for All or the Millennium Development Goals does not receive adequate recognition and investment.

Some of the most commonly cited benefits of early childhood development programmes relate to children's ability to participate successfully within the formal education system: lower drop-out and repetition rates, higher levels of overall achievement, etc. These are clearly benefits not only to the individual child but also to the system, in terms of reducing education costs by increasing efficiency. It is ironic therefore that a commonly encountered view is that early childhood provision is somehow a luxury, a bit frivolous in view of the "more pressing need" for primary education services. Basically, where resources are limited, young children are the first to lose out. And yet all the evidence should point us the other way. Ignoring the needs of young children is shortsighted and is guaranteed to result in problems later on. Conversely, positive early experiences and opportunities provide lasting benefits to both children and their society as a whole.

FAILURE TO REACH THE MOST DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

Those programmes that do exist are, in the main part, failing to reach the very children they should be targeting. Therefore, ECCD is not perceived in many quarters as relevant to social reconstruction efforts and does not receive the level of investment that we have demonstrated it deserves. As Myers (2000) points out in his thematic study prepared for the Dakar Education for All Conference, "Children that are better off economically and socially are more likely to be enrolled than children from families with few resources and/or that are part of groups discriminated against socially."

Sample surveys conducted with UNICEF support in forty-eight countries using Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS2) found marked inequities according to parents' income levels, maternal education, and whether or not parents lived in a town.²⁴ The ECCD figures are a reflection of wider disparities in access to social services. In many instances the richest fifth of the population receives, on average, twice as much support in health and education as the poorest fifth.

In Chile ECCD enrollment was found to be more than double for children in the wealthiest fifth of the population than enrollment for children from the poorest fifth. (Chile was the only country to disaggregate EFA report ECCD enrollment figures by income levels.) Household data from Brazil found that enrollment amongst the richest 10% of the population is 56%. For children from the poorest 40% it is less than half that—at 24%. As Young (2003) states, "Rich' children receive a disproportionate share of public expenditures," despite the fact that all Brazilian children have the same constitutionally mandated access to free preschool education.

UNESCO's December 2003 policy brief examines the issue of equal access to early childhood care and



Kazakhstan: UNICEF/H097-0484/Maggie Murray-Lee

education, looking at information from Mexico, Botswana, Vietnam, and Brazil. Children from families where parental education is lower are less likely to access ECCD programmes for 3–5 year-olds. Low income has the same effect. For example, in Mexico 22% of low-income families interviewed in Mexico City and Chiapas were able to send their children to formal ECCD programmes, as opposed to 58% of higher income families. In Botswana the comparable figures were 10% and 35%.

As the UNESCO 2003 brief points out, inequalities in access to care are not confined to formal provision. There were critical social class differences in access to informal care also. Higher income families were much more likely to have paid adults assisting them with childcare while the parents worked. Parents with lower incomes and less education were the most likely to have to leave their children in the care of other children (33% in Botswana) or to bring them to work (53% in Mexico) in what were frequently unsafe settings.

Given the rapid increase in many countries of private, for-profit ECCD provision, usually serving the better off, the lack of targeted public provision can widen the gap between rich and poor, "situating children from poorer families at a major disadvantage

for success in school compared to children from higher income levels" (Mingat and Jaramillo 2003).

This is not just a children's issue and not just a developing country issue. Toynbee's June 6, 2003 article in the UK's *Guardian* newspaper draws on new research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that captures the frantic struggle and endless journeys of British mothers trying to combine work and childcare. She speaks of women's "right to survive while working and bringing up children at the same time." She also points out, "if men had to do this every day there would be a sudden shift in priorities."

DIFFICULTY DELIVERING INTEGRATED SERVICES: PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

Early childhood services do not fall neatly into any one sector. The needs and indivisible rights of young children span the areas of health, nutrition, safe environments, psychosocial development, and learning. Even when the will is there, the very inclusivity of ECCD can make it confusing. As the responsibility of many, providing services can too easily become the responsibility of no one. Governments and donor agencies alike tend to be oriented sectorally, and government departments or ministries tend to be organized vertically. Comprehensive development frameworks are needed to integrate the vision of policy-makers and to coordinate action on the ground.

There is now a good deal of pressure on governments to take a holistic approach. And while the

overall frameworks should indeed be looking at the whole child, international agencies might do better to acknowledge that ministries ARE sectoral. There has perhaps been too much pressure for ECCD projects at the level of implementation (and especially the ECCD centres) to do everything.

DIFFICULTY IN GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT—BUILDING ON THE STRENGTHS OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES, AS WELL AS ADDRESSING ISSUES OR PROVIDING SERVICES

When countries start to really expand ECCD programmes, they often tend to equate ECCD with formal programmes (especially preschools), instead of valuing and encouraging non-formal, family and community-based, and community-owned initiatives. An important point, stressed by Myers and others, is that we don't expect or want ECCD to be "delivered" primarily in formal settings. It occurs through natural interactions in homes and should continue to do so. Many child development programmes around the world fail to recognize and respect families' and communities' achievements and resourcefulness in raising their children, often against extraordinary odds. They use a deficit model emphasizing a professional's view of what people lack and stressing the need for educating parents.

It is not helpful to romanticize the way families and communities operate. There are issues to be addressed and we recognize that families face very real



ECCD includes family, non-formal, community-owned and community-based initiatives.

constraints. However, we want to ensure that a flexible range of supports is available to families and communities that will strengthen their abilities to support their children's overall development. In working toward this, there is a need to build more on the positive and on working collaboratively with families and communities.

Meeting the Challenges

How can we effectively respond to these challenges in getting adequate attention to young children? What does it make the most sense for us to focus on? These are big questions and we will be very selective in looking at only a few areas, endeavouring to be very practical in making suggestions. We will start with the larger more systemic issues and then move into a few comments and immediate, concrete suggestions.

USE HOLISTIC POLICY AND PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

As a country seeks to identify ways to expand ECCD programmes it is entering into a process of 1) assessing the situation of young children and determining what is already being done to support families and young children, and 2) looking at ways to strengthen and supplement these supports.

A child rights framework offers an integrated way of conceptualizing responses to young children. It keeps the whole child firmly at the centre—but of necessity is concerned with all levels of society.

A child rights framework is also an important tool for guiding the development of ECCD policy, planning, and the establishment of monitoring frameworks to assess progress in meeting obligations to young children at different levels (family, community, local institutions, district, provincial, and national). Many of the indicators are the same as those used for example in PRSPs, and it is helpful to delineate this linkage for decision-makers who may not understand the relevance of ECCD to broad-based development issues. Such frameworks are used in a number of countries. The framework that was developed in Nepal is one of a number of country case studies conducted under the auspices of the Consultative Group.²⁵

For such frameworks to be effective a strong central coordinating body should include senior government representatives. Representatives of NGOs, who play such a key role in many countries, should also be part of the group. The Ministry officials have responsibility for mainstreaming young child rights in their own ministries as part of a coordinated whole.

TARGET PROVISION TO MAKE SURE THAT THE DISADVANTAGED ARE INCLUDED

One aspect of making effective use of limited resources is targeting—making sure that the children who will benefit most (i.e., the disadvantaged) are

reached. While we may wish to see free early childhood services for every child, this commitment should initially be targeted where resources are constrained.

Reaching ALL children means working to ensure that the most disadvantaged are included.

We need to use evidence, both local and international, such as Boocock and Larner's 1998 review of long-term outcomes of ECCD programmes, which cites the growing body of evidence from developing nations, showing the effectiveness of cost-effective interventions targeted at disadvantaged groups in addressing some of the adverse effects of poverty and discrimination. As Birdsall (1999) observes "The poorer the families are, and the more unequal the society is, the greater the need there is for governments to channel public resources to ECCD interventions that can stop the intergenerational transmission of poverty which undermines the development of any nation."

We must persuade people of the costly consequences for children's health, development, and education in situations where we do not reach the disadvantaged. The UNESCO brief cited above suggests establishing partnerships with and mandates on the private sector through social security systems. It also emphasizes the importance of direct public provision and public subsidies that can reach children whose parents work in both the formal and informal sectors.

Countries' policies make a big difference. In Vietnam, active public sector efforts have both increased the number of families being served and decreased disparities. In Ho Chi Minh City, 57% of low-income families had access to ECCD programmes, only five percentage points less than the higher-income families. Cuba's programmes reach 98% of the population with dramatic positive results for children's academic performance. "Whatever mechanisms are chosen, public support—both from country policy makers and global ones is urgently needed to decrease inequities" (UNESCO 2000).

It is important to remember that targeting the most disadvantaged takes a really focussed effort. For example, even though Save the Children's Siraha programme was for poor villagers, and even though there were financial concessions available for the poorest, they (the *dalits*) remained under-represented until very focussed efforts were made to increase their numbers. Targeting the most disadvantaged doesn't just happen by making a programme available.

ENCOURAGE FLEXIBLE IMPLEMENTATION, RECOGNIZING SECTOR REALITIES

As mentioned above, there is pressure on governments to take a holistic approach. And while the overall frameworks should indeed be looking at the whole

India: UNICEF/HQ00-0665/Roger Lemoyne



Services and supports need to converge at the level of the child.

child, international agencies might do better to acknowledge that ministries ARE sectoral and that what matters is that children have access to services and supports. Rather than always pushing for multi-sectoral integrated projects, we need to also recognize that it is fine if, for example, a child:

- Participates in an ECCD centre operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. The centre may have an educational orientation and may offer a range of learning opportunities for children. Attention is paid to children's hygiene and health awareness
- Is referred both for preventative health care and sick care to the Ministry of Health's local health post
- Is linked to local nutrition interventions where they exist

The point is that all these services do not need to be delivered under one roof. Services need to converge at the level of the child, not necessarily at the institutional level. If it works to have a fully integrated service, great. If it doesn't, and it doesn't in most developing countries because it is complicated to organize, that is fine too. What is crucial is that the diverse sectors have ways to communicate and support each other's work, rather than competing for resources and control over what happens for young children.

For example, in many countries, ECCD centres for 3–5 year-olds have their closest connection to the primary schools. Often, if they are operated as a partnership between the government's education department, NGOs, and local communities, there is a tremendous effort to keep costs low so that government can continue expanding provision as part of the Basic Education system. To insist on a feeding component (which often accounts for approximately 40% of the operating costs) as part of the budget would be likely to decrease the Ministry of Education's interest, unless complementary support from, for example, the World Food Programme or the Ministry responsible for nutrition could also be tapped.

FOSTER APPROACHES WHICH BUILD ON STRENGTHS AND WORK IN GENUINE PARTNERSHIPS

A key role for ECCD programmes is to re-enforce existing positive child-rearing practices and the self-esteem of parents and caregivers so that they view themselves as effective providers and supporters for their children. Tapping into the family and cultural stream in which children are nurtured supports and builds on parental strengths. One of the Consultative Group's contributions over the years has been an emphasis on approaches that acknowledge the subtle processes of child development and that build on families' achievements. As the drive for "services" and state involvement gains momentum these subtle and contextual processes of children's development and learning in the natural environment of the home must not be forgotten. These natural, informal supports for children's development are a crucial resource.

More contextual knowledge of children's realities will allow us to inform and encourage the development of broader-based ECCD approaches that take account of both cultural values and the need to equip children for a rapidly changing world. All children have the same rights but there is no one right way to support early childhood development. Policy and programme decisions need to be made in collaboration with families and communities in order to be relevant, affordable, and jointly owned. The good intentions of government as they expand services are laudable and should be acknowledged. However, government cannot do it all. Family and community members are also duty bearers and offer indispensable and complementary contributions towards realizing a government's desire to ensure a good start for all children.

Make our Advocacy More Effective

Within all of the strategies for addressing challenges a connecting thread is making our advocacy more effective. We will therefore now look, in a little more depth, at some of the ways we may be able to do this.²⁶ Advocacy is the deliberate process of

influencing those who make decisions. It is action aimed at changing policies, positions, and practices, often aimed at governments, institutions, and organizations.

Feny de los Angeles-Bautista (2003) concludes that, "our overarching advocacy goal is getting young children on the social agenda and making sure they receive the care they are entitled to." To help reach this goal within all our countries, there are a myriad of different objectives which need to be achieved from community to national level—from getting the health post staffed, to getting remuneration increased for ECCD personnel, to getting government support for expanded or more targeted ECCD provision, to getting a national ECCD policy in place and then ensuring its implementation in reality. There is also much to be done to influence international development agencies. We need to be selective and choose a reasonable number of change objectives to work on at any one time.

PROVIDE LOCAL HARD EVIDENCE AND MORE ACCESSIBLE STUDIES

While one might say that the evidence is overwhelming in its support of ECCD interventions, the fact is that there are plenty of people who still need convincing. Being able to use different arguments is key to our success. For some, the returns on economic investment provide the most convincing arguments. It is the local hard evidence that convinces politicians and bureaucrats to embrace ECCD.

We need to:

- Make better use of existing studies, presenting them (both globally and locally) in more easily comprehensible formats that relate specifically to the interest of the particular group we are trying to influence
- Conduct more local studies (see case study on page 46 which describes the ECD leadership development programme of the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), and which includes as one of its goals to increase the research and knowledge base that is derived by regional leaders in their own context) which present the findings in everyday language that is immediately compelling. Indeed we need to become much better at producing different versions of the same study, such as:
 - the full study where the detailed findings are presented, as well as the methods used so that findings can be scrutinized for reliability and validity
 - the short version for policymakers highlighting the key aspects that will be of interest to them
 - targeted versions aimed at specific interest groups. For example, if a report is for a Ministry of Education, it should include the



Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway/D. Mckenzie

impact on education indicators, the fit with existing priorities and commitments, implications for future policy and programmes, and ways in which these can be affordable

- a donors' version, making it clear how our work fits with donors' concerns and priorities
- a version for local government officials

The reaction of government and donors to the Nepal study (and its various summaries), which is described in the case study on page 53, is proof of the power of local data for advocacy. The Ministry of Education has committed to supporting a tenfold increase in the number of ECCD centres to 45,000 reaching over one million disadvantaged young children by 2009. Indeed it is powerful motivation for us also to have such dramatic proof of the impact of such programmes in addressing entrenched education and social justice issues.

In addition to studies demonstrating programme impact (such as the evaluation of PLAN International's early childhood programmes in Bangladesh: see case study on page 51) policymakers need information that will allow them to judge which interventions are most beneficial and still affordable. They need to know how various factors influence a programme's effectiveness. This ongoing research and evaluation is essential both to improving programming and to making the most effective use of limited resources.

FIGURE 1—ADVOCACY SPIRAL



Working for Change in Education, Save the Children (UK) 2000.

**PLAN OUR ADVOCACY—
TAKING INTO ACCOUNT WHO WE
NEED TO INFLUENCE AND WHAT
THEY CARE ABOUT**

The advocacy spiral above (Save the Children 2000) charts a step-by-step process for effective advocacy, taking it from the aim (what we are trying to change) through analysis, planning, implementation, assessment of progress, and adjustments. While effective advocacy needs to be planned it is also a highly responsive process—requiring an ability to adapt to changes in the situation and to create or seize opportunities.

Much of the advocacy process spiral is reminiscent of general project planning. The difference is the key emphasis on “who.” Government is perhaps the most

common target for advocacy work, but before it is possible to embark on serious advocacy with government it is necessary to analyse how and where decisions are made throughout various systems.

Charting the Advocacy Cycle

Critical to success is identifying the people who have the power to make change happen, and identifying who and what influences them.

We need to understand the agendas of the key players (both the key decision-makers and those who influence them). If they have no direct interest in the issue, what then, are they interested in? How might it be possible to utilize this to encourage them to pay attention?

INFLUENCING POLICY DECISIONS—A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Let's say your organization has been supporting a very effective ECCD programme for remote, under-served populations in Tillinewa (an imaginary country which many of you will be familiar with!). You have, in a deliberate collaboration with the Ministry, conducted a study that demonstrates improvements over a multi-year period in a whole host of child and family level indicators. In Tillinewa most government supported ECCD programmes tend to serve urban children, and especially those urban children who aren't particularly disadvantaged. You want to influence the Minister of Education to make two key decisions: to increase the ECCD budget and to target disadvantaged communities in rural areas. However, there are some key challenges to address:

- The Minister does not know much about ECCD and he regards it as unimportant and unconnected to primary education. Like most politicians he wants immediate recognition for his achievements. His main concerns are re-election and getting the next World Bank loan for basic education. He has come under criticism as primary education indicators are very poor and have barely improved over the last three years and this is getting a lot of attention. He is influenced by media coverage and by what the World Bank says.
- The media also do not know or care much about ECCD. They are interested in circulation rates.
- The World Bank personnel in Tillinewa are concerned about poverty reduction, primary education indicators, benefit-to-cost analyses, and timely disbursements.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES?

You know your objectives. But your explanation of why these objectives are important may be presented differently for different audiences reflecting their concerns and interests. Perhaps you do not have immediate access to the Minister so you start with the media and the World Bank. Below are just a handful of the possibilities:

- Media work is one of the best ways of influencing public opinion. Provide the media with good human-interest stories combined with easy-to-read research results emphasizing the impact on disadvantaged children's enrollment and achievement levels when they enter primary school.
- Be familiar with the details of the policies and priorities of the World Bank in country and globally, and adapt your message to highlight its relevance to poverty reduction and primary education. Identify key individuals who can convey and advocate for your message within the organization.
- As work progresses it may suggest other opportunities. For example, the position of the World Bank might be influenced by a key think-tank on education that also feeds key policy documents to the media. It may be helpful to work with this group—part of broadening the coalition.

- Co-host (if possible with the Ministry of Education) a national seminar bringing together many different groups including government representatives, NGOs, UN, academics, and the development banks to explore the links between good quality early childhood experiences and primary school outcomes. Release the study (formal release is made by a senior Ministry representative with a commentary from a prestigious academic or the World Bank) at the seminar and hold a press conference at which you provide a short clear summary. (Remember: your organization's main interest might be, for example, the dramatic effects the ECCD programme has had on children's confidence, communication skills, and enthusiasm for learning, and how parents are now engaged with their children's overall development. You know this will stand them in good stead throughout life. By relating these to achievements in the more traditional education agenda it will also be possible to engage people with broader ideas).
- By now the Minister should be interested in meeting! Ahead of the meeting be sure he has a short summary which catches the attention and quickly communicates key points regarding public demand, impact on primary education indicators, addressing poverty issues, and affordability. A useful rule of thumb suggested in *Working for Change in Education* is that the reader should be able to register these messages in the five minutes before a meeting!

Note: Often we won't be targeting the most powerful people or the policy-makers. In many contexts a change in what young children actually experience is not necessarily achieved through influencing policy. Supportive policies may be in place but what happens in practice may be almost completely unconnected with policy. The problem becomes one of working to ensure implementation. In that case, it is necessary to identify who the key decision-makers are at different levels that influence implementation.

Whoever we are trying to influence, it is important that we are able to speak with authority. To gain authority requires having both legitimacy and credibility. We enhance our legitimacy by representing a broad or important section of people and groups. It is important to create alliances and build broad collaboration with others with similar objectives. Credibility comes from being able to demonstrate that we know what we are talking about: having information about the current situation, speaking from both direct practical experience and sharing findings of research studies or evaluations—i.e., providing evidence that the solutions being proposed have a good chance of succeeding. Different audiences respond to different kinds of evidence. Some people want statistics; others are more influenced by personal testimonies and stories. This is a critical factor in how we present our message. Whatever we present, we need to be inspirational and articulate.



Conclusion

There will always be something more immediate, there will never be anything more important.

We have to convince society that the well-being of people, starting with the youngest people, is a central concern to all, including both government and civil society. Focussing on young children is at the centre of strengthening the circles that make up a society (de los Angeles 2003). From both a rights and investment perspective, the positive influences of ECCD resonate throughout a society and often reinforce each other. Investments are often made to address social justice issues and attention to addressing exclusion ensures the highest return on investment, as emphasized by all the economic analyses.

The benefits of early childhood development programmes are being increasingly documented through research and economic analysis, and experience and research are proving that ECCD is valuable, not only in terms of responding to the immediate needs of children and their families, but also over time in terms of children's ability to contribute to the community and participate in society. Perhaps the most compelling argument in favour of ECCD is that failure to attend to the youngest children perpetuates social and economic disparity and waste of social and human potential: "Gross underinvestment in children and their mothers, especially those in the poorest households and with the least education, is one of the

most potent 'engines' driving the growing inequality within and between nations" (Iglesias and Shalala 2002).

We began this article by pointing out the massive nature of our task. Getting the youngest children on the international agenda as a starting point will take a sustained effort in many arenas. A powerful argument that makes sense to most audiences is that you don't build a house starting with the second floor. Similarly, the world cannot begin its attention to children once they reach school, cannot ensure health without working with the age group in which the foundations of health are laid, can't hope for peace if its youngest children experience daily conflict and violence, and can't have liveable cities unless we start by considering what it means to create a world fit for young children.

As people ask us: "What does ECCD have to do with literacy, or poverty reduction or economic reconstruction?" we have to be prepared to reply and also to reverse that question. What do the concerns of adults in the various sectors have to do with young children? What needs to happen *early* if they wish for an educated, democratic, participatory populace to fulfil their particular objectives? Rights, education, peace, social infrastructure, and sane governance of nations all rest on the foundation of the youngest human beings, who will need to achieve their full positive human potentials if a world fit for children (and adults) is to be achieved.



ENDNOTES

1. See Robert Myers (2002), *From Early Child Development to Human Development*, ed. Mary Young. Washington D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.
2. Committee on the Rights of the Child within the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland.
3. A collaboration between a number of international and national NGOs, Akhtar et al. 1999. Parenting Program Handbook; Bangladesh Child Development unit.
4. Thapa, Pradhananga, Dandey et al. 2001. Home-based Programme Facilitators' Handbook. Seto Gurans/National Child Development Services, UNICEF/Save the Children.
5. De los Angeles-Bautista, Feny. "Philippines: early childhood care and development at the heart of community development." *Early Childhood Matters*. October 2001, no. 99, Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, The Netherlands.
6. See Evans, Judith (2000). "Working with Parents and Caregivers to Support Children from Birth to Three Years of Age." *Coordinators Notebook*, no. 24.
7. See Barnett 1998.
8. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project (EPPE 1997–2003) is Europe's first major longitudinal study into the effects of preschool education on children's developmental outcomes (intellectual and social/behavioural) at the start of primary school. More than 3000 children were assessed at the start of preschool (around the age of 3), their developmental progress was monitored until they entered school, and then for a further three years until the end of Key Stage 1. The study applied an 'educational effectiveness' design to establish the factors related to children's progress, followed by intensive case studies to 'un-pack' effective practices. For key findings, see http://k1.ioe.ac.uk/schools/ecpe/eppe/eppe/eppepdfs/eppe_brief2503.pdf The EPPE 3–11 study (2003–2008) provides a five-year extension to EPPE 1997–2003. EPPE 3–11 follows the same cohort of children to the end of Key Stage 2 (age 11). For more information, see: <http://k1.ioe.ac.uk/schools/ecpe/eppe/index.htm>.
9. See Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart (1993). *Significant benefits: The HighScope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Press; Kellaghan and Greaney (1993).
10. See Van der Gaag and Tan (1998).
11. Heckman (1999) "Policies to foster human capital"; NBER Working paper series no. 7288; Paes de Barro and Mendonca (1999) "Costs and benefits of preschool education in Brazil"; Institute of Applied Economic Research.
12. Based on the declaration, UNDP has worked with other UN departments, funds and programmes, The World Bank, the IMF and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on a concise set of goals, numerical targets and quantifiable indicators to assess progress. The UN General Assembly has approved these as part of the Secretary-General's Millennium Roadmap.
13. See *Coordinators Notebook*, no. 21, 1997, Transitions and Linkages.
14. See CN no. 21, and discussion of Save the Children Transition Initiative in CN no. 27, 2003 (pp. 74–5).
15. Karoly et al. 1998. *Investing in Our Children: What we know and don't know about the costs and benefits of early childhood interventions*; RAND, Santa Monica; Ramey et al. 2000. *Persistent Effects of Early Intervention on High Risk Children and their Mothers*; *Applied Developmental Science* 4.
16. Upadhayay (1995) from ICD Conceptual Framework.
17. Barnett and Boocock (1998) *Early Care and Education for Children in Poverty: Promises, Programs, and Long-term Results*, Albany, SUNY Press; Lazar, I. and R. Darlington (1982), "Lasting Effects of Early Education: A Report from the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, no. 195; Schweinhart et al. (1993).
18. Palmer (1983) "The Harlem Study: effects of type of training, age of training and social class," *As the Twig is Bent: Lasting Effects of Preschool Programs*. Hillsdale, NJ: Consortium for Longitudinal Studies. Johnson and Walker (1991) "Final report of an evaluation of the Avance parent education and family support program." Report submitted to the Carnegie Corporation. San Antonio, TX: Avance.

19. Powell (1986) "Research in review: Effects of program models and teaching practices." *Young Children* 4; Schweinhart and Weikart (1997).
 20. Minujin, Vandemoortele, and Delamonica (2002). *Economic Growth, Poverty and Children in Environment and Urbanization* 14, no. 2; IIED.
 21. See for example: www.realityofaid.org.
 22. See Dasgupta (1993); The World Bank (2000).
 23. See Myers (2002) in Ch. 10, "Role of the private sector in Early Child Development," in *From Early Child Development to Human Development*, ed. Mary Young. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
 24. UNICEF designed the MICS2 in collaboration with other partners and household data on a wide array of indicators collected by government agencies.
 25. CERID (2000). "In search of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Indicators: a contribution to the EFA Year 2000 assessment." Nepal: Tribhuvan University; CN no. 25 (2001).
 26. See also *Coordinators' Notebook*, no. 27, 2003, on Advocacy.
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Related Resources

Publications

The Importance of Caregiver-Child Interactions for the Survival and Healthy Development of Young Children. Linda Richter. 2004. *Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development (CAH), World Health Organization.* 102 pp.

This review brings together current theory as well as empirical evidence from an array of disciplines including neurophysiology, psycholinguistics, behavioural embryology and developmental psychology on the importance of caregiver-child relationships for the survival and healthy development of children. It documents the technical basis for intervening to strengthen caregiving for the young child and provides the scientific evidence of the effects of the caregiving relationship on the child's health, as well as on the child's neurophysiological, cognitive, and social development. It concludes that integrating activities to improve the caregiving relationship (e.g., sensitive and responsive interactions) is a necessary element to improving the effectiveness of health, nutrition, and education interventions for newborns and young children.

The WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development supported this review as the second in a series to guide interventions to improve the health, growth, and psychosocial development of

children, particularly those living in resource-poor settings. The first in the series is *A Critical Link: Interventions for physical growth and psychological development* (1999, WHO/CHS/CAH/99.3), available in English, French, and Russian.

To order: World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland. Tel: 41 22 791 3281. Fax: 41 22 791 4853. E-mail: cah@who.int. Website: <http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health>

Starting Early Starting Smart (SESS) *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)*

A child's development during the infant and preschool years lays a critical foundation for later growth and development. With this in mind, SESS, a partnership between the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (<http://www.samhsa.gov>) and the Casey Foundation (<http://www.casey.org>), was founded to acknowledge that it is important to target positive interventions to very young children. In short, SESS is a knowledge development initiative designed to create a new model for providing integrated behavioural health services (mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment) for young children (birth to seven years) and their families, while also serving to inform practitioners and policymakers about what works, based on a multiyear study of successful interventions and promising practices. To further the spread of knowledge, SESS has developed a few publications for early childhood practitioners, families, and policymakers. Two key publications are:

- *The SESS Story* (Starting Early Starting Smart) (Inventory Number: BKD435)

Want to know more about Starting Early Starting Smart programmes? The SESS Story is an overview of programme innovations. Content includes information about SESS services, methodology and approach, case studies, collaboration, outcome measurement, lessons learned, and a profile of each of the 12 SESS sites. One of the most promising practices and early lessons learned in SESS programs are documented in this publication.

- *Key Principles in Providing Integrated Behavioral Health Services for Young Children and Their Families: The Starting Early Starting Smart Experience* (Inventory Number: BKD423)

This publication describes the core components of the SESS programmes. Contents include the philosophical principles and underpinnings, program implementation, building an intervention approach, and identification of what works. This is a very useful guide for anyone planning the integration of behavioral health services (substance abuse prevention and treatment and mental health) in early childhood and primary health care settings.

To order: <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/promos/sess/publications.asp>

Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships, Working Paper #1. *National Scientific Council on the Developing Child.* 2004.

This first in a series of Working Papers documents the importance of nurturing and stable relationships with caring adults in the community and calls attention to the science-policy gap.

The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child is a new multidisciplinary collaboration comprising many of the nation's leading scientists in early childhood and early brain development. Its mission is to bring sound and accurate science to bear on public decision making affecting the lives of young children.

The Council is housed at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University.

For an online version of this document, go to: http://www.developingchild.net/papers/paper_1.pdf. For more on the Council and a wide range of information on early childhood development, please see: www.developingchild.net.

Toolkits

Planning for the Delivery of Early Childhood Care and Development Services: A Simulation Model. Alain Mingat and Adriana Jaramillo, *The World Bank*, May 2003.

Competition for resources among sectors in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals is a key challenge for many countries. The provision of Early Childhood Care and Education services is one alternative that can help in the achievement of four of the MDG Goals: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Reduce child mortality; Achieve universal primary education; and Promote gender equality and empower women. Expanding ECCD services especially for children from disadvantaged households, is also one of the Dakar Education for All Goals. In an environment where resources can be scarce, adequate planning becomes a key element in decision making for resource allocation. Early Childhood Care and Education implies provision of integrated health, education and social protection services, which means that the resources needed to meet this goal will come from both health and education budgets.

The financial simulation as described is intended to help countries design their National Strategy for ECCD by bringing its financial implications into the policy discussion. It is useful to note that the model is to be used for countries that anticipate progress in coverage from where they currently stand and where they expect to be in 2015.

http://www.ecdgroup.com/library_launch.asp



Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway/UK

Case Studies

Positioning ECCD

ECCD is often noted as a poverty alleviation or strategy. But what do we know about poverty and the experience of poverty? Christian Children's Fund (CCF) recently conducted an in-depth study of what poverty means to children, from their perspective, in order to broaden and strengthen CCF's work. Some of the results of the study are presented in the first case study. The second case study, Tanzania's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) II, describes a consultation process facilitated by the Tanzania ECD Network and includes key ECD recommendations for inclusion, suggesting ways forward toward reducing poverty and improving the quality of life for infants and young children in Tanzania.

One of the key issues in moving the early childhood agenda forward is the need for greater in-country capacity to take leadership in the development of national ECCD policies and programmes. An innovative strategy in post-secondary education is being provided by the University of Victoria in Canada through the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU). The characteristics and some of the outcomes of this approach to

capacity building are reported on in this third case study.

Within a child rights approach to ECCD, a variety of dimensions of a child's development need to be addressed. One of these is a child's right to an identity. In the fourth case study, there is a description of how Birth Registration has become a focal point for action in the West and Central regions of Africa. The case study describes the outcome of a recent regional conference on Birth Registration, with a detailed description of specific activities within Guinea Bissau.

Finally, within the lead article, Caroline Arnold places emphasis on the use of local data as the basis for understanding local experience and creating local programmes. Examples of how this has been done are presented in the report of an evaluation of Plan International's programme in Bangladesh and in the description of the Nepal study—highlighted in the lead article—that is presented in the final case study.

Additional studies can be seen in the pdf version of this issue of the *Coordinators' Notebook* at www.ecdgroup.com/notebook.asp.

Building a Deeper Understanding of Poverty and the Young Child

Summary of a Presentation Made at the Christian Children's Fund's Conference,
November 2003



Colombia: UNICEF/HO99-0239/Jeremy Horner

Today, despite major advances in state provision, scientific knowledge and technology, one in four babies globally is born into extreme poverty and conditions of extreme adversity. Half of the world's poorest people are children and there are more destitute babies than even before. Across the globe, the magnitude of child mortality and suffering because of poverty is overwhelming and has attracted the attention of organizations such as Christian Children's Fund (CCF) that are focussed on the protection and well-being of children in different parts of the world.

— Christian Children's Foundation 2003

In an attempt to strengthen, broaden, and deepen CCF's impact on the lives of children, the organization undertook a study to understand the cycle of poverty and to determine how CCF's work could contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty. A major strategy within the study was to canvas the views of CCF stakeholders—young people (mostly 8-20 years old), their families and communities, CCF staff, and the staff of partner organizations to ascertain their understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of child poverty and coping strategies. The study was conducted in Kenya, Belarus, Bolivia, India, Sierra Leone, and the USA.

Why study child poverty? The reasons include the fact that there is a disproportionate concentration of poverty among children, since children comprise almost half of the world's population. In addition, the costs of poverty are disproportion-

ately absorbed by children. It is also true that child poverty affects the health, well-being, and productivity of future generations, and thus society as a whole. All over the world poverty interferes with the realization of children's rights. Furthermore, children do not always have the capacity to overcome the effects of poverty.

In an attempt to get beyond understanding poverty as only "objective" physical states related to standard economic measures, the study explored the social concepts of poverty. The study provided the following definition of poverty:

Poverty is a multifaceted, dynamic, and contextualized form of adversity in which material lack interacts with and is mediated and compounded by social exclusion, inequity, and powerlessness, with multiple effects on well-being.

Who are the poor? The poor are likely to be women. Children from one-parent (mother-headed) households are likely to be poorer, less healthy, and less educated than children from two-parent families. Caste and ethnicity are also likely to contribute to poverty, as does living in a rural area (although there are extreme poverty sectors within urban areas). Child-headed households are almost always among the poor.

How do children experience poverty? There are many myths about children's experience of poverty, including some that suggest that children are not aware of being poor until they reach middle childhood. The study revealed quite the

opposite. Children at a very early age are acutely aware of their poverty; it affects them personally and plays a large part in forming their identity.

Children have a holistic understanding of poverty. While poverty impacts the material things that children have, it also affects their friendships and social status. Children are ashamed of being poor and this has an impact on their relationships with peers. Poverty leads to social exclusion and the loss of self-esteem. Poverty prevents children from accessing important resources that might help them move out of poverty.

Poverty exacerbates gender and birth order distinctions. Generally girls are worse off than boys: girls work harder and longer, and as a consequence they have less time for recreation than boys. Being the eldest daughter makes things even worse: the eldest daughter is expected to make major sacrifices for younger siblings. For boys, poverty may delay or prevent their transition to adulthood.

Where do poor people get support? Informal private sector (money lenders) and family mechanisms and resources are far more important than formal institutions in supporting people living in poverty. In addition, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and government feature play a minor role in the lives of poor people.

Some of the lessons from this research and from practical experience about development work with the poor are:

1. *There are some obstacles in providing aid for poverty eradication.*

Aid agencies seldom reach the poorest groups. It has also been found that often there is a mismatch between what poor people want and what aid organizations offer. This is largely the result of the aid agenda being driven by the agencies, not by those being served.

2. *The Aid community sees children as ultimate victims of adversity and uses this image in their fund raising.*

While there is an appeal to sponsors to provide goods and services for poor children, this approach risks disempowering and stigmatizing children, who can grow up to think of themselves as incapable of acting on their situation. The children's work in support of family survival is ignored and often seen as abusive and harmful, rather than having meaning given to the local practice. As a result of the complexity of poverty "children's projects" have neither impact on broader community processes or on the cycle of poverty within which many families live.

3. *There are appropriate ways to act on child poverty.*

Child poverty needs to be understood within the global, regional, national, sub-national and local forces that influence children's lives. It needs to be recognized that any actions that are taken have strong political connotations.

Children are not inherently vulnerable. They are not passive recipients of experience. By actively engaging in family and community processes, children increase their self-esteem and become more resilient. Activities need to be created that complement and/or reinforce assets within the family and community, strengthen coping skills, provide livelihood security, and reduce the risks to children's well-being. So, programmes for young children need to include work with families and communities and the strengthening of civil society, with a focus on strengths rather than deficits.

In essence, poverty is an overarching vulnerability. It is complex, dynamic, situation-specific, and experienced differently by adults and children. Relative poverty is as important as absolute poverty; and both material and psychosocial deprivation have an impact on the child's life course. Given this, programmes focussed on poverty reduction could well be the most effective means to implement children's rights.

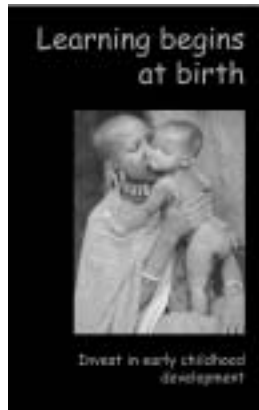
However, it is important to avoid over-simplistic conclusions about the relationship between poverty and people's capacity to support children's development. Time and again, the study found common practices that draw creatively on minimal resources. While socio-economic factors are a key influence on what happens for children in the early years, the picture is complex. In addition to socio-economic factors, childrearing practices are defined by parents' traditions, knowledge, and beliefs. Poverty reduction interweaves and balances three types of improvement in the lives of children, families, and their communities: material, organizational, and the psychosocial. Thus all three need to be addressed.

As a result of the study, CCF has developed a draft framework for understanding poverty and will continue to work on this framework until it fully reflects CCF's mission to strengthen, broaden, and deepen its impact on the lives of children.

To request a copy of CCF's Poverty Study, send an email to: VEAdams@CCFUSA.ORG

Christian Children's Foundation. 2003. Foreword, Part III *Children and Poverty, Shaping a Response to Poverty.*

Towards Improving the Quality of Life for Infants and Young Children in Tanzania: Poverty Reduction & Investing in Early Childhood Development



The real question is how to use the available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: Invest in the Very Young.

—James J. Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences, 2000.

Tanzania's vision for a nation with a high quality of life for all relies on our building resources today. In order for Tanzania to realize this development vision, we must invest in the foundation stones of the nation—the optimal growth and development of our infants and young children, in Early Childhood Development, ECD.

ECD needs to be mainstreamed and become the starting point in Government's thinking about how to build human capabilities, break cycles of inter-generational poverty, and redress socio-economic inequities.

Given the context of poverty impacting on the lives of more than 50% of Tanzania's population, the capacity of families to take the full responsibility for caring for and nurturing their young children is rapidly declining, and this is being magnified by the impact of HIV/AIDS on family coping mechanisms. Thus, in order to ensure the optimal development of infants and young children in the critical foundation years of their development, a new commitment to realising integrated multi-sectoral approaches to supporting ECCD at family, community, and institutional levels is required.

The challenge for ALL ECD stakeholders is therefore, "How can we work together to ensure that infants and young children in Tanzania, especially the disadvantaged and most vulnerable, not

only survive, but really thrive, and thereby become the 'backbone' of the nation's development?"

This case study is an outcome of consultation processes facilitated by the Tanzania ECD Network.

THE TANZANIA ECD NETWORK AND IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE FOR INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

The Tanzania ECD Network is a network of active organizations working across the integrated fields of early childhood care, development, and education.

In February 2004, the Tanzania ECD Network mobilized on the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) review process, re-convening an ECD resource team of Community Service Organisations and others to 1) support a wide consultation of ECD stakeholders at community level in all steps, 2) facilitate the PRS consultations, data collections at family and community levels, and 3) raise awareness of the critical importance of investing in ECCD for Human Resource Development.

The outcome of this process is the identification of the challenges to ECD for families and communities, and concrete ECD Recommendations and Outcomes, for community up to the national level (see table on page 42).

TABLE 1. ECD RECOMMENDATIONS: To improve the quality of life for infants and young**THE CHALLENGES TO ECD**

- ECD is not yet adequately defined in the Tanzanian context
- There is a need for reliable, comprehensive data re: ECD, & ECD HIV/AIDS
- Inadequate support for children with disabilities & their families
- There is little evidence that existing ECD data is informing planning
- There is evidence of child abuse
- Increase in child labour due to poverty
- Lack of serious involvement of, and support for, community ECD resource people in planning & management processes
- Conflicting ECD policies and guidelines are indicative of sectoral focussed ECD planning

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- There is limited public awareness of the critical importance of the early years in human capacity development; therefore there is no prioritization in planning and public investment in the critical early years and poverty reduction planning
- Lack of clarity about what 'ECD' actually is, makes planning appropriate ECD interventions extremely difficult
- Community level support services are not building on existing community efforts/strengths, knowledge and resources

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 2

Raise awareness at all levels, that the early years (conception to age 8) are the foundation years for sustainable human resource development, and therefore, poverty alleviation and the development of the nation:

- Family & Community
- National Government
- Local Government
- Civil Society

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- ECD service provision and training opportunities are limited, uncoordinated and often inappropriate, due to a lack vision and understanding of holistic approaches to ECD
- Institutional capacity in integrated approaches to community-based ECD support is very limited & training opportunities are minimal
- Lack of multi-sectoral coordination in ECD
- Lack of capacity development opportunities for community ECD facilitators
- Services are often inaccessible and unavailable, particularly in rural areas, for vulnerable groups including persons with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities and the very poor
- Lack of systematic and transparent mechanisms to support participatory approaches to improving ECD support re: planning, implementation, and evaluation of service provision

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 1

Comprehensive participatory research on holistic ECD (0–8 years) in the cultural, social and economic contexts of families and communities, informing planning and budgeting processes

OUTCOMES

- Quality holistic ECD defined in the cultural and social contexts of Tanzania
- Tanzania's ECD Framework articulated, defining & prioritising disadvantaged and vulnerable children, including those with disabilities and those affected by HIV/AIDS
- Planning informed by comprehensive national ECD baseline research & documentation

OUTCOMES

- ECD is clearly linked to Tanzania's poverty reduction strategies, at all levels
- ECD programmes developed, informed by local efforts/strengths
- Increased participation & commitment by all ECD stakeholders in early interventions to support disadvantaged infants and young children's holistic development, critical to preparing children for school and success in learning

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 3

Develop, resource and implement integrated, multi-sectoral ECD policies, and guidelines

OUTCOMES

- Integrated policies and guidelines for holistic ECD reflected in all child & family related sectors
- Sectoral & cross-sectoral responsibilities & commitments are clarified, including coordination of Integrated ECD support for families and communities in their ECD responsibilities
- Guidelines for partnership approaches to realizing ECD support at all levels are clarified & disseminated widely to ALL stakeholders
- Regulations for service provision programmes, staff & facilities; child protection etc, are reviewed and/or developed through participatory processes and widely disseminated

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- With the incidence of HIV/AIDS, the number of affected infants and young children is escalating
- Lack of early interventions & life opportunities for children with disabilities
- There are serious limitations in human, financial and technical resources re: support services that target vulnerable groups including those with disabilities and those affected by HIV/AIDS, and the very poor
- Human rights including children's rights are seriously undermined due to poor resourcing in all key sectors
- There is minimal ongoing support for community-based initiatives to supporting ALL infants and young children
- Lack of collaborative initiatives across government, civil society and private sector to increase poor families' access to quality holistic ECD support
- The exemption and waiver systems do not work in practice, often privileging the well to do and excluding disadvantaged and vulnerable young children & their families

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- The prevailing low status of women & cultural beliefs that limit fathers' roles in the care of their young children, impact negatively on child survival & development
- Family & community patterns are changing with changes in socio-economic status, resulting in:
 - Widening gaps between the strengths of traditional child-rearing knowledge & beliefs, and actual practices;
 - Weakening of extended family child-care support systems and community sense of shared responsibility for child-care;
 - A high demand for informal child-care support at family and community levels, in rural and urban areas—as a mutual support to women and other caregivers of grandparents and siblings
- Many girls/teenagers are dropping out of school due to pregnancy
- Child-headed households due to HIV/AIDS pandemic

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- With school entrance 'testing' and also very formal Std 1 programmes, parents are demanding similarly very formal early learning programmes rather than holistic support for their child's development & education
- Although research shows that the critical period for human development is Early Childhood; holistic support for infants and young children is not yet prioritized

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 4

Provide quality integrated ECD support services, for the most vulnerable infants and young children, including those with disabilities and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

OUTCOMES

- Dispensary & Clinics linked with community ECD initiatives and other service providers
- Cost sharing mechanisms reviewed & systems in place to ensure access to appropriate services for the most vulnerable infants and young children
- All ECD services integrated into existing activities & resources at community level
- Integrated and resourced plans for child-care support in village, ward & district planning for ALL children
- Government & private sector partnership re: quality child-care provision 'in the work place', to support women's role in the work force and to protect young children from child labour

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 5

Educate & support families & communities, in their roles as their young children's primary caregivers and first educators.

OUTCOMES

- Parenthood Education programmes included in all formal and non-formal education programmes; primary school, secondary school, COBET, Adult Education, etc.
- Increased capacity of all caregivers to support holistic ECD, including greater participation of men/fathers
- Strengthened 'family' as a core institution for socializing and fostering the potential of infants and young children
- Capacity development of service providers re: integrated ECD approaches, towards the development of partnerships re: support for sustainable community ECD initiatives

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 6

Expand the primary education system to include integrated, activity-based pre-primary programmes that support holistic view of ECD, and are actively linked with community ECD initiatives.

OUTCOMES

- Government plans in place re: support for early education and stimulation including resourcing & training
- Developmentally appropriate ECD programmes (including programmes such as pre-school and pre-primary)
- Increased support for poor families and communities re: infants' and young children's holistic development

TABLE 1. ECD RECOMMENDATIONS: To improve the quality of life for infants and young

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- There is a disregard for the rights of women, especially in their roles and responsibilities as mothers, family caregivers and income earners
- Lack of involvement of fathers in their shared responsibility for young children

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 7

Strengthening Gender Equity in childcare and family responsibilities and women in their multiple roles as mothers, family caregivers and income earners.

OUTCOMES

- Partnership approaches to supporting childcare; early education and stimulation
- Parenting education programmes & psychosocial support for mothers, given the high incidence (48%) of young women having their first child before the age of 18, and the breakdown of traditional support systems
- Implementation of economic enhancement strategies including:
 - Supportive micro-finance /credit schemes
 - Community education re: business skills including agriculture
 - Direct support systems & capacity development to cooperatives at village level, including savings and credit schemes
- Affirmative action for women re: roles in decision making at all levels

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- Marginalization of children's issues
- Lack of children's participation in informing issues that affect their lives, from involvement in decision-making at the family level, to the village level, and beyond
- Lack of accessible & appropriate/relevant social service provision; health, education, water, etc.
- Conflicting sectoral ECD related policies, guidelines, regulations, & standards have resulted in
 - Lack of consensus on what constitutes ECD
 - Confusion at service delivery level re: roles & responsibilities
 - A lack of child and community friendly initiatives

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 8

Develop strategies to increase resource allocation for infants and young children.

OUTCOMES

- ECD prioritised in national budgets across the sectors. Innovative strategies in place for public / private partnerships in resourcing ECD service provision e.g. day care provision in the work place; investment tax in support of vulnerable infants and young children; development of National Children's Trust
- Disadvantaged & vulnerable children including HIV/AIDS affected are prioritized in budget planning
- Clear & efficient mechanism/s identified and resourced re: Coordination of ECD support at all levels

Today's infants and young children will be the young adults who will inherit the fruits of Tanzania's Development Vision, 2025. Therefore what is it that we need to do now, as we review Tanzania's Poverty Reduction Strategy, in order to ensure that today's most vulnerable young children not only survive, but have equal opportunities to realise their potential, and fully participate in contributing to national prosperity? There is no time to waste. We must act NOW and invest in ECCD.

NEXT STEPS: Since the writing of this article, which was based on the first draft of the PRS II Document, the ECD and PRS Working Group, and AMANI Network have succeeded in getting ECD in the second draft of the PRS II document. During National Poverty Policy Week at the end of October, civil society stakeholders had an opportunity to celebrate their achievements and comment on the PRS II document, and share concerns and recommendations for implementation. For more updates on this process, contact Elle Hughes at ecdnet@cats-net.com and/or see Recommendations at www.ecdgroup.com/regional_networks.asp.

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- Lack of transparency (i.e. corruption) in decision-making processes, and lack of accountability for resources, is negatively impacting on quality of life for infants and young children
- Lack of strategies for participatory research, planning, implementation, monitoring, at all levels
- Lack of community level involvement in decision-making process & local resource management including;
 - Water
 - Land & Environment Issues
 - Health Care
 - Early care and education, etc.
- Guidelines and protocols for monitoring the quality of service provision across ECD related sectors are limited
- Policies are highlighting the importance of partnership approaches to improving ECD support however; implementation across public, private and non-for-profit actors is yet to be realized

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 9

Strengthen capacity in ECD from family to national level, and develop clear guidelines for partnership approaches to mobilizing concrete ECD support.

THE CHALLENGES TO ECD

- The ever-increasing spread of HIV/AIDS
- Stigmatization of HIV/AIDS affected people, including children
- Lack of counseling support for people living with HIV/AIDS
- Advocacy and sensitization campaigns do not seem to be having a positive & wide impact
- Young children are very much forgotten in relation to HIV/AIDS discussions at ALL levels

ECD RECOMMENDATION NO. 10

Prioritize support for infants, young children and their caregivers who are affected by HIV/AIDS.

OUTCOMES

- Training/capacity development of staff working across ECD support services re: appropriate support and sensitivity to ECD & HIV/AIDS, including education and psychosocial support for children affected by HIV/AIDS, their caregivers, and communities

OUTCOMES

- Institutional capacity development of all ECD related sectors
- Integrated ECD Training & Programme Guidelines, for across the early years age range, developed
- ECD guidelines and resource booklets for families, community members & service providers, supporting children's holistic development across the age range
- Strategies for supporting participatory approaches to ECD training and capacity development, including planning & feedback, developed & implemented
- Multi-sectoral ECD planning at national level realised through local government structures at district, ward & community levels, linking health, sanitation, nutrition, education, adult education, and other social programmes
- Strengthened local government structures for developing ECD capacity and resources, to support development of community-based ECD initiatives
- Community capacity development re: local resource management

- Implementation of a National ECD HIV/AIDS Information, Education, Communication programme, relevant to ALL levels, addressing:
 - HIV/AIDS & Cultural practices
 - Quality Care for Infants & Young Children
 - Benefits of raising Status of Women (high rate of infection among girls & women; dangers of early marriages & pregnancies etc.)
 - Prevention of Discrimination & stigmatization of HIV infected infants & young children & their caregivers
 - FGM, child abuse, child labour issues
 - The potential of young children to participate in addressing issues that affect them
- Innovative child-care initiatives are resourced, to ensure they are:
 - Prioritizing disadvantaged and vulnerable children, including those with special needs
 - Locally appropriate
 - Family & community-based
 - Cost effective
 - Addressing the family & community needs re: HIV/AIDS infected and affected young children
- Legal Framework in place to ensure equitable access to services and support for infants and young children who are HIV/AIDS infected and/or affected

The Early Childhood Development Virtual University

One of the primary challenges in relation to Early Childhood Development (ECD) is how to create local capacity that can provide leadership in the development of ECD policy and programmes, as well as increase the research and knowledge base that is created by regional leaders within the context of their communities. The ECDVU has created and delivered an innovative ECD leadership development programme that responds to this need. Through a combination of Web and face-to-face interactions, ECD professionals from diverse countries become ECD leaders and create an international community of learners and practice in support of child, family, and community well-being.

Some of the key characteristics of ECDVU are as follows:

COUNTERING BRAIN DRAIN: SELECTION, LEARNING, AND DEVELOPMENT IN-COUNTRY

The ECDVU uses a country-selection process that is designed to ensure only emergent leaders with deep commitments to children and to their home country participate. The starting point for the programme is the creation of a national ECD committee that identifies key intersectoral goals for young children and their families. In line with these, the committee identifies leaders and future leaders to participate in ECDVU. What this means is that ECDVU participants are *not self-selected*—they are *nominated* by the ECD country committee. Typically, ECDVU participation involves a team of three-four individuals from a country who coordinate their diverse activities and provide support to one another. Building on this deep commitment with a relevant and practical approach to country-based learning has ensured not only high programme completion rates (90%) but also high in-country continuation.

COMBINING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS: VIRTUAL AND PERSONAL

While the majority of ECDVU learning and interaction is based on a web-platform, participants and faculty meet face-to-face every six months. Long-lasting relationships are forged at these face-to-face gatherings and on-going sharing of ideas is achieved through the web—the combination represents an optimal, affordable approach to

personal interaction, capacity promotion, and network enhancement.

RESPECTING LOCAL AND EXTERNAL KNOWLEDGE: FORGING A SYNTHESIS BASED ON LIVED REALITIES

Those who have worked in international development are keenly aware that research based on a predominantly Western scientific paradigm is part of the story, but not the full story needed to move forward effectively in local development. The ECDVU is an applied programme that is respectful of many sources of knowledge, including local and lived knowledge. Without respecting such knowledge, and seeking to incorporate it into local development, sustainability will not be achieved.

Courses are context-sensitive and assignments are tailored for relevance. The ECDVU builds on a fifteen-year history of providing post-secondary education across cultures and nations through a “generative curriculum” approach that builds on local knowledge as well as on published knowledge. In addition to building on local knowledge, course requirements are linked directly to application within the context where participants are working. Throughout the delivery of the ECDVU, participants are required to ensure that *their* learning becomes the country’s learning and that ideas and expertise reach not only the most accessible, but also the least accessible.

ECDVU faculty and presenters represent the best available expertise regionally and internationally. Their role, in addition to instruction, is essentially as personal advisors to the ECD building process in-country. Through on-going communication and sharing on the Web, plus face-to-face interactions in residential seminars, personal connections are forged, as well as professional connections—a key to a sustainable community of practice.

FOSTERING COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS AND PRACTICE: NETWORKS THAT WORK

Too often networks exist in name only—they lack on-going activity and fully shared commitment. The ECDVU network emerges from a strongly shared sense of learning together and “doing” together. Over the three-year period of an

ECDVU Master's degree course of study, students interact on an on-going basis and meet face-to-face across countries at least four times. Out of this intense, cooperative learning and sharing emerge both country-level and regional-level networks that are personally and professionally driven. Such networks offer hope for sustainability and for cooperation across participating countries. One of the keys to sustaining networks is for people to have a meaningful reason for networking. In this instance, one of the links is the fact that ECDVU participants are involved in the planning for the 3rd African International Conference on ECD, to be held in Accra, Ghana, May 30–June 3, 2005.

CREATING A LITERATURE AND MAKING IT ACCESSIBLE: BEYOND ACADEMICS

One of the challenges in promoting ECD in Africa, and in many other parts of the world, is being able to access relevant literature. Insofar as much of the successful work is not published through mainstream sources (if it is published at all), creating an accessible literature is one of the objectives of the ECDVU programme. One way the ECDVU attempts to address the issue of accessibility is through the use of its Website: www.ecdvu.org. Located on this site are many of the papers and projects produced by ECDVU students, as well as useful links.

TAKING ROOT: RIPPLE EFFECTS

One of the keys to sustainable capacity building is the generation of organic growth (often described as a ripple effect)—the ideas, concepts, and practices that take root and are spread as a result of people's participation in meaningful learning activities. Within the cohort of learners that completed their degrees in 2004, the ripple effects have included:

- The creation of parent support and enrichment materials and processes in rural Eritrea
- The development and implementation of innovative community-based approaches to dealing with the impacts of HIV-AIDS in Uganda
- The use of indigenous knowledge (IK) for the planning and implementation of early childhood programmes in Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Lesotho, Eritrea, Nigeria, and The Gambia

- The development and delivery of health and nutrition training in Nigeria
- The development of ECD policy and a Plan of Action in Malawi
- The revision of national undergraduate education in Lesotho and Uganda
- The promotion of inter-and intra country consultations throughout Africa and the Middle East

MAXIMIZING RESOURCES: COST EFFECTIVENESS AS RELATED TO COMPLETION

Fees represent one facet of programme cost; completion rates another. With a 90% completion rate, the ECDVU compares favourably with any distributed education programme in any part of the world. According to a study of distance education in South Africa, arguably the most advanced in Sub-Saharan Africa, a drop-out rate of 50% is not unusual. Recent studies of distance education report that completion rates for non-formal health and rural development programmes are much lower: Kenya 43%, Uganda 11%, and Tanzania less than 4%. Quality, relevance, and commitment count.

In 2004, the ECDVU completed two pilot projects:

- A three-year, distance education Master's degree programme in Africa (ten countries participated)
- A one-year, distance education Graduate Diploma programme in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA, four countries participated)

MOVING FORWARD: WHAT NEXT?

Currently in the planning stage is the creation of another cohort of participants from Sub-Saharan Africa. This would be developed in partnership with two African universities (Chancellor College, University of Malawi, and the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana). In addition, a one-year professional development programme has been proposed by Yemen, and a Canadian Aboriginal plus Maori Indigenous programme is currently under development.

For more information refer to the ECDVU Website: www.ecdvu.org.

A Child Rights Approach to ECCD

Birth Registration—Every Child’s “Right from the Start”

Within this case study there is a description of a regional workshop on Birth Registration, held in Dakar from 23–27 February 2004. The workshop was developed in collaboration with PLAN International, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), UNICEF’s West and Central African Regional Office (WCARO), and UNICEF country offices, with the support of UNICEF Headquarters.

Birth registration—the right of all children to a name and a nationality—must not only be of prime concern to every parent, but indeed must be a top priority for all actors in society including governments, civil society, local communities, and the public and private sector. When children are registered at birth, society’s doors more readily open to a whole range of other rights, including education, health care, participation and protection as well as providing children with not only a social and cultural identity, but also with a true sense of citizenship. This is why birth registration makes up such an important component of the integrated approach for early childhood development.

Birth registration positively affects children’s lives not only during childhood, but *throughout* their entire lives. Children whose births are registered benefit in many diverse ways: registered children can enrol in school; registered children are better protected against child labour and trafficking; adolescents can more easily avoid being conscripted into early military service or avoid being forced into early marriage; young adults can seek official employment; young couples can legally marry; and adults can legally vote, apply for passports and travel beyond their country’s borders. And, as the life-cycle continues, new parents can ensure that their children’s births are also registered so their children will also have access to, and will benefit from, the same basic rights and opportunities.

Children whose births are not registered do not legally exist in official government statistics that help determine health, education, and social service policies and budgets. They are likely to face discrimination and a lack of access to basic social services like health and education. With no proof of age and identity, they may lack the most basic

protection against abuse and exploitation, and the protection they need because almost inevitably, unregistered children are the children of the poor and excluded. Lack of birth registration exacerbates their poverty and underscores their marginalization, thereby putting the most basic of rights even further beyond their reach.

Furthermore, the lack of a birth registration helps to perpetuate a vicious cycle, often rooted in poverty. For example, seventy per cent of the child soldiers in Africa have not been registered at birth, putting them outside the government system with no protection, making them prime targets for recruitment or forced conscription.

BIRTH REGISTRATION IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

In 2003, a birth registration campaign for West and Central Africa (WCAR) was launched with high visibility in Bamako, Mali on the Day of the African Child with the President of Mali. Two main objectives were to help raise awareness of the importance and value of birth registration, and, in many countries, to also help raise actual birth registration rates through innovative birth registration campaigns. Simultaneously, national campaigns were launched in each of the 24 countries, including those in emergency situations.

Following the launch of the campaign, Plan, UNFPA, and UNICEF regional and country offices, with the support of UNICEF Headquarters, organized the first Regional Conference on Birth Registration held in Dakar, Senegal in March 2004.

The conference was attended by 175 participants, including UNICEF representatives and partners, four Ministers (Senegal, Guinea, Niger, and Ghana), Department Heads, Civil Registrars, Parliamentarians, Civil Society Organizations, NGOs, Youth and Media, and Goodwill Ambassador Harry Belafonte.

Many examples of innovative experiences and interesting results were reported: 1) the success of a joint birth registration and mosquito net (impregnated with insecticide) distribution campaign in The Gambia, and 2) the access of previously unreachable children to birth registration through the use of mobile birth registration teams in Sao Tome y Principe.

A COUNTRY EXAMPLE**Birth Registration—Guinea-Bissau**

The Government of Guinea-Bissau, through the Ministry of Justice, pays special attention to the right to an identity expressed in having a name and a nationality. To ensure this, the registration of births is the accepted practice for legally recognizing a person as having a specific name and nationality. The 2000 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), a household survey undertaken by the Secretary of State for Planning and UNICEF, showed that 58% of children between zero and five years of age were not registered. The most commonly mentioned reasons for non-registration were the high cost and the long distance to a registration centre/office.

To respond to the situation, the government conducted a birth registration campaign for children between zero and ten years of age in four regions of the country. In Guinea-Bissau, there are thirty-five existing civil registries, most of which have very poor working conditions (no office supplies and equipment, old registration books, and in some cases, serious space problems). More recently, the Government has made efforts to improve the working conditions of the sectoral and regional civil registries. Three new services for Notary, Registry, and Civil Identification will soon open. At the regional level, there are preparatory activities for the reorganization of services and training of personnel and plans to create eleven more birth registration units.

Although part of the revenues of the Ministry of Justice come from birth registration, the campaign was conducted free of charge, demonstrating success in raising political commitment. Thus, birth registration became a manifestation of the Government's intention to pursue the fulfilment of the rights of the child. UNICEF supported the Government in this initiative, contributing financial and logistical support to the registration campaign. A total of 55,370 children were registered, exceeding the initial targets. The campaign has generated increasing demand of families not only for registration of children but also of parents themselves.

The participation of local youth associations and social mobilization activities—particularly broadcast radio messages—contributed to the success of the birth registration campaign. These efforts revealed the crosscutting nature of birth registration. In the Health Sector, the requirement that the majority of children must hold a vaccination card proved itself to be an important prerequisite for child registration. Given the crucial importance of this particular instrument in the identification of children and their parents, it serves the purpose of a support document to undertake legal birth registration of children.

The education system does not allow a child to enter school without a birth certificate. In practice, vaccination cards often help facilitate children's access to the four-year basic education. However, since continuing education requires the possession of a birth certificate, lack thereof has been one of the causes of school dropouts in the country.

The campaigns were equally intended to raise awareness among communities and parents on the importance of the birth registration and in many instances parents have also been registered.

The conference closed with a recommendation for offering free and obligatory birth registration for all children, aged birth-eighteen years—in all twenty-four WCAR countries by 2005. Conference participants agreed that raising awareness, establishing legal frameworks, and targeting top-level government officials were key priorities. The four Ministers worked together with the participants, coming up with several interesting advocacy proposals to improve political will.

Birth Registration exhibits from all countries were on display, each demonstrating birth registration progress reached in their respective countries. Participants also identified national priorities, for example, in Ghana, the first day of September

(2004) will be dedicated to birth registration, marking the anniversary of Ghana's first birth registration in 1912; in Mali, there will be a focus on children in need of special protection; and in Gabon, the needs of minority groups, particularly the Pygmies, will be a priority.

Based not only on the constraints identified, but also on the national priorities set up by the country delegations, a Two-Year Regional Plan of Action was presented jointly by the UNFPA, PLAN, and UNICEF Regional Offices. The main lines of action are:

- To strengthen partnership between main actors, including governments, civil society, the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS), the Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC in French), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), international NGOs, development partners, media, artists, and children's parliaments

- To technically support countries facing similar problems and constraints
- To maintain the high level of mobilization of the conference through on-going follow-up

In addition to these specific action points, the Conference has reinforced UNICEF's alliance with PLAN, UNFPA, and other members of civil

society to work together toward the realization of the rights of all children in the region.

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Evaluative Research on Preschool Initiatives of PLAN Bangladesh

Early Childhood Care for Development is starting to gain international recognition as people interested in education and health begin to recognize its importance for overall development. Universal primary education is one of the millennial goals and preparing young children for learning is an important first step.

The Early Childhood programme of PLAN Bangladesh has been operating for several years. It covers three age groups: parenting sessions for mothers of children under three years, community-based group care for children aged three and four years, and preschools for five-year-olds. For each, there is a curriculum, syllabus, set of materials, and training component. Communities have been involved in initiating and implementing the activities by means of a child-centred participatory process. By training mothers, preschool teachers, and adolescents from the community, the programme aims to enhance general awareness about child development.

Several months ago, the decision was taken to evaluate the programmes. This would allow all people involved to see where the programmes stand and where they might be improved in the future. There is no question that phenomenal progress has been made in setting up the programmes within communities, developing human resources to implement the activities, and attracting young children and their parents to participate on a daily basis. In the spirit of continuous improvement, it is necessary to look at programmes from an independent perspective and see where they stand.

As a child development researcher now working at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, I was asked to undertake the evaluation. Researchers and ECD specialists at PLAN helped to modify existing measures and pre-test them on children. During the months of October and November, 2003, twelve local research assistants collected data at three sites where PLAN implements preschool programmes. Preschools and children attending them were randomly selected, and children living in non-preschool villages were included for comparison, for a total sample of 401.

The preschool evaluation included:

- Standardized Wechsler tests of children's vocabulary, verbal reasoning, and analytic reasoning
- School readiness skills of the children, e.g., colours, math concepts, and literacy
- Social play of the children as evidenced by the Play Observation Scale
- Nutritional status of the children along with preventive health as reported by the mother
- Mothers' and fathers' understanding of child development and the stimulation received by their child
- An observational assessment of the quality of the preschool process using most of the forty-three items from the internationally known Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R), along with ten extra literacy and numeracy items from the Institute of Education in London. The Tamil Nadu (South Asian) modification of the ECERS was also applied to some preschools
- Interviews with preschool teachers and their trainers and supervisors

The main findings indicated that the preschool children had considerably higher skills related to school readiness than control children (M_s were 21.7 and 13.1, respectively out of thirty), after controlling for socio-economic and nutritional differences. Preschool children also showed better vocabularies and reasoning and more social skills. However, scores on these latter measures were generally low, and differences between the two groups were significant but small. The cognitive level of preschool play among programme children was not more sophisticated than that of control children.

Concerning physical indicators of health, preschool children had better weights and heights though they did not eat a more diversified diet than controls on the previous day. The level of infection may be partly to blame for low nutritional status in that 25% of the children were sick in the previous week and a few used a latrine, according to their mothers' reports. Preschool children were twice as likely to have one of the ten inquired upon disabilities, but all children seemed to have received the usual preventive health measures.

Mothers in both groups demonstrated a reasonable level of knowledge about their child's need for stimulation and play but not about the causes of illness or the expected ages for child competencies. Preschool mothers knew what their children were learning in preschool and were positive about the experience.

The quality of the preschool programme by international standards was low-middle, but high according to South Asian standards. On the nine dimensions, the programme did well on literacy, math, and interpersonal interaction, and poor on activities and programming. Independent observations of materials and communication confirmed these evaluations. The importance of these quality indicators was demonstrated by the statistical relation between the quality of a preschool and the cognitive performance of its students. Interviews with the teachers, supervisors, and other staff revealed high satisfaction with the programme. However, knowledge of important child-learning issues was low. Recommendations are now being

implemented with the aim of overcoming some noted limitations. For example, the curriculum now places greater emphasis on material and teacher support for sophisticated free play, along with non-instructional language and games to enhance vocabulary and verbal reasoning.

This is one of the few independent evaluations of an early childhood programme in a developing country. Plan Bangladesh has been very open and honest in exposing its activities to outside scrutiny. This speaks well for its desire to develop a high quality programme for children. There are plans to follow up the preschool children when they are in first grade. Simultaneously, the programmes for younger children will be evaluated. It is expected that the findings will inform future plans of all organizations that deliver early childhood development programmes.

Contributed by Frances Aboud, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) and McGill University, January 2004.

What's the Difference? The Impact of Early Childhood Development Programmes

A Study from Nepal of the Effects for Children, their Families, and Communities

This study is a joint publication of Save the Children US and Norway, Children's Environment Research Group, and UNICEF



This report describes a Save the Children early childhood programme in Nepal and the dramatic effects it has had over just a few years, not only for young children, but also for their families and communities. It 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.

The study took place in thirty-eight communities that have ECD centres in an extremely impoverished district in the eastern terai. The research, on which this report is based, looked at critical numbers and trends—enrolment rates, passing rates, school retention, gender, and ethnic breakdowns. Equally important, it drew on people's experience, opinions, and observations in an attempt to understand the dynamics underlying these trends. The early childhood programme in the villages of Siraha district of Nepal has been successful beyond expectations. We are also beginning to have some understanding of why this is so and what we need to do to build on this success.

Introduction

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. Inequitable access to land complicates the dependence of the largely rural population on subsistence agriculture and has meant a growing reliance on the cash economy. This means in-

creased work migration for men, heavier workloads for women and children, and an erosion of traditional family patterns. Internal conflict over recent years has caused even greater hardship for the country's poor.

Mortality and malnutrition rates remain high for young children in Nepal, and their daily care is compromised by the focus on day-to-day survival. Most disadvantaged families feel powerless to promote their children's best interests and underestimate their capacity to support young children's learning and ability to interact effectively with the world.

Discrimination against girls and women in Nepal still affects almost every area of their lives—ten girls die for every seven boys; they also get less to eat, less healthcare, less access to school, less chance to play, and less choice in their lives (Action Aid 1999).

Twenty percent of Nepal's children still are not enrolled in school, and the figures are higher for girls and *dalits* (untouchables) and other disadvantaged groups. Those children who start school are poorly prepared, and schools are equally unprepared to respond to their needs. Attendance is low, failure is frequent, and repeat and dropout rates are high, especially in the first two years. Problems associated with the transition to school require serious attention. One particular problem is the number of underage children that, lacking care at home, accompany older siblings to school,

swelling the population in already overcrowded classrooms.

On many of these difficult fronts, ECD programmes can provide effective support, relieving childcare burdens for families whose support systems are stretched to breaking point, providing parents with a forum for discussion and information about children, filling significant gaps in children's lives, helping to smooth the transition to school, and providing positive alternatives for young children who otherwise contribute to serious overcrowding in grade one.

In recognition of this there has been significant expansion of ECD programmes over the last fifteen years. UNICEF and various NGOs, especially Save the Children, PLAN International, and the national NGO, Seto Gurans National Child Development Services, play key roles in ECD in Nepal, often in cooperation with different ministries, local government bodies, and community groups or local NGOs. However, still less than 14% of children currently enrolled in grade one have been exposed to any kind of early programme childhood. The Department of Education hopes to increase this to 51% by 2009.

Early childhood field programmes supported by Save the Children (SC) in Nepal consist of linked parenting programmes and community-based ECD centres operated entirely by local partner NGOs. Parenting programmes are the usual entry point for Save the Children's ECD work. Between 1998 and 2002, SC supported the start-up of more than 200 ECD centres, providing opportunities for about 13,000 deprived three to five year-olds in twelve districts. There is a large unmet demand for more centres, and recent breakthroughs in the sustainability of these programmes have enabled more rapid expansion undertaken in partnership with the District Education Offices (DEOs) and Village Development Committees.

The centres, run by local women, provide an expanded range of experience for these children, encouraging culturally appropriate active learning, and helping them develop skills that will enable them to make good use of future learning opportunities offered in school and elsewhere. Facilitators lead the children in a simple planned programme using a range of low cost materials, offering a mix of directed activities and opportunities for free play.

Children's gains from these centres, both cognitive and social, have been dramatic. Parents, teachers, and others see these children, in contrast to their non-ECD peers, as neat and clean, respectful and obedient, but at the same time as self-assured, capable, and highly motivated. They are described

as avid learners, quick to pick up new skills and information, and they are felt to have more highly developed social skills. In short, they appear to combine traits that have traditionally been emphasized for children within the culture with those that are critical for coping with a changing world.

Some of the most eagerly awaited findings of this study are in regard to the impacts of ECD programmes on children's school success over subsequent years. It is this information that is summarized in the following sections.

Children in Schools

The ECD children are described by both parents and teachers as being well prepared and enthusiastic about starting school. Their confidence and communication skills (including, in the case of minority group children, familiarity with the Nepali language), their ease with adults, their propensity for learning, the fact that they are accustomed to regular attendance, all help to smooth the transition. The schools offer few of the advantages they are accustomed to—small groups, close attention, songs and stories, and a range of stimulating activities—and many of the children say they miss their centres. But nonetheless their teachers see them as involved, eager learners. In many cases, teachers make use of ECD children's capacity to encourage and support other children, and note that they are generally raising the level of expectation within classrooms.

STARTING SCHOOL

Almost all the children who have participated in ECD programmes in this study start school. At least 95% of the 935 children who have gone through the ECD centres included in this study have ended up on the school lists, and the great majority of these appear to have joined school at the appropriate age (six years old). ECD facilitators and the district supervisor all confirm that it is very rare for an ECD child not to start school.

TABLE 1
Boy/girl ratios in grades 1 and 2 in schools
in 24 VDCs

	ECD group	Non ECD group
boy/girl ratio grade 1	50/50	61/39
boy/girl ratio grade 2	54/46	66/34

In Siraha, where overall school enrolment for primary school is 57%¹, an estimated 75% of children start grade one. In other words, about 20% more ECD than non-ECD children actually start school in Siraha. Differences in school starting rates are especially striking for girls and for chil-

dren from disadvantaged groups. National figures for the district for 1999 indicate that almost twice as many boys as girls go to school.² Within the ECD group, initial enrolment of boys and girls is about equal. In the schools the study looked at almost equal numbers of boys and girls who had been in ECD centres were enrolled in class one, as opposed to a 61/39 (boy/girl) ratio for children with no ECD centre experience. In class two, the figures are not quite as good—ECD group boy/girl ratio changes to 54/46—but they are dramatically better than the non-ECD ratio of 66/34 (or about two boys for every girl).

In Siraha as a whole, only 30.5% of *dalit* children are estimated to be enrolled in the five primary grades.³ Among the ECD group, *dalit* children have started school at a slightly higher rate than their non-*dalit* peers—over 95% have started school. Given their low dropout rates over the first two years, this represents a significant gain. They are likely to attend over five years at rates far higher than 30.5 percent.

SCHOOL READINESS

ECD parents and facilitators are quite clear that children who have attended a centre are better equipped to handle school than their non-ECD peers. But they may be biased observers. Teachers in the schools, however, have little reason for bias. These children, say their teachers, are ready for school both academically and socially. Their familiarity with numbers, letters and a range of concepts, their experience and patience with solving problems, and their excitement about learning all stand them in good stead when they get to school. Their exposure to adults through the centre equips them to handle teachers with poise and to answer questions confidently, and their familiarity with Nepali adds to their confidence. The ECD children are willing to ask questions about things they don't understand—an important skill for making

the most of school. Eleven percent has entered directly into grade two.

ATTENDANCE

According to teachers, ECD children's school attendance is considerably better than that of non-ECD children, not only from week to week and month to month, but even within the school day. Non-ECD children often go home for lunch and then do not return. The ECD children are there for the day. Because school records are so often missing or incomplete, it is not possible to figure children's overall attendance rates. But if all available attendance records are taken at face value, they indicate that ECD children attend school 11% more of the time not a substantial difference, but it becomes more so if their tendency to stay throughout the day is considered.

SUCCESS IN YEAR-END EXAMINATIONS

As might be expected from children who are both better prepared and more regular in attendance, their success in year-end examinations is dramatically better. In 2000, SC collected data on the pass rates of children in the schools in twenty-four VDCs in Siraha. Using this data in combination with data on 261 ECD children who attended some twenty of these schools during that year, it was possible to compare passing rates in grades one and two⁴ for the ECD children and their classmates. In grade one, 81% of the ECD children passed, as compared to 61% of their non-ECD classmates. In grade two, 94% of the ECD children passed as compared to 68% of their non-ECD peers.⁵ There is virtually no probability that these differences were due to chance rather than to the ECD programme ($p=0.000053$ for grades one and two combined.) This one-year snapshot demonstrates the significant support that ECD can provide to children in their early years of school.



Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway

TABLE 2
Grade 1 pass rates in 2000

	ECD group	Non ECD group
Boys passing	79%	58%
Girls passing	83%	64%
Total passing	81%	61%

TABLE 3
Grade 2 pass rates in 2000

	ECD group	Non ECD group
Boys passing	96%	70%
Girls passing	91%	66%
Total passing	94%	68%

TABLE 4
Promotion, Repetition, and Dropout Rates

		Promotion %	Repetition %	Dropout %
Grade 1	National	41.7%	36.7%	21.6%
	ECD group	83.5%	5.5%	11%
Grade 2	National	73.9%	17.6%	8.5%
	ECD group	95.1%	2.2%	2.7%

National figures from School Level Educational Statistics of Nepal 1999, HMG/MOES/DOE

PROMOTION, REPETITION, AND DROPOUT RATES

These higher pass rates translate into higher promotion rates for ECD children, and lower dropout and repetition rates. Although schools do not keep track of these figures, it was possible to calculate them for a large number of the ECD children based on their individual records, and to compare these figures with rates for the country as a whole. Tables 4 presents the combined promotion, repetition, and dropout rates for ECD children for the years 1998, 1999, and 2000, and compares them to the government’s national figures for 1999 (the middle of the three years in question.)

ECD children’s higher pass rates mean that they are far less likely to drop out or to repeat a year. These results are especially marked for grade one; 36.5 % of grade one children repeat the year nationally, but only 5.5% of the ECD group repeated grade one. It is worth considering the implications of these reduced repetition figures. If grade one repetitions were to drop from 41.8% nationally (the figure for 2000) to the 5.5% experienced by this ECD group, class sizes for grade one would drop by over one third. Furthermore, if underage children were all attending ECD, rather than informally attending grade one, (20% of grade one children are estimated to be under age) the number of children in these grade one classes would drop still further. Grade one classes could be around 50% smaller—allowing for quality improvements.

ECD children tend to move on to grade two at approximately double the national rates. Because of the absence of school records for consecutive

years, the promotion, repetition, and dropout rates for the ECD children cannot be compared to those of their classmates. As a very low percentage of Siraha children actually pass grade five (24 % of those who start grade one, according to district figures), we can assume that ECD children would compare even more favourably within their own schools and district.

Given these striking results it would be reasonable to ask if the ECD children are better off in the first place. In fact, the programme deliberately targets disadvantaged groups and the majority of children are from extremely poor families—with *dalits* well represented.

Indeed school success and retention rates for *dalit* children who have attended ECD are startlingly good. Our sample of 79 grade one *dalit* children was 2.12 times more likely to move on to grade two than the rest of Nepal’s grade one population, and almost five times less likely to drop out. Because we have been unable to find national or district figures that compare the success of *dalit* and non-*dalit* children, it has not been possible to determine what role ECD has played in this higher *dalit* success rate. However, these outcomes are compatible with findings from ECD research around the world, pointing to the fact that the most disadvantaged children are most likely to experience dramatic benefits from ECD programming.

PARENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The parents of the ECD children, accustomed to playing an active role at the centres, are more likely to talk to teachers, to show an interest in

their children's progress, to engage actively with the school management committee, to raise issues that concern them, and even to call for accountability from teachers and administrators. Like their children, these parents provide a model and a catalyst, raising expectations and pointing to alternative kinds of engagement within the schools.

These parents have learned the value of involvement, and while they may not spend much time at school, according to teachers, they are far more likely to visit than non-ECD parents are. This kind of parent involvement is more likely to occur where there are friendly links between school and centre—the kinds of links that are currently being promoted through the child friendly school initiative and SC's partnership with the District Education Office. In one school, for instance, where the headmaster is also a member of the ECD management committee, parent involvement is especially strong.

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 one methods. There is conviction that their children learned much more in the centres and an inclination to discuss this with the school. This increased willingness of parents who have been involved with an ECD centre to engage with the formal school system is an unanticipated yet highly significant outcome. It has been established in other settings that the involvement of parents is one of the most robust predictors for a child's success in school.

The success of these programmes is testimony to the potential of constructive partnership. The collaborative efforts of community members and ECD centres, of the centres and local Village Development Committees, of Save the Children and local NGOs, have all been critical to the programme. Most recently, the partnership with the District Education Office offers the promise of bringing these benefits to many more of Siraha's children. Such partnerships are clearly the key to reaching hundreds of thousands more children and families in Nepal, helping them in tangible ways to recognize and achieve their rights.

Adapted from *What's the Difference? An ECD Impact Study from Nepal*, Save the Children (US), P.O. Box 2218, Kathmandu, Nepal. himalfo@savechildren.org.np http://www.ecd-group.com/pdfs/nepal_impact_study.pdf.

REFERENCES

1. School Level Educational Statistics of Nepal 2001, HMG/MOES/DOE.
2. School Level Educational Statistics of Nepal 1999, HMG/MOES/DOE.
3. Siraha District Education Office, 2002
4. Although some of Siraha's ECD children have already gone on to grade three, and a few even to grade four, their numbers are still low enough to make us cautious about using them in comparisons of this kind. All indications are that these children are continuing to do well at school.
5. This means that pass rates were 32 percent higher for ECD children in grade one, and 38 percent higher for ECD children in grade two, than for their classmates.



Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway



Armenia: UNICEF/HQ97-0824/Roger Lemoyne

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Activities of the CG Secretariat



For over twenty years the Consultative Group on ECCD (CGECCD) has organized annual meetings for its member participants from donor agencies, international NGOs, and regional participants. As a result of strategic thinking and planning over the past year, the CGECCD has decided to open the meeting for those active in the field of ECCD internationally and interested in the meeting's agreed-upon topic for discussion and review.

This year's focus is on Early Childhood within Education For All (EFA). The principal activity is to review the evidence on the impact of ECCD programming on primary school outcomes, identify gaps, and decide on a forward-looking evidence-building agenda. This area of interest—also the focus of this issue of the *Coordinators' Notebook*—was selected in light of current national and international debate and discussions regarding the first goal of Education For All, which addresses early childhood care and education as well as how ECCD efforts can help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The three day meeting in October 2004 will include a series of presentations and discussions of selected papers related to the conference theme, including recent reviews of literature and research studies as well as working sessions to explore and debate further related issues, in particular the governance and monitoring of the 1st Goal and next steps. It is anticipated that the next issue of the *Coordinators' Notebook* will focus on ECCD and EFA.

If you are interested in sharing additional research or evaluation reports related to this topic, please contact the Secretariat of the CGECCD at info@ecdgroup.com.

For background and additional information on ECCD and EFA, see the CGECCD's website at: [http://www.ecdgroup.com/education_for_all\(efa\).asp](http://www.ecdgroup.com/education_for_all(efa).asp).

News of the International Secretariat

Arab Resource Collective

Ghanem Bibi, General Coordinator
P.O. Box 27380
Nicosia 1644 Cyprus
Tel: 3572-766741
Fax: 3572-766799
E-mail: arccyp@spidernet.com.cy or arcleb@mawared.org
Website: www.mawared.org

The Arab Resource Collective (ARC) is an Arab independent non-profit organization founded in 1988 whose objective is to contribute to developing a resource culture in Arab societies. ARC's work is organized into three intersecting circles: childhood and youth programmes, health programmes, and learning, training, and communication programmes.

Ongoing and upcoming work related to ECCD includes building and enhancing the capacity of a resource pool of trainers and professionals in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through:

- Convening technical capacity building workshops to develop expertise in the use of the Arabic ECD manual on ECD pedagogy through participatory activities
- Producing and disseminating papers on best practices in legislation and models of existing public/private service provision in the region targeting children ages 0–8
- Compiling and disseminating an anthology of support materials and best practices on parent education
- Disseminating the Arabic ECD manual (see www.mawared.org) in Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, and possibly Iraq
- Producing and disseminating an annotated bibliography of ECD resources in Arabic

Central Asia

Ayla Göksel
Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV)
Büyükdere Cad. Stad Han. No:85 Kat:1 34387
Mecidiyeköy-İstanbul
Turkey
Tel: 0 212-213 42 20 / 213 46 39
Fax: 0 212-213 36 60
Email: acev@acev.org
Website: www.acev.org

Ongoing activities in 2004 in the region included an ECD Advocacy Training Workshop for Central Asia Region, which was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 11–13 October, 2004.

Convening organizations included the Mother Child Education Foundation (Consultative Group on ECCD), Open Society Institute/International Step-by-Step Association, UNICEF, and Save



the Children—locally hosted by the Soros Foundation/Step by Step Association—Kazakhstan.

Aimed at NGOs, INGOs, local staff, and ECD specialists (e.g., academics) in Central Asia and Turkey, the purpose of the workshop was to provide the necessary skills and tools to advocate on behalf of ECD at the community level (parent advocacy), national level (policy development and change), and regional/international level (international agreements, conventions, networks). At the same time, the workshop took into consideration programming frameworks (how do changes in programming activities occur, who makes them?), public policy frameworks (how is policy made; who makes it?), and a sociology of information framework (how do we use information to influence policy and programming?)

Rather than elaborating on *why* ECD is important (as is so often done), the workshop concentrated on *how* ECD's importance can be manifested in the programmes and policies in our respective countries. As such, the workshop set out to increase knowledge and skills in utilizing different mechanisms to improve the state of ECD in our countries. The workshop was envisaged as a hands-on practical training session with different case studies and exercises to increase awareness of the various tools, mechanisms, and strategies that one can employ or take advantage of in advocating for quality ECD.

For more information, email: acev@acev.org.

Research

Turkish Early Enrichment Project* (TEEP) Tracer Study 2004

The Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) is conducting a second follow-up of the Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP), a parent-focussed and centre-based child-focussed intervention programme

conducted with mothers and children in low-income, low-education areas of Istanbul between 1982–1986. The second follow-up to TEEP has been carried out twelve years after the first follow-up and eighteen years after the completion of the training programme.

This is the third study conducted to explore the effects of TEEP. The first study was conducted after the completion of the four-year project and investigated the separate and combined effects on children from economically deprived backgrounds of an educational preschool environment and a mother training programme in the short run. The second study was a longer-range follow up conducted six years after the end of the original study. The children were teenagers at the time and the study mostly focussed on how the project influenced these children's cognitive development and adjustment to school.

This third study, which is the second follow-up to the original study, aimed to investigate the project's long-term effects on the participants' social lives, who were then entering their adult lives. The results of the study will be presented at the CG AGM in Istanbul October 2004 and published in late 2004.

**The Turkish Early Enrichment Project has been implemented as the Mother Child Education Programme since 1993 by the Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV).*

Preschool Costs, Benefits, and Outcomes Study

Turkey has one of the lowest levels of preschool education coverage of any lower-middle income country. In 1996, there were only 175,000 students participating in pre-primary programmes, representing less than seven percent of the age group.

By 2002, the enrollment rate increased to eleven percent, a significant improvement, but still well below the average rate for countries in the same income group (twenty-eight percent). This means that the vast majority of children entering first grade have had no prior experience in a school environment. It also means that less advantaged children start school without exposure to pre-literacy skills or other opportunities that children from better-off families may have.

This study will estimate the impact of preschool attendance on grade progression, educational attainment, student achievement, and non-school outcomes. In addition, it will examine the cost implications of lower educational efficiency associated with not assuring the provision of preschool education. This study will also measure the benefits and costs of preschool education and associated programmes for improving the school readiness of children, including mother education programmes. Finally, the study will identify mechanisms that could be introduced in Turkey to expand preschool services, especially for children from poorer families, without an excessive burden on the State.

The study is being carried out by Prof. Mehmet Kaytaç of Boğaziçi University and will be published in late 2004.

Latin America

Alejandro Acosta, Regional Director
CINDE, Bogota Office

Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat of the Consultative Group
Network for ECCD in Latin America
Carrera 33 Numero 91-50
Barrio La Castellana

News of the International Secretariat

News of the International Secretariat

Bogota, Colombia
Tel: 57-1-2564116 / 6168943
Email: aaacinde@supercabletv.net.co
Website: <http://www.gc-al.org/>

Grupo Consultivo/America Latina

Ongoing and proposed activities in 2004/2005 include:

- Redesign/launch of an ECD website in Spanish for exchange and knowledge dissemination on ECD best practices for practitioners and policymakers
- Publication of online ECD bulletins for practitioners and policymakers, including ECD legislation and policy reforms
- Convening a fourth regional ECCD workshop to encourage institutional and professional exchanges on evaluation among national organizations at the regional level (Fall of 2004)
- Convening an interagency workshop on parent education
- Translation of the *Coordinators' Notebook* into Spanish beginning with issues 25 on Indicators and 26 on Early Childhood and HIV/AIDS
- Coordination of four possible national case studies about the impact of macroeconomic evolution on children in Argentina, Ecuador, Perú, and Colombia, based on the activities of the Group on Children and the Economy—a think tank developed by Save the Children, UK, UNICEF, and the Antonio Barco Foundation
- Advocacy
 - Promoting discussions around linking ECCD programmes with poverty alleviation programmes, but also around why Latin American countries cannot be limited only to poverty alleviation or reduction programmes. What is really needed are human and social development strategies—ECCD being one of the most powerful
 - Evaluation of ECCD alternatives
 - Tracer Study on children's participation including a synthesis of children's participation under the age of seven
- Continued work with the Colombian Alliance for Children, conducting advocacy at the national and local levels to re-position and enrich ECCD through the design of national and local ECCD policies, as well as through the International Forum on ECCD and Development: The Challenge of the Decade, held this past year
- Ongoing awareness raising and dissemination in the area of ECCD and HIV/AIDS
 - HIV/AIDS is now a thematic focus of the International Forum on ECCD and Development: The Challenge for the Decade
 - As part of the activities included in an agreement on ECCD in Colombia (between the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, Administrative Department for Social Welfare of Bogotá, UNICEF, Save the Children, UK, and CINDE), Save the Children, UK is conducting initial exploratory research on this issue.
 - Translation of *Coordinators' Notebook* No. 25 on HIV/AIDS supported by Pueblito, UNICEF, World Bank, and UNESCO

Activities of the Partners

International Step by Step Association (ISSA)

A very warm welcome to our newest partner, The International Step by Step Association. The International Step by Step Association (ISSA) is an educational network of individuals and early childhood organizations. Its overall goal is to promote democratic principles, parent and community involvement in education, and equal opportunities for all children. In carrying out this goal, ISSA develops educational resources, implements high quality child-centred educational programmes, and supports ongoing research. Established in the Netherlands in 1999, today ISSA's network extends to Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Asia, and the Americas.

Step by Step (SbS), a comprehensive child-centred education programme for families with children from birth to ten, is at the core of ISSA's activities. SbS was launched in 1994 in Central and Eastern Europe by the philanthropist George Soros and the Open Society Institute (OSI). Currently, SbS programmes can be found in twenty-nine countries. The initiative currently:

- Serves 1,000,000 children, ages birth to ten
- Works with 400 institutions that train or re-trains teachers
- Provides staff training through over 330 training centers based in schools, preschools, and universities



Activities of the Partners

All of ISSA's initiatives are tailored to each context and community, but are based on the following core set of principles:

- Equal access to educational opportunities
- Child-centred, individualized teaching and learning
- Development of skills for life-long learning and participation in a democracy
- Promotion of teachers as facilitators
- Parent involvement
- Community engagement in public education
- Culturally-appropriate learning environments and approaches
- Ongoing professional development

Within the context of SbS child-centred learning and family participation, ISSA supports a wide range of programmes. Collectively these initiatives provide a comprehensive set of educational services, advocacy, and policy reform for children from birth through age ten and their families.

ISSA is a unique network established by professionals from countries undergoing transitions in early care and education policies and practices. ISSA's services for members include:

- ISSA's biannual Journal, *Educating Children for Democracy*. Developed for educational professionals interested in child-centred teaching methods and educational transformation based on the experiences of countries in transition
- Quarterly Newsletter
- Discounts on publications and events (annual conference, trainings and workshops)

In the Fall of 2003, ISSA and the Step by Step Network embarked on a two-year project to document the impact and reflect on the learning from the first ten years of the Step by Step programme through the development of national case studies. The project (in process) is providing training and mentoring support to researchers in twenty-nine countries to conduct case studies on specific programme initiatives sponsored through the Open Society Institute and ISSA. The project will also draw together results into a final report in 2005.

This year ISSA celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Step by Step Programme at its annual conference, "A Decade of Change: Stepping into the Future," which was held from November 8-10, 2004 in Budapest, Hungary. The event focussed on themes such as: change in Early Childhood Education practices and policy in regions where ISSA is active; achievements of the Step by Step programme and other international development programmes; challenges within the Step by Step programme; and the field of Early Childhood Education worldwide. For more information, visit the ISSA website at: www.issa.nl.

Sarah Klaus, Executive Director

Email: sklaus@issa.nl

Éva Izsák, Membership Manager

Email: eizsak@issa.hu

Or visit our website at: www.issa.nl



Armenia: UNICEF/HQ97-0791/Roger Lemoyne



Nigeria: UNICEF/HQ97-1375/Giacomo Pirozzi

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

Moving Early Childhood Development Forward in Africa: The Third African International Conference on Early Childhood Development

In recognition of the critical importance of protecting the rights of young children (birth to eight years of age) so that they can develop their full cognitive, emotional, social, and physical potential, Early Childhood Development (ECD) has found expression in international declarations and frameworks adopted for the development of countries in Africa. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Cairo Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Education for All (EFA) goals, and the Declaration and Framework for Action of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS) all have provision for the inclusion of ECD as a priority area for human resource development in support of national development processes. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has also called for the revision of its agenda to include a focus on early childhood development.

Unfortunately, following the adoption of these important international declarations and frameworks, early childhood development has still not received the needed support in concrete terms, in most national development plans and processes in Africa. Many children in Africa

Activities of the Partners

continue to die before their fifth birthday, many children still repeat and drop out of the educational system because they are not ready or prepared for the school system, and many children in difficult circumstances are not receiving the necessary care and support.

It is in light of the above that the third in a series of African International Early Childhood Development Conferences will be held in Accra, Ghana from May 30–June 3, 2005 with the theme "Moving Early Childhood Development Forward in Africa." This third conference follows the first (held in 1999 in Kampala, Uganda) and the second (held in 2002 in Asmara, Eritrea).

The focus of the Third African International ECD Conference will be on three important priority action areas that are necessary to move the ECD agenda forward in Africa, including ensuring:

- effective caring practices within the family and community
- access to and use of quality basic services
- a supportive policy environment

The conference will include three days of technical workshops based on the three action areas indicated above and a one-and-a-half day Ministerial meeting under the leadership of the chair of ECOWAS, H.E. President John Agyekum Kuffuor.

The outcome of the conference is expected to draw increased political commitment to early childhood development in Africa, facilitate accelerated action at country levels, and also feed into other development processes including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), EFA, Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) and NEPAD plans.

The conference is being organized by the Working Group on Early Childhood Development of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA-WGECD), representing a partnership between international organizations including UNICEF, the World Bank, UNESCO, WHO, the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG), and national governments.

Updated information regarding selection of country delegates and other details will be announced by September 20, 2004.

Stella Etse, ADEA-WGECD Secretariat
 c/o UNICEF Reg. Office for West and Central Africa
 P. O. Box 2972
 Dakar-Yoff, Senegal
 Tel.: +221 869 58 58
 Fax: +221 820 30 65
 Email: setse@unicef.org
http://www.adeanet.org/meetings/wgecd/en_wgecdannounceen.html

Christian Children's Fund

Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is an international child development organization, working in thirty countries, assisting 7.6 million children and families regardless of race, creed, or gender. Since its inception in 1938, CCF has provided more than \$2.2 billion in services to children, with most of the funding coming from individual contributors. CCF has ECD programmes in twenty-four countries.

ECD Regional Highlights

Honduras CCF Honduras serves children with an emphasis on early childhood. With some World Bank support, CCF Honduras is expanding their work in innovative capacity building, including outreach and advocacy work, as well as working in cooperation with

the government and NGOs. The first "ECD Centre for Programme Excellence," located in Honduras, is in the process of development. The centre showcases the CCF "Guide Mothers" programme which has gained international recognition for its work with young children. The centre is designed to promote good early childhood practices, disseminating training materials and technical guides and offering hands-on and remote training for early childhood development practitioners.

Albania ECD work in Albania includes parent empowerment and peace education. The World Bank has observed the connection and funded the programme, which has been expanded on a national scale with very limited funds.

Kenya CCF Kenya has expanded ECD programmes to cover nomadic-pastoralist-hunting-gathering groups such as the Potok and Turkana in Samburu areas. The Loipi (shade/shelter) ECD programme builds on the cultural strengths of Samburu people and uses all available local resources to nurture the development of children in a setting where the children belong to the community as a whole, and youth and adults members of the community serve as caregivers and mentors. This programme is supported in part by the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Indonesia In Eastern parts of Indonesia, CCF is supporting holistic ECD programmes that are well integrated with other community development efforts, such as safe water and environmental sanitation, and food production/nutrition education.

Afghanistan Child Centred Spaces organized and run with CCF support are giving displaced children the opportunity to have the psychosocial support needed to cope with serious adversity, and to enable them to grow and learn in protective environments.

ECD Events

ECD World Forum, Acapulco, Mexico (May 2003) As in the past, CCF has participated in this international event, which includes CCF Mexico, a partner in the local planning. CCF participants made five presentations including one on community-based ECD.

Briefing at Capitol Hill In conjunction with the U.S. based Basic Education Coalition, CCF arranged for a briefing on Capitol Hill in May 2003 for congressional staff.

CCF Staff Conference with Focus on ECD In November of 2003, CCF hosted its International Programme Conference in Washington, DC, "Transforming Communities for Young Children." The conference spearheaded the exchange of experiences and ideas regarding child-focused community transformation. Experts in the fields of international development, early childhood care and development, and evaluation challenged CCF's staff and guests to reach for new paradigms in children's development, looking beyond children's survival and investing in children's growth, development, and care in early childhood.

Over 220 participants, representing over thirty country offices, local project staff, local partners, donors, and more than ten other NGOs converged on Washington with great excitement and anticipation. The opening night "Showcase" provided an opportunity to exhibit the resilience of children through the toys they themselves made to play with. The showcase also featured an international collection of toys made by ECD teachers and volunteer facilitators to help children play and learn.

During the course of the week, speakers Robert G. Myers, a noted scholar on young children, Jo Boyden, a social anthropologist, and Caroline Arnold, Save the Children Alliance, discussed the "payoffs" of investment in programmes for young children; the importance of

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Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway/D. McKenzie



children's and families' participation; the major causes of child poverty as identified by respondents in CCF's innovative three-part poverty study highlighting how children experience and understand poverty; and the need for a balance between traditional practices and modern beliefs. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator for UNDP, presented a compelling speech on the final day, which emphasized the importance of the Millennium Development Goals and how CCF's work ties in to the UN's efforts across the globe.

Publications and Resources

Booklet "Right from the Start" highlights CCF's Early Childhood Development programmes throughout the world. CCF's emphasis on ECD reflects its concern for children from pre-birth to eight years of age. CCF believes that getting children off the right start is essential in their future development. The booklet also highlights many of CCF's innovative programmes such as:

- Guide Mothers who teach mothers in their communities best health practices with their children, proper sanitation, and best nutrition practices
- The Grannie's Programme which works with older women in the community to reinforce the message of reproductive health and best childrearing practices
- CCF Dream Corners (children's libraries) and toy libraries
- Gardens of Children, which provide children, ages three-six, with a safe and fun learning environment.

Adaptation of ECD scale CCF has developed a universal monitoring scale for its private use in twenty-four countries. The time-consuming adaptation in fourteen countries takes into consideration cultural bias and other psychometric issues. The scale closely monitors each child's progress in critical areas of growth measuring intellectual, social, and physical attributes of young children under six. Refined over a four-year period after a review of twenty different monitoring tools, the

scale has been piloted in twelve countries in Africa, North and Central America, and Eastern Europe. More than 2,100 children have been tested to help CCF ensure that the scale milestones and indicators and its instructions are understandable by both parents and staff and universally applicable.

Gilberto Mendez, Senior Programme Specialist
ECD and Education
Christian Children's Fund
2821 Emerywood Parkway
Richmond, Virginia 23294, USA
Tel: (804) 756-2787
Fax: (804) 756-2718
Email: gemendez@ccfusa.org
www.christianchildrensfund.org

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Ready to Learn Center, Academy for Educational Development

Speak for the Child: Community care for orphans and AIDS-affected children in Kenya

Since March 2001, *Speak for the Child* has been supporting the community of South Kabras in Kenya's Western Province in improving the health, nutrition, education, and emotional well-being of young children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. As of December 2003, *Speak for the Child* services 339 children ages five years and under. Key programme components are immunizations, preschool, regular home-visits, and support groups for community mentors and caregivers.



Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway

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The programme has had measurable impacts on the lives of orphans and their caregivers. Some results include the following:

- 95% of enrolled children are fully immunized
- 94% of children age 3-5 are enrolled in preschool
- Almost 60% of caregivers are now combining and enriching foods to improve the diets of these children and making an effort to talk to their children in a gentle manner, shout less, and listen more
- 88% of caregivers have planted new crops or have prepared land for planting
- 63% of caregivers are involved in income generating activities

Objectives in 2003 included increasing coverage of orphans and vulnerable children, advocacy, and network building to improve the care of young AIDS-affected children, and programme replication by building NGO capacity. *Speak for the Child* has now enrolled 60% of orphans in South Kabras; helped establish a national working group on early childhood development and HIV/AIDS, which has set goals and objectives, and has trained 113 members of local NGOs and CBOs who also receive regular follow up for monitoring and troubleshooting.

On December 10th, 2003 *Speak for the Child* sponsored a Children's Event Day to honour enrolled orphans and vulnerable children, their caregivers, home-visiting mentors, teachers, health care providers, traditional leaders, and other community members working to support them. Among the 2000 participants were local HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and support NGOs and CBOs, the District Officer, the area Member of Parliament, the Provincial Children's Officer, District Medical and Education Officers, the District Officer for Early Childhood Development, and local industry representatives. The event provided key HIV/AIDS prevention messages, free child health check-ups, immunizations, medications by the local health clinic, and meals and blankets. It also affirmed and increased community commitment to improving the care and development of young orphans and vulnerable children and highlighted the importance of young children and their need to be valued, protected, and cared for with love.

In January 2004, *Speak for the Child* began programme implementation in two neighbouring communities, East and West Kabras, to strengthen its national and international advocacy and networking initiatives, and identify and train additional HIV/AIDS care and support NGOs and CBOs interested in incorporating activities for young children affected by HIV/AIDS.

For further information, see: <http://www.aed.org/Projects/sfc.cfm>

Ready to Learn Center

Academy for Educational Development

1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20009-5721

Phone: (202) 884-8261

Fax: (202) 884-8408

E-mail: ready@aed.org

Website: www.aed.org/readytolearn

UNESCO

UNESCO promotes a holistic approach to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) with the aim of implementing the vision of the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (1990), namely that learning begins at birth. Assisting Member States to achieve the first Dakar Goal on ECCE to expand access, improve quality, and ensure equity is the ultimate goal of UNESCO's early childhood programmes.

In cooperation with UNESCO field offices and other external partners, UNESCO's strength is in upstream policy work, providing assistance with the development and implementation of ECCE policies, as well as capacity-building opportunities for government officials on ECCE policy options and strategies.

In 2004/2005, UNESCO concentrates its efforts on the following activities:

UNESCO/OECD Early Childhood Policy Review

A global project on early childhood policy review is being implemented jointly with OECD. This project reviews ECCE policies in four selected countries (Indonesia, Kenya, Kazakhstan, and Brazil) in order to identify concrete measures to improve their policies, and to compile and distribute comparative information on early childhood policy planning and implementation.

The five key policy issues to be reviewed include: access (level of participation in ECCE, equity in access to quality ECCE), quality (integration of care, education and formal schooling, physical and material support), resources (distribution of public resources, mobilization of non-public resources), government coordination (across different sectors of government, across different levels of government), and data and research development (data needs, research needs).

Publication Activities

UNESCO Policy Briefs on Early Childhood. As part of its efforts to support policy work, UNESCO publishes the UNESCO Policy Briefs on Early Childhood, a series of monthly two-page flash notes on early childhood policy issues which seek to answer various questions on the planning and implementation of ECCE policies.

Recently featured articles include *Early Education Financing: What is Useful to Know?* (no. 23), *Funding Strategies for Equitable Access to Early Childhood Education: The Case of New Zealand* (no. 22), *Enrolment Gaps in Pre-Primary Education: The Impact of a Compulsory Attendance Policy* (no. 21), *"Encouraging Private Sector": Pre-School Education Reform in Morocco* (no. 20), and *Access, Public Investment, and Equity in ECCE: The Nexus in Nine High-Population Countries* (no. 19).

The Policy Briefs are available online at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/ecf/index.htm>.

UNESCO Early Childhood and Family Policy Series *Family Support Policy in Central and Eastern Europe—A Decade and a Half of Transition* has been produced in English and Russian as part of the UNESCO Early Childhood and Family Policy Series.

Early Childhood Care and Education in E-9 Countries: Status and Outlook UNESCO's most recent publication, *Early Childhood Care and Education in E-9 Countries: Status and Outlook*, is a report prepared as a background document for the fifth E-9 Ministerial Meeting held in Cairo, Egypt, on December 19–21, 2003. The report offers an overall review of the contexts in which the E-9 countries' ECCE policies are being developed and implemented, and summarizes the countries' key policy objectives and the priority tasks to be performed.

Training Seminar

In cooperation with the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC) in Haifa, Israel, the Seminar on Education for All in Early Childhood—Dream or Possibility? was held on 16–24 May, 2004. Targeting government officials, policymakers, NGO

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representatives, and educators from 17 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, the seminar focussed on various issues related to early childhood policy planning and implementation.

Yoshie Kaga

Assistant Programme Specialist

Early Childhood and Family Education Section

Email: y.kaga@unesco.org

UNICEF

Just released!

EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE PACK

Young Child Survival, Growth & Development

First Edition June 2004

Published by the Integrated Early Childhood Development Unit

UNICEF Programme Division

United Nations Children's Fund

3 United Nations Plaza, H-10B

New York NY 10017 USA

www.unicef.org/earlychildhood

Giving children the best start in life is the most important job society and families can have. Children who are born with adequate birth weight, have good nutrition and care, a warm and supportive environment, and rapid treatment for illnesses have a much better chance of realizing their rights to life, survival and development and of fulfilling their potential. These are the children for whom we need to create a World Fit for Children.

This Early Childhood Resource Pack is designed to help programme planners and managers understand the basic elements of the best start in life for children and how to most effectively work together to achieve those goals. It combines advocacy arguments with experiences, exercises and information that can be used to develop skills and understanding in programme for young children in development and emergency situations.

The Resource Pack contains detailed notes that provide facilitators with a guide on how to present the most recent research and experience related to programme for young children and their families in order to stimulate discussion and provide an opportunity for participants to develop concrete actions in relation to Early Childhood programming, advocacy and policy development.

The Resource Pack is not a blueprint—it is a set of more than forty sessions, of 1–2 hours in duration, that can be offered in many different configurations. A number of different “pathways” (i.e., a sequence of sessions) can be used, depending on the characteristics of the participants and the amount of time that you have for the workshop. In support of the facilitation, the Resource Pack contains PowerPoint presentations, handouts and background reading materials for those leading the Workshops.

For a copy of the Resource Pack on CD-ROM contact your national UNICEF office.

ECCD Resources

As the Salt in the Sea is a thoughtful book offering an insider perspective into the processes of growth and development, stemming from an unusual project devoted to advocacy for the young child.

Working within an institutional framework and experimenting with a multiplicity of strategies to achieve its objectives, Project ACCESS (1999–2001) has contributed significantly in casting light on the enormous need for and difficulties of advocacy for neglected children in India.

The material is arranged according to the various themes and the varied approaches used. Research, communication, networking, training, resource materials, capacity building and documentation itself, are perceived as different dimensions of effective advocacy.

To obtain a hard copy, email: library@mssrf.res.in; to obtain an electronic copy, see: www.mssrf.org.

Losing a Parent to Death offers a practical guide to the treatment of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who experienced the death of a parent or primary caregiver. The authors identify common reactions to loss in infancy and early childhood, explain specific complications in the grieving process associated with traumatic responses to sudden and/or violent parental death, examine assessment and treatment approaches, and offer vignettes illustrating children's responses and clinician interventions. The authors approach is informed by an integration of psychoanalytic theory and attachment theory with interventions influenced by social learning and cognitive-behavioural approaches. The book also includes a directory of valuable resources.

Essential for clinicians, this book will also be invaluable for teachers and caregivers seeking to provide emotional support to bereaved children.

To order a copy, see: www.zerotothree.org/bkstr_mental.html.

Supporting Fathers: Contributions from the International Fatherhood Summit presents five papers prepared and discussed at the International Fatherhood Summit in Oxford, England, March 2003.

Bringing together practitioners and academics from twenty countries to discuss practical work, policy issues, the state of current research, and areas of international concern around fathers, the papers provides a basis for further discussion and exploration on providing the best possible environment for the development of children by explicitly placing fathers within the concept of parenthood.

Single copies of the above are available free of charge upon request from Bernard van Leer Foundation: registry@bvleerf.nl or to download at www.bernardvanleer.org.

As the Salt in the Sea

MINA SWAMINATHAN AND
L.S. SARASWATHI

*Losing a Parent to Death:
Guidelines for the Treatment
of Traumatic Bereavement
in Infancy and Early
Childhood*

ALICIA F. LIEBERMAN, NANCY
C. COMPTON, PATRICIA VAN
HORN, AND CHANDRA GHOSH.
IPPEN (2003). 152 PP.

*Supporting Fathers:
Contributions from the
International Fatherhood
Summit*

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS:
GARY BARKER, DAVID BARTLETT,
TOM BEARDSHAW, JANET
BROWN, ADRIENNE BURGESS,
MICHAEL E. LAMB, CHARLIE
LEWIS, GRAEME RUSSELL,
NIGEL VANN.
BERNARD VAN LEER
FOUNDATION, APRIL 2004.

Calendar

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

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

■ RECENT MEETINGS

September 17, 2004

*33rd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
Geneva, Switzerland: "Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood"*

In 2002, the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children adopted a Plan of Action that committed Member States to the "Development and implementation of national early childhood development policies and programmes to ensure the enhancement of children's physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive development."

Nepal: Save the Children US/Norway



Having reviewed since 1993 the situation of child rights in almost all countries of the world, the Committee has noted that the rights of babies and young children are too often overlooked. Nevertheless, it is widely recognized that early childhood is a crucial period for the sound development of young children, and that missed opportunities during these early years can not be made up at later stages of the child's life. This applies to all rights recognized in the Convention, including those to survival, development, protection, and participation.

As a result, the Committee on the Rights of the Child decided at its 33rd session to devote its 2004 day of general discussion to "Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood," a public day of discussion aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of the contents and implications of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as they relate to early childhood. Topics of discussion included an examination of key features of child survival, protection, and development and innovative approaches, techniques and tools used to guarantee child participation in early childhood.

For more information and to obtain proceedings, see: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc/doc/discussion.htm>.

September 22–24, 2004

An International Meeting on Early Childhood Prevention
European Society for Social Paediatrics (ESSOP) 2004 Annual Meeting
Montréal, Canada

Aimed at planners, researchers, decision makers, trainers and practitioners, ESSOP's first international meeting held outside Europe brought together participants from a variety of fields and professions with a stake in children's well-being. The meeting offered opportunities to learn about effective early childhood prevention practices, and discuss ways of implementing best practices in communities, to improve children's quality of life.

For more information: www.essop2004.ca

November 8–10, 2004

Annual conference/10th Anniversary: "A Decade of Change: Stepping into the Future," International Step by Step Association (ISSA)
Budapest, Hungary

The event focussed on themes such as: change in Early Childhood Education practices and policy in regions where ISSA is active, achievements of the Step by Step programme and other international development programmes, challenges within the Step by Step programme and the field of Early Childhood Education worldwide.

For more information: www.issa.nl

November 17–19, 2004

Healing Communities through Early Childhood Education: Powerful Lessons from Northern Ireland, Albania, Columbia, Croatia, Mali, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, and the United States
Belfast, Northern Ireland

World Forum on Early Care and Education in partnership with NIPPA—the Early Years Organisation

<http://www.childcareexchange.com/wf/working/index.php>

■ UPCOMING MEETINGS IN 2005

May 17–20, 2005

World Forum on Early Care and Education
Montreal, Canada

A global exchange of ideas on the delivery of quality services for your children in diverse settings.

Early Registration by December 31, 2004

<http://www.childcareexchange.com/wf/purpose.php>

Calendar

May 30–June 3, 2005

Moving Early Childhood Development Forward in Africa
Accra, Ghana

Working Group on Early Childhood Development of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA-WGECD), representing a partnership between international organizations including UNICEF, the World Bank, UNESCO, WHO, the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Development (CGECD) and national governments.

Third in a series of African International Early Childhood Development Conferences, the focus of the event will be on three important priority action areas that are necessary to move the ECD agenda forward in Africa including to ensure:

- effective caring practices within the family and community
- access and use of quality basic services and
- a supportive policy environment

For information/outcome documents from previous conferences (Kampala, Uganda, 1999 and Asmara, Eritrea in 2002), see: http://www.adeanet.org/workgroups/en_wgecd.html.

Contact:

Stella Etse ADEA-WGECD Secretariat
c/o UNICEF Reg. Office for West and Central Africa
P.O. Box 29720

Dakar-Yoff, Senegal

Tel: +221 869 58 58

Fax: +221 820 30 65

E-mail: setse@unicef.org

Website: http://www.adeanet.org/meetings/wgecd/en_wgecdanounceen.html.

The *Coordinators' Notebook*, a publication of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, is published twice annually.

Developmental Editor: Ellen M. Ilfeld

Editors: Elizabeth Hanssen
Louise Zimanyi

Design/Production: Maureen Scanlon

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West Springfield, MA

For subscription information, please contact:

CGECCD Secretariat
Ryerson University
Faculty of Community Services
Sally Horsfall Centre for Studies in
Community Health (SHE697)
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3 Canada

Tel: (416) 979-5000, x4801

Fax: (416) 979-5384

E-mail: info@ecdgroup.com



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 ECCD, and to seek out new partners. The Secretariat is housed at Ryerson University in the Faculty of Community Services. 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, International Step by Step Association, PLAN International, Pueblito, Save the Children Alliance, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank.

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.

For further information and to subscribe contact:

Kathy Bartlett, Co-director
Aga Khan Foundation
1-3, Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneve
P.O. Box 2369, 1211 Geneve 2
SWITZERLAND
Tel: (41-22) 909-7200/7208 direct
Fax: (41-22) 909-7291

Louise Zimanyi, Co-director
Ryerson University
Faculty of Community Services
Sally Horsfall Centre for Studies in Community Health (SHE697)
350 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario
M5B 2K3, CANADA
Tel: (416) 979-5000 x4801, Fax: (416) 979-5384

E-mail: info@ecdgroup.com Website: www.ecdgroup.com

The Consultative Group can also be reached through:

Dr. Robert G. Myers
Insurgentes Sur 4411, Ed. 7, Dept. 302
Tlalcoligia, D.F. 14430, MEXICO
Tel: (52-5) 513-4813, Fax: (52-5) 573-4277, E-mail: rmyers@laneta.apc.org