

Early Childhood Development on the Global Agenda: Building Partnerships for Sustainability and Harmony

**Asia-Pacific
Regional
Network for
Early Childhood**

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2014 Annual
Regional Conference
Report



ARNEC
Asia-Pacific Regional Network
for Early Childhood

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The 2014 Annual Regional Conference of the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood was held on 3-5 December 2014 at Crowne Plaza Manila, Philippines. About 400 participants representing 40 countries attended the Conference.

Global and regional ECD advocates and supporters are at the forefront to ensure that ECD is at the heart of the post-2015 Global Development Agenda. ARNEC continues to spearhead the advocacy effort in the region and kept the momentum going by making such advocacy the focus of its culminating activity for 2014. Hence, the theme “ECD on the Global Agenda: Building Partnerships for Sustainability and Harmony” for the 2014 ARNEC Regional Conference.

ARNEC shall continue its work towards the establishment of a strong and more dynamic ECD community in the Asia-Pacific region to contribute to the adoption of holistic and inclusive national ECD policies and agenda. It shall enhance the region’s ECD knowledge base and use its broad experience to influence the global ECD agenda.

The three-day Annual Regional Conference was organized with specific daily themes: (a) Partnerships and Alliance Building for ECD; (b) Contributing to Sustainable Development through ECD; and (c) Building Social Cohesion through ECD. Plenary keynotes were given by eminent resource persons and concurrent sessions contributed to the rich and substantive discourse, recommendations and further steps that can lead towards keeping ECD in the heart of the post-2015 Global Development Agenda.

Side sessions were also organized to discuss specific business concerns. Country and agency programme experiences and materials were shared and illustrated through video and poster presentations.

Two pre-Conference activities were also conducted: (a) a Pre-Conference Workshop on “What does it take to make the holistic and integrated approach to ECD work” and (b) a study visit to government child development centers and non-government ECD project sites in Metro Manila and nearby Municipalities of the Philippines, the host country.

The Conference concluded with the pledges of commitments by participating countries, a summary of the future directions of ARNEC and way forward and the announcement of Beijing as the next venue for the 2015 Annual Conference and handover of the ARNEC banner from the Philippines as the 2014 host.

Executive Summary

The theme of the 2014 Annual Regional Conference of the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood, held on 3-5 December 2014 at Crowne Plaza Manila, Philippines, was “ECD on the Global Agenda: Building Partnerships for Sustainability and Harmony”. The three-day Annual Regional Conference was organized with specific daily themes that led the discourse towards keeping ECD in the heart of the post-2015 Global Development Agenda: (a) Partnerships and Alliance Building for ECD; (b) Contributing to Sustainable Development through ECD; and, (c) Building Social Cohesion through ECD.

ECD in the Post-MDG Agenda. The post-2015 agenda identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. Its goal on “effective learning for all children and youth for life and livelihood” includes ECD as one of its targets. The target is focused on the quality of its implementation in both structures and processes, and, more importantly, on developmental outcomes for all children under the age of 5. An ECD index is being considered to measure achievements that encompasses physical, cognitive, language, literacy, social and emotional domains for learning and development, and early child education prior to formal schooling is being considered to measure ECD achievement.

Investing in ECD. Evidence-based studies and research that cover a wide range of sectors from psychology to neuroscience to economics reveal the critical importance of investing in early childhood. The high correlation between the Human Development Index and the ECD index was underscored.

Public investments in ECD would mean lower costs, and increased efficiency in health care, nutrition and primary education. Studies on the return of investments such as cost-benefit analysis and social returns on investments are recommended to provide specific evidence on the economic and social returns of investing in ECD.

ECD Policies in the Asia-Pacific Region. The Conference provided the venue for updates and statuses of ECD policies in the region which are generally in place but need strengthening or enhancement. Country policies normally cover the ECD age up to six years old only and they vary in the appreciation on the significance of covering children until the age of eight years when they start to enter the formal education system.

There are few standardized indicators, measures and assessment tools - especially for social, emotional, moral indicators. And, as such, data among countries are not comparable to generate specific regional data except for those that refer to enrolment in ECE programmes or services.

ECD policies or policy frameworks and action plans are normally supported by or aligned with other sector policies. Some are in more advanced stages and others are relatively new (like in as Bhutan and Cambodia). Others are in the process of

amendment or have already amended their respective policies (India and the Philippines) to address gaps that evolved from their enforcement or implementation and to further provide additional features and enhance their policies. But in spite of these, almost all are not without challenges and difficulties encountered in the course of implementation and enforcement.

The policies articulate inter-sector coordination efforts and mechanisms. Multi-sector structures have been created at national and local levels. Mother agency attachments vary but most are attached to the education ministry.

Country Situations of Young Children and ECD Programmes. In spite of many achievements, the Asia-Pacific region continues to be confronted with challenges to bring about the desired results and outcomes for young children. Asia is characterized by unequal societies with a wide gap between the rich and the poor. These are normally the countries that do not have or lack policy changes in physical and social programmes to provide ECCD access to quality services for all young children.

Basic ECD data and relevant information were presented. In addition, participating countries, inside and outside the region, shared their ECD experiences and programmes which are in varying stages of advancement and successes.

These include the following: (a) development of family resource centers (Pakistan) and the resource learning centers (Philippines); (b) quality enhancements (re-structured pre-school education curriculum in three states in India) and improving process quality in Chilean Public Preschool Education (*Un buen comienz*); (c) social returns of ECD such as the Social Returns on Investment Study (in Ecuador) and the Aflatot programme that combines social and financial education in ECD; (d) community-managed and parenting programmes by strengthening their respective roles (Plan Indonesia and Vietnam) and Supervised Neighborhood Play (Philippines).

ECD Tools and Measurements. Regional and other initiatives were shared during the Conference: (1) the Pacific guidelines of the PRC4ECCE (Pacific Region Council for ECCE) for national quality frameworks that defined systems components to ensure that the countries are on-track according to international standards and ensure quality of ECCD programmes; (2) the EAP ECD (East Asia and the Pacific ECD) scale developed and supported by the Hongkong University (HKU), ARNEC, UNICEF, and OSF and; (3) the gender and ECCD self-assessment tool by Plan Asia (Bangladesh and Laos); (4) the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) tool by Save the Children US to measure children's holistic development and early learning.

Partnerships for Harmony and Sustainability in Early Childhood. Partnerships for harmony, alliance building and sustainability were acknowledged. Foremost are between and among horizontal and vertical functionaries of government structures. Partnerships have widened, domestically and internationally. Countries shared their experiences in expanding partnerships and alliance building for ECD (Save the Children

in Bangladesh and India). These were also discussed in the context of two strategic features of ECD: (a) in the institutionalization of inter-sector ECCD Coordinating Committees (such as in the Philippines); and (b) in systems integration for ECD (Indonesia).

Advancing the agenda for young children should emanate from the commitment and support of the highest political leaders (as demonstrated in Cambodia, China, Indonesia) and all numerous stakeholders. Most discussions underscored this important aspect.

Harmony and the opportunities for promoting them in ECD were defined and interpreted in many different ways. Shared in the discussion of harmony were: (a) Tahderriyah, Arabic for preschool curriculum for Muslim children in Southern Philippines; (b) harmony and happiness in Bhutan, where all developmental efforts and human endeavor are guided by its happiness index which shall be applied in its developing ECD programme; and, (c) the principles and values of harmony among children and social cohesion as being done in ECD.

Capacity Building. Capacity building strategies were discussed to promote professional development for quality improvement in ECD processes and content such as the enabling environment for early educators in India and the possible collaboration between ARNEC and OMEP (*Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Préscolaire*).

The qualifications and competence of ECD practitioners, especially those in the frontline service delivery/workforce need strengthening. The guidelines for quality pre-primary education teacher development in Southeast Asia are currently being developed by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). Further collaboration can be done to develop the policy guidelines for the workforce in ECCE in Asia and its database.

Inclusive ECD. Alternative and innovative modes of delivering ECD services for children who live in hard-to-reach and far-flung areas, children of minority groups and those who are marginalized, children with disabilities, children from cultural communities, among others, were presented.

These are community-based and village-based interventions supported mainly by non-government organizations and international development agencies that are consistent with government standards and policies. Some of these are play group schemes such as the community-based play group (Songpan, Tibetan Plateau, Southwestern China) Supervised Neighborhood Play (Philippines), Intensive Supported Playscheme (Australia) the upgrading of creches and ECD centers in Child-Friendly Tea Estates (Sri Lanka), a programme for gypsy children that addressed their social exclusion (India). Most of these programmes were evaluated and they revealed improvements in ECD participation or enrolment.

Peacebuilding, a New Area for ARNEC. A “fishbowl” discussion on peacebuilding was included in the agenda of the Conference. Various perspectives and insights on

peacebuilding as they affect young children were deliberated upon. Children are at the center of fragile conflict situations which need to be addressed to achieve sustainable peace. They can, however, be active participants to conflict resolutions and become agents of transformation and peace-builders themselves (as shared by the World Vision experience in Southern Philippines).

Future Directions of ARNEC. Following the discussions and recommendations during the Conference, ARNEC laid out its plan for 2015 and onwards. These are aimed at articulating ECD in the post-2015 agenda framework in various venues and opportunities. ARNEC shall continue to expand its communication linkages using different modalities and learning/resource sharing of successful experiences and good practices. The venue for the 2015 ARNEC Annual Conference was announced. It will be held in Beijing, China in October 2015.

Pre-Conference Activities

Two simultaneous pre-Conference activities were organized for participants on 2 December 2014: a pre-regional conference workshop on the holistic and integrated approach to ECD and study visits to ECCD centers.

ARNEC Pre-Regional Conference Workshop: *“What does it take to make the holistic and integrated approach to ECD work?”*

The Pre-Regional Conference Workshop was convened to discuss the context and principle of the holistic and integrated approach (HI) to ECD and identify lessons learnt from country experiences and the challenges that hinder its implementation or adoption. Recommendations were put forward by participants on how to make the HI work in various settings, particularly where it matters most – at the point of delivering ECD services to the young child.

Dr. Mae Chu Chang, an ARNEC Board Member, led the initial discussion focused on the theme of the workshop: *“ECD should be holistic, multi-sectoral and integrated. How to make this happen on the ground?”* Country experiences were shared:

- a. *“Cambodia: Full potential child development – entry points at family, sub-national and national levels”*, by Mr. Tomas Jensen, Chief of Local Governance for Child Rights of UNICEF Cambodia, and
- b. *“Convergence of ECD services at the frontline delivery level”* based on India’s experience by Ms. Swati Bawa Sawhney, Consultant, PwC PL, India
- c. An additional presentation was made by Ms. Jessica Ball of the Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnerships (www.ecdip.org), School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, Canada, on *“Hook, Hub, Lifeline: Creating Connections for Child and Family Wellness.”*

Cambodia. A bottleneck analysis of the life cycle approach from pregnancy to newborn and infancy to early childhood was utilized in Cambodia to determine the challenges in the demand and supply of different sectors. The analysis contributed to the development of the country’s national ECD policy and action plan. It was noted that other policies that have impact on young children exist such as those in the health and nutrition sectors. However, these are hardly enforced nor backed by technical or financial resources.

Promoting local governance for child rights is a key strategy being supported by UNICEF. In addition, the following strategies are also being assisted by UNICEF in the pursuit of the ECD action plan: community-led mapping of social services, massive, repetitive, intensive and persistent communication of shared ECD vision and geographical convergence, collaboration, coordination.

India. The ECD policy of India and its programme experience dates a long way back with its Integrated Child Development Services. The evolution of the integrated approach as articulated in India’s ECD policy, its current status and programmatic expansion were discussed. While the political commitment to ECD remains steadfast, a strategic shift in planning and policy amendment was necessary.

The presentation concluded with recommendations along the following areas: (a) Policy Provisions – the need for a conducive policy environment at all levels, adoption of the 3A framework –Assessment, Analysis and Action, and selection of the appropriate entry point; (b) Program Design and Content - focus on outcomes related to growth and development, counseling and behavior change interventions, inter-sectoral approach for synergy, capacity building, scaling-up of results-proven models; and, (c) Program Management - involvement of the community, social cohesion, vertical and horizontal information sharing incentives, and joint planning, implementation and monitoring.

Canada. The key messages of the research on the connections of child and family wellness conducted by the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, Canada, was presented by Ms. Ball. The research drew from the lessons learnt and experiences of its partners in First Nations.

The key messages were: (a) that young children are the “hooks” in inter-generational programmes; (b) the social determinants of health and wellness as the rationale for “hub”; (c) the developmental perspective and connectivity in making things happen emanate from children, families, communities, nations; (d) that “one size does not fit all” and diverse approaches can be planned out and implemented for diverse populations; and (e) that communities can demonstrate for governments how community-led interventions can be community-paced. In summary, ECCD can serve as both “hooks” and “hubs”.

The research also identified challenges in pursuing a “holistic and integrated” approach to ECD: (a) the promotion of integration is too much too soon; (b) professional “turfism” dominates interventions including for training opportunities; (c) the administrative structures are fragmented at regional and federal levels that render redundancy in grants and aids and conflicts in mandates; (d) the strategic plan of one sector can conflict or be co-opted by other sectors particularly when vying for scarce resources; and (e) coordination can become the new mantra with top-down, prescriptive models and evaluation criteria.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The presentations of Resource Speakers were followed by plenary discussions and group work. In summary, the following are the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop:

1. Integrated Early Childhood Policies

Almost all countries in the Asia-Pacific region have integrated ECD policies in place, with defined policy framework and action plans. These promote holistic and integrated ECD covering a range of services that address the cognitive, physical, social, emotional and other developmental needs of a young child. The integrated approach requires multi-sector participation and convergence.

In spite of the gains and advancement in ECD, much would still have to be done for the holistic and integrated approach to work in real terms on the ground. The gap between policies and actual implementation level is a challenge that almost all countries face. This is mainly attributed to the sector-focused nature of government structure and systems, mandate and authority. Several recommendations were put forward but basically this can be summed up with the cliché “one size does not fit all”.

An integrated ECCD policy, its framework and implementing guidelines must be defined according to the context of the country from its very basic geographic configuration to its form of government, system and structure: (a) centralized, decentralized or partially decentralized system of governance, including budgeting; (b) mandate and authority at different levels; and, (c) established inter-agency mechanisms for ECCD collaboration and coordination.

2. Government System and Structure

Promoting holistic and integrated ECD given established vertical systems and structures would require the issuance of guidelines for delineation and, at the same time, the intersection or inter-face of mandates, roles and, including, funding for ECD. The adoption of the holistic and integrated approach necessitates understanding of government structures within the regional network.

3. Child Development and Wellness

Young children should be at the core development agenda of all sectors at all levels and right in the very homes of families and in communities. The goals and outcomes for the young child’s development shall not be limited to educational opportunities but should be holistic and should cover all developmental domains that require health care, nutrition and food security, socialization, water, sanitation and hygiene, special protection. Thus, making it imperative for all sectors involved to work together, complement each other’s services and interventions, coordinate and collaborate.

A common assessment tool needs to be developed to determine how the child is progressing, what the remaining gaps and needs are and what interventions need to be provided.

4. Capacity Building

In addition to policies and systems, capacity building is vital to promoting the integration of ECD for the full development of the young child. Capacity building can

take many forms such as a basic university education, on-the-job training, institutional human resource development, agency training, attendance and participation to training activities, seminars and conferences. Other opportunities include learning networks and webinars. Capacity building can be accompanied or supported by learning materials such as handouts, flyers, policy briefs, reports, others.

Capacity building must impart a common and unified message. The development of a standard curriculum becomes imperative adapted to the context, functions and levels of learners and users.

5. Way Forward for ARNEC

ARNEC serves as the ECD learning hub or learning network ECD in Asia-Pacific and it shall set about and continue the following:

- a. promote regional collaboration, learning and working together at the regional level by bringing knowledge and insights from professionals;
- b. tap and maximize professionals from various sectors, groups or associations, including NGOs or networks for capacity building initiatives; and,
- c. bring on capacity building initiatives to other venues, whether as a group of contiguous countries or as an interested government/country host.

Study Visits to ECCD Centers

Study visits were organized by the host country, the Philippines, for Conference participants. The activity showcased different ECCD Centers around Metro Manila and in the nearby province of Rizal. It familiarized participants on how center-based and home-based ECCD services are delivered in the Philippines. A total of 54 participants from different countries (Cambodia, Bhutan, Pakistan, China, U.S.A, Finland, Timor Leste, Myanmar, others) joined the study visits.

The National Child Development Centers (NCDC), being government centers, are located within the compound of public elementary schools (Binangonan Elementary School and Epifanio de los Santos Elementary School), both established only in January 2014. These serve as learning centers that introduce best practices of integrated Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services for children, 0 to 4 years of age, a laboratory for research and innovations about ECCD to promote continuing education of service providers; and a resource center for ECCD practitioners, both in the public and private sectors.

Two projects sites of the community-based Healthy Start Program (HSP) of the Consuelo Foundation, an NGO, were also visited. One project site is implemented by the Sienna

College in Taytay, Rizal run by the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena and the other project site in Paco-Pandacan area in the City of Manila is implemented in partnership with Families and Children for their Empowerment and Development. The HSP targets 0-3-year-old children from disadvantaged communities, where parents are taught to bond with their children and improve their physical, intellectual, and emotional development. They participate in regular parenting and child development sessions guided by the Growing Great Kids (GGK) Curriculum that contains simple learning activities, information on brain development, child health and safety, and nurturing child care practices.

The Miriam College Child Study Center (CSC) in Quezon City is a privately-run Early Childhood Education (ECE) Center for children, ages 2 to 5 years old. Children are molded to be happy, healthy, and well adjusted, ready and eager to learn in a wholesome and stimulating environment. It emphasizes the development of good values, attitudes, desirable habits and skills necessary for children to become independent in school life. The educational programmes provide children with a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences that lead to the enhancement of self-awareness, competence, independence, and social skills.

The Integrated Day Care Center in Mandaluyong City is an Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Center that provides free day services for 720 children, ages 3 to 4 years old. The Local Government of Mandaluyong City shoulders most of the operational expenses which include the salaries of the teachers, teaching materials, children's school bags, and electricity and water bills. The Barangay Captain provides school materials and takes charge in the maintenance of the Center. Active support from parents is shown through the supplemental feeding given to children.

The participants to the study visits shared their impressions and took note of the salient features of the centers they visited as compared to the situation in their respective countries.

- The Philippines is a potential model when it comes to ECCD policy formulation. The passage of the Republic Act (RA) 10410 “Early Years Act of 2013” mandated the establishment of an ECCD System with both the National and Local Governments having specific roles. In other countries, for instance, ECCD is mostly focused on early child education, with the Ministry of Education overseeing the programmes.
- The major role of Local Government Units (LGUs) in providing the budget for implementation and sustainability of ECCD programmes in their own city/municipality was unique for the participants.
- Provision of FREE public ECCD services that involve early education, supplemental feeding, health check-ups and immunization for 0-4-year-old children and parents’

orientation were regarded well by the participants, especially by those from India, Myanmar, Bhutan, among others. The participants found interesting the periodic assessment given to each child using a standardized tool (UNICEF's ECCD Checklist). In the case of the Healthy Start Program, an assessment tool and also evidence-based tracking of the children after the five-year implementation of the programme are being used.

- The Healthy Start Program is a home-based model for disadvantaged and at-risk children. It sparked the interest of the participants; for one, parents who wish to be part of the programme need only verbal commitment, and can cease to join if they wish to do so. While there is high incidence of drop-out families, there are still more than enough families to serve. Another facet of the programme which drew the interest of the participants was that the Family Support Workers who implement the programme come from different backgrounds – office clerk, janitor, vendor, etc. – who are all volunteers trained in the HSP.

- The Miriam College's Child Study Center is the only private ECCD center that was visited. Participants noted that the Center's structure and curriculum can be a benchmark for other countries.

Conference Proper

Day 1: Partnerships and Alliance Building for ECD

Plenary Opening - Welcome Messages

Bro. Armin Luistro, FSC, Secretary of the Department of Education, Philippines

Secretary Luistro acknowledged the 2014 Annual Regional Conference of ARNEC as an opportunity for looking back and assessing whether efforts on early childhood development (ECD) have created an impact on young children. It is an auspicious moment for moving from one reality to the next.

Countries have benchmarks, data bases and statistics. But, at the end of the day, the test of a country's commitment will be based on the "faces of children" that people see. The Secretary emphasized that it is not just about data informed about and reported upon in many meetings in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and globally.

Countries have discussed how each one is moving on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and targets. If there is any goal that needs to be pursued, it is to check on and ensure that the most vulnerable are reached out - especially children who are still labouring in harsh conditions or unable to go to school because of various conflicts among people or even the sad fact of disciplinary complaints about teachers and other adults in schools.

The Conference gives the opportunity for countries in the Asia-Pacific to determine what else is needed to be done for different societies for the caring of vulnerable 0-8- year-old children and focus on global shared beliefs cognizant of traditional practices and heritage.

"Are children more loved today than a decade ago?"

Ms. Katherine Manik, National Director, Child Fund Philippines and ARNEC
Core Team

Ms. Manik, as co-organizer of the Conference, welcomed the guests and participants who had convened for a very important discussion on the impact of the global agenda for children. She underscored the significance of sustaining and building new and harmonious relationships to keep ECD in the global and policy agenda for children.

Ms. Manik recognized the participation of children and youth (as supported by ChildFund and World Vision) participating with adults in the Conference. A reading camp was organized for them as an innovative demonstration of how children and youth can meaningfully be engaged to build their confidence. She further called on participants to build and nurture new and lasting relationships and partnerships for early childhood development.

ECD lies in the heart of ChildFund's efforts to prevent exclusion by stimulating social, cognitive development of the under-fives for success in formal school and building critical social interaction beyond their families. In the Philippines, a certain percentage of those who enter school will not be able to complete any level of education. ChildFund, through its Headstart programme, helps to improve their success before going to school and until they complete school for their future success.

Ms. Manik concluded with a message to *“build, nurture new lasting relationships partnerships with children in their early childhood.”*

Dr. Mae Chu Chang, Member, Board of Directors, ARNEC

Dr. Chang shared her professional background and the blossoming of her relationship with ECD and ARNEC. After a 30-year work experience in World Bank in different countries where she shied away from NGOs and private organizations, she has re-invented herself by building-up a working relationship with an NGO coalition in Indonesia. She continued to expand her work in other countries and now engages with around a thousand NGOs worldwide.

She shared her story with ARNEC on how ECD became her cause and dedication, following an invitation to attend a UNESCO conference. Dr. Chang commended ARNEC's networking capability and its ability to get top speakers and senior people in conferences, and tapped SEAMEO to host a conference, among others. ARNEC's major role in capacity building by combining the knowledge of professionals coming together was acknowledged. Dr. Chang cited how conference participants can become professionals as they generate regional knowledge and can expand to global knowledge.

Dr. Chang's book on *“ECD as the foundation for life and invest in ECD”* will be published soon. The book will focus on ECD in Indonesia.

Ms. Teresa Aquino Oreta, former Senator of the Philippines

Guest of Honor

Ms. Oreta walked the participants through the Philippines' long journey in the formulation of legislative policies and effecting practices for the advancement of ECD spanning all of 50 years from 1964 to the present. Her account is based on her experience as a former legislator and later on as the first chairperson of the ECCD Council.

- ❖ In 1978, a Presidential Decree was promulgated mandating the establishment of day care center in every *barangay* (village).
- ❖ In 1987, Republic Act (RA) 6972, otherwise known as the Total Development and Protection of Children's Act, further supporting day care centers was enacted. Despite the mandatory establishment of day care centers in every village, the practice did not turn as well as intended.
- ❖ In 2000, the first ECCD law or RA 8980 was passed, with then Senator Oreta as principal author. Among its provision is the creation of an ECCD Council under the aegis of the Council for the Welfare of Children.
- ❖ In 2013, the Early Years Act (EYA) or RA 10410 was enacted into law to provide a comprehensive ECCD system.

The key features of EYA include: (a) the recognition of 0-8 as the most crucial stage of educational development; (b) the promulgation of a national system of ECCD; and (c) the promotion of basic, holistic and a full range of health care service, nutrition, early learning opportunities and social services for 0-4-year-old children.

Under the EYA, the National ECCD Council is now formally established with a Governing Board, chaired by the Department of Education and supported by a Council Secretariat. Ms. Oreta expounded on its role and the assistance it provides to provinces, cities, municipalities and *barangays* (villages).

The grand alliance for ECCD, Ms. Oreta believes, is still a big challenge but also a great opportunity, encouraged by the response of local government units as part of the solution to ensure that all young children are able to develop to their fullest potentials.

Ms. Oreta concluded by thanking the participants for their interest in the Philippine model of ECCD.

Regional Keynote Address

Early Childhood Development: What does it have to do with sustainability and harmony?

Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Member, Board of Directors, ARNEC

The regional keynote address of Dr. Shaeffer began with a brief economic overview of Asia and the status of ECD in the region. He primed the arguments for investments in ECD with some provocations before elaborating “sustainable development” in ECD and education, the essence of his address.

Dr. Shaeffer shared a report on the wide gap between the rich and poor in Asia. While there is a rising huge middle class and more millionaires in Asia, the gap between the rich and the poor is still wide. Over a billion people are still in extreme poverty, in spite of the prosperity brought about by the one percent that own 44 percent of the wealth in Asia. The report referred to concludes that the most unequal societies are from countries without policy changes in physical and social programmes.

Before proceeding to his main agenda, Dr. Shaeffer brought up the following concerns and provocations:

1. Why do few governments recognize global definitions of early childhood as 0-8 years old and therefore ignore the important transition to and early success in primary school?
2. Why do governments ignore the developmental needs of children 0-3?
3. Why are grade 2 classes, as part of ECD, usually have the least experienced and trained teachers and with the highest pupil ratios, and, why is grade 6 the opposite?
4. Why do governments and development agencies spend so little on ECD?
5. Why are there so few early primary grade teachers/specialists at this Conference?

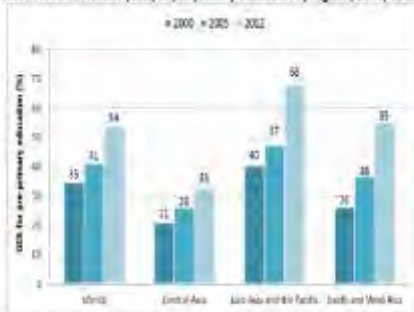
Why invest in ECD? Neuroscience, genetics and population studies indicate that early childhood is the most important development phase in a human lifespan. Following said context, Dr. Shaeffer run the Conference participants through the various arguments on why there is a need to continue preaching ECD to the converted.

- ❖ Brain development argument. The most rapid period of brain development, at 80 percent, occurs in the first few years of life and the influence of a child’s environment on brain development is long lasting.
- ❖ Economic argument. Providing quality care and educational opportunities for young children, especially the most at-risk, is a powerful strategy in order to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

❖ Education argument. Early learning begets later learning success.

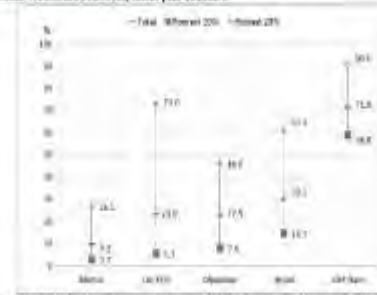
The global and regional status of ECD. A brief status of ECD in the region is shown in the charts below on gross enrolment ratios (GER) in pre-primary education. It compared the status of ECD in Asia to that of the world and showed that East Asia and the Pacific exceed that of the world's performance. South and Western Asia is also slightly above the world's status.

Figure 2: Gross enrolment ratios (GER) in pre-primary education by regions, 2000, 2005 and 2012



Source: Statistical Table 1, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, July 2014.

Figure 4: Percentage of children aged 3-4 years who attended an early childhood education programme in selected countries, latest year available



Source: UNICEF global database, July 2014. Based on: Bhutan: MICS 2010; Lao PDR: MICS 2011-12; Myanmar: MICS 2009-10; Nepal: DHS 2011; Viet Nam: MICS 2010.

Sustainable development. Dr. Shaeffer identified the three pillars of sustainable development and cited pertinent essentials to make them work:

- ❖ Environment – the need for awareness of the richness of natural resources and of the fragility of the physical environment wherein children can be included in the discourse
- ❖ Economy – the sensitivity to the limits and potential of economic growth and impact on society and environment
- ❖ Society - an understanding of social institutions and their role in change and development.

ECD and sustainable development. ECD is essential to creating a sustainable future and sustainable development that can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet its own needs.

Education for sustainable development (ESD). ESD is about learning rather than teaching. Thus, it is critical for the following to be pursued: (a) reforming the structure and nature of basic education starting from ECD; (b) reorienting existing education programme with the inclusion of ECD; (c), developing public awareness with children; and, (d) building capacity within education systems across all ESD partners – including those focused on ECD.

The pillars of learning: promoting harmony and sustainability. Dr. Shaeffer re-visited the Delors report entitled *Learning: The Treasure Within* which he considers as having a “great conceptual framework”. That in order to help modern society cope with the

challenges in the world around it, the Delors report, recommended four pillars of learning:

- ❖ Learning to know – acquiring the instruments of understanding, or learning how to learn
- ❖ Learning to do – applying knowledge in daily life, to be able to act creatively and responsibly in one’s environment
- ❖ Learning to be - acquiring universally shared values, developing self-knowledge, becoming immersed in one’s own culture and its wisdom
- ❖ Learning to live together (HARMONY) - promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence; being able to celebrate diversity in people and in their histories, traditions, beliefs, values, and cultures
- ❖ But building a sustainable future requires a “fifth”, more proactive pillar – learning to transform society, change the world, and live SUSTAINABLY by working toward a rights-based, gender-neutral, non-discriminatory society, acting to achieve social solidarity and international understanding, and by living sustainably.

Dr. Shaeffer concluded his address with two important points:

- ❖ Harmony and building a sustainable future should start with young children.
- ❖ The ARNEC community – and beyond – must ensure that the skills, values, attitudes, and behaviours which promote sustainability and harmony are: reflected in all early childhood development programmes and that they are successfully transmitted to all young children.

Plenary 1

Alliance building and partnerships for more holistic and inclusive ECD

Alliance building and partnerships for ECD were discussed from the experiences of China's Development and Research Foundation (CDRF) at a national scale and, at ground level, from that of a Municipal Mayor in the Philippines. Mr. Lu Mai told the story of how partnerships enabled CDRF to undertake a research on ECD that led it to become a national policy and programme. CDRF initiated partnerships both domestically and internationally. On the other hand, Mayor Rony Molina of San Jose de Buenavista recounted his experience and his resolve to provide security of tenure to day care workers and ECD service providers, by using local government funds.

The Moderator for Plenary 1 was Dr. Mae Chu Chang of ARNEC. The Panelists were Mr. Lu Mai, Secretary General of the China Development Research Foundation and Hon. Rony Molina, the Municipal Mayor of San Jose de Buenavista, Antique, Philippines.

China Development and Research Foundation

China's State Council approved the National Plan for Child Development in poor areas (2014-2016) for 680 counties covering 40 million children. The development of this plan was based on a CDRF experiment started in 2007. It then became a social experiment in 2009 and an extension programme in 2012, before finally being integrated into the National Plan for 2014.

Mr. Lu Mai recalled that the CDRF sought the support of two concerned Ministers for monetary contributions to kick off the experiment. Alongside, an alliance was built with influential groups which included multinational companies working with CDRF, international financial institutions/organizations such as the World Bank and OECD, and local governments. Funds were provided in the alliance and implementation was done by government.

Other non-monetary contributions to the phased experiment were solicited: (a) scholastic inputs provided by advisers for research; (b) the very powerful media support that showed before-after nutrition situation of 0-3-year-old children that shocked and got the attention from society that led to programme implementation; and, (c) NGOs, including village-based NGOs and support from different social groups which worked together for nutrition improvement and feeding programmes.

The role of CDRF was to connect with the alliance and implement the National Plan. The process of integrating ECD in the National Plan took almost three years after its presentation to the President, working on the comments CDRF received from the President, the difficult negotiations with nine Ministers before reaching a consensus. Partnership is critical in getting important policies from the State.

CDRF's role changed in the process. First, the initial experiment had to be continued. Second, the assessment of village education center about children's performance in school takes several years before any improvement becomes visible. Third, monitoring and assessment must be continued.

CDRF is now working with Microsoft for a website school feeding thrust, where a hundred managers and teachers will be trained on the mechanics of the school feeding intervention. The performance of managers and teachers and the results concomitant results will be monitored. The strategy shall enable the identification of counties where the programme will be implemented in.

Municipality of San Jose de Buenavista, Antique, Philippines

Mayor Rony Molina presented the experience of San Jose de Buenavista where permanent positions for day care workers (DCWs) in his jurisdiction were institutionalized. San Jose de Buenavista is one of the pilot areas of the National ECCD Council for the establishment of a National ECCD Center. The story of day care in San Jose de Buenavista spans almost three decades. The Municipality is one among the local government units that established day care centers in all of its *barangays* as mandated by law. The day care workers – the permanent second parents to most of the young children in the Municipality, are now given permanent item positions. Almost all of the DCWs have passed accreditation requirements.

Mayor Molina called to mind that in the earlier years DCWs rendered services as volunteers or on temporary designation and relied on contributions of parents and local Councilors for their “honoraria”. They did not have security of tenure. Furthermore, money for day care center improvements was generated through fund raising activities initiated by parents.

The passage of the Local Government Code in the 1990s gave the Municipality more leeway and fiscal autonomy to allocate funds for the ECD programme, The funds for ECD programmes were augmented by those coming from the national government through the more enhanced ECCD law. With said policies in place, political leadership and a supportive local development council, the institutionalization of ECCD in the Municipality was made possible. Mayor Molina further attributed the “success” of ECCD in San Buenavista to the support of and partnerships with parents themselves.

Plenary 2

Sharing of new national early childhood policies/policy frameworks

Cambodia, Nepal and India discussed their respective ECD policies and policy frameworks. Cambodia focused on the endorsement of its national policy and action plan by its Prime Minister and the royal decree which stipulates the organization and functioning of the National Committee for ECCD. Nepal underscored the convergence of ECD services in its School Sector Reform and the Education for All (EFA) Plan. Compared to these two countries, India is far advance in its ECD policy. After several decades of enforcement and experience, its policy was amended and enriched by expanding its package of ECCE services and scope.

The Moderator for Plenary 2 was Mrs. Bernardine Ha'amori, Director, ECD, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, Solomon Islands. The Panelists were: from Cambodia composed of the Vice Chair Permanence and Deputy Secretary General of the National Committee on ECD - Vice Minister Kim Sethany, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and Director Prak Kosal, Early Childhood Education Department; Dr. Bimala Raj Paudyal of the National Planning Commission of Nepal; and from India - Dr Shashi Panjab, Minister of State (IC), Department of Child and Women's Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal and Dr. Dinesh Paul, National Institute of Public Cooperation and Development

The Government supports Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development in Cambodia

The panelists from Cambodia composed of the Vice Chair Permanence and Deputy Secretary General of the National Committee on ECD - Vice Minister Kim Sethany, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and Director Prak Kosal, Early Childhood Education Department – discussed and presented their Government's high-level commitment and policy support for ECD.

The national ECCD policy of Cambodia envisions that all Cambodian children, from conception to age under-six, especially the disadvantaged, vulnerable and poor children, shall be provided with care and development services. The specific objectives of the national policy are to ensure that:

1. all women are provided with health care and nutrition during pregnancy;

2. all children are registered at births, provided with regular care and health checkup, have access to adequate education;
3. school readiness of all Cambodian children to start grade 1 at age six;
4. there will be technical staff, caregivers, parents and guardians with appropriate knowledge on ECCD;
5. 11 relevant ministries/institutions work together closely to address issues concerning ECCD; and
6. children from birth to school age shall enjoy physical, cognitive, mental and emotional development at both home and centers providing quality and sustainable health services, nutrition and education.

A royal decree stipulates the organization and functioning of the National Committee for ECCD. It further defines the composition, roles and functions of the National Committee and allocates financial resources. It is supported by a general secretariat responsible for policies, administration and finance and monitoring and evaluation.

The national policy and action plan was signed by the Prime Minister and launched in 2014 together with eleven line ministries, municipal and provincial participants and legal department. The strong commitment of the Cambodian government, especially its top leaders, encourages the various ministries to work together to support and ensure the success of ECD.

Cambodia shall continue to build on this opportunity and do the following: (a) coordination and working together between and among the national mechanism and the relevant ministries and departments; (b) deference to structure and culture of all stakeholders in national and sub-national levels; and, (c) wide dissemination of the national policy.

Cambodia has a population of 13.4 million. 40% of its under-six children are stunted, 28% are underweight, and 11 % are wasted.

Nepal , a country with immense geographical, social and cultural diversity, has a population of 26.5 million. 23.8% of its population are below poverty line. Children with ECD experience in the first grade are 56% (2014).

India is a big country with a population of 158.8 million 0-6-year-old children.

Convergence of services for effective ECD: An experience towards mainstreaming of Nepal

Nepal is undergoing a political transition and the drafting of its Constitution is still in process. Dr. Bimala Raj Paudyal of the National Planning Commission of Nepal re-affirmed that children's rights are recognized as fundamental rights in the country's interim Constitution (2007) and incorporated in the 13th Development Plan 2014-2016 and other policies and strategies such as the School Sector Reform Programme 2009-2015. Convergence initiatives are reflected in said policy documents.

ECD is part and parcel of the Education for All campaign to foster children's total development and the following will be done to lay the firm foundation for them: (a) implementation modality for center-based ECD services; (b) adoption of an integrated and holistic approach; (c) government support to community-based schools (for increased coverage); and (d) mainstreaming ECD in sector interventions such as health, local development, agricultural policy, other programmes and activities in ECCD centers.

Institutional arrangements for ECD include: (a) an ECD caucus among members of Parliament; (b) the Steering Committee at the Nepal Planning Commission (NPC); (c) the Technical Committee at the Ministry of Education; (d) the National ECD *Parisad*; and (e) a National Network. Each of the structures has different roles with the NPC as the government agency responsible for planning and coordination and overall monitoring.

The country still has to address challenges that pertain to its political stability as it influences the formulation of policies, achieving the quality and quantity of ECD, and, the enforcement of its ECD and other children-related policies.

Implementation of a new ECCE policy in India

The new ECCE policy in India and its implementation was discussed by Dr. Shashi Panjab, Department of Child and Women's Development and Social Welfare (West Bengal). The national commitment to ECCE of India is enshrined in the 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002 where it affirmed that the State shall endeavor to provide ECCE for all children until they complete the age of six years (Article 45). Section 11 of the right of children to free and compulsory education act of 2010 prepares children above the age of 3 years for elementary education.

A new ECCE policy was adopted in 2013 which strengthens and redefined the package of ECCE services under the public initiative of the Integrated Child Development Services. Public initiatives include *Anwadis* and crèches. In addition, ECCE services are provided by the private sector in the form of kindergartens and preschools, NGOs have *balwadis*, and corporations provide facilities for child care.

The ECD package consists of a training package, parenting guide, and interventions. Care and counselling have more subsets in ECCE. A child protection card is a card used for improving the utilization of services of ICDS and the National Health Mission thus becoming also as a tool for convergence. New emerging and key areas in ECD were identified as: universal access with equity and inclusion; ensuring quality; strengthening capacity; monitoring and supervision; research, evaluation and documentation; advocacy and awareness. From among these are non-negotiable standards: ECCE programme duration is four (4) hours and the inclusion of several domains of development. Putting regulatory framework shall ensure basic quality inputs and outcomes across all service providers.

Plenary 3

Children's Participation in the Conference

A unique feature of the Conference was the involvement and actual participation of children where a space was created for them to express their own views about their needs and dreams in two phases: the first phase was conducted on-site for children aged 0 to 5 where their outputs were shown through a short video compiled by Plan International; and, the second phase was the participation and presence of children aged 6 to 8 during the actual Conference. Save the Children took the lead for the Children's Camp, in collaboration with Child Fund and World Vision.

The video presentation showed ECD caregivers and parents, mothers and fathers, talk about issues affecting their 0-5-year-old children, what they can do for them and their dreams. Their sentiments are the same even if they come from different settings. Thirty children aged 6 to eight from communities in Metro Manila supported by Save the Children, Child Fund and World Vision participated in the Conference activity. Among them, three children represented the group and shared their views during the Plenary. Three youth volunteers from the same communities facilitated the process.

The format of the session was patterned after the Reading Camp component of the Literacy Boost Programme of Save the Children. They were given questions about their hopes and aspirations and their answers were expressed through storytelling, journal writing and arts and crafts. These were then displayed in the exhibit areas of the Conference. Children expressed the need for helping each other and with a message for adults to be more industrious and not to be lazy.

Concurrent Session 1

Concurrent Session 1 was about partnerships for ECD and the experiences of the Philippines, Bangladesh and India. The Session Moderator was Mrs. Mahmuda Akhter, Executive Director, Institute of Child and Human Development, Bangladesh. The Discussants were: Dr. Carmen Damos-Bonoan, National Director, Reach Out and Read, Philippines, Ms. Roxana Khanom, Manager, Early Years Development, Save the Children Bangladesh, and Ms. Amrita Goswami, Programme Coordinator, Save the Children India.

Partnerships for Early Literacy Promotion in Health Care Settings: The Philippines Experience

The Reach Out and Read Model and ABE (Advice, Books, Environment) project, of which Dr. Carmen Bonoan is the National Director, is aimed at early literacy and language development. Advice stands for 'Encourage parents to read aloud daily and offer age-appropriate advice'. Books for 'From 6 months - 5 years old, clinicians can provide books'. 'Environment' means setting circumstance full of readings, posters and volunteer readers. Children who read loudly can develop well in language and literacy.

Fifteen studies were conducted to determine the outcome of the project. The studies revealed that parental attitudes and practices, home environment, children's attitude and skills have been transformed in a positive way. However, there is a need to overcome the challenges encountered by the project. These include the 'lack of perception that health care providers can encourage literacy as part of health care supervision', 'lack of appropriate books for early childhood', 'expenses for books', 'availability of volunteer readers' and 'sustainability of the programme'.

Partnerships and alliance building for ECD: A multi-sectoral approach for building parental capacity to help child growth and development in rural Bangladesh

The presentation of Ms. Roxana Khanon was about a joint project of Save the Children and the American Institute for Research funded by the World Bank's Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund.

The Bangladesh Government's National Nutrition Services and Revitalization of Community Health Care Initiative of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Save

the Children implemented the project. The American Institute for Research and Data International evaluated the project.

Based on the evidence that both nutrition and child stimulation interventions have positive effects on child development, this project was designed to provide families with early childhood stimulation, in addition to the national nutrition programme. The target age and duration of intervention: 0 to 3 years for 24 months.

As a result, mothers engaged in more supportive and stimulation interaction with their children. Household nutrition and the health environment at home improved. These were also found contributing to children's physical and cognitive skills development.

On the other hand, the evaluation of the project showed a low coverage of mothers, difficulty in attracting mothers for follow up, the gap in coordination among service providers and so on. The project also targetted fathers using SMS and video clips.

Partnerships to ensure the effective delivery of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services - a success story

The presentation of Ms. Amrita Goswani was about the Andhra Pradesh project of Save the Children. The project provided children with child-centered, gender sensitive and inclusive teaching-learning environment. The goal was to effectively deliver preschool services and ensure the smooth transition of young children from preschool to primary school. It targeted 20,000 0-8-year-old children.

The project was implemented with partnerships among government departments of ICDS and the education department, caregivers and the community at large, civil society and academic partners.

Concurrent Session 2

Concurrent Session 2 covered the different aspects of early education – the early learning provided by Anganwadi workers in India, the challenges that the ECCD workforce in the region are confronted with and the proposal for upgrading their conditions, and the adoption of mother tongue-based language education for children of indigenous communities in India. The Moderator for the Session was Ms. Ina Tamarua, ECD Advisor, Ministry of Education, Cook Island. The Discussants (in chronological order of their presentations) were: Ms. Kinnari Pandya, Senior Lecturer, Azim Premji University, India; Prof. Eunhye Park, Professor, Ewha Women's University,

South Korea; and Mr. Sudhir Kumar Digal, Programme Manager, People's Rural Education Movement (PREM), India.

Enabling environment for early educators: a key to early learning among children

The ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) scheme is the largest government-run programme in India that provides a comprehensive health care, nutrition and psychosocial development to children 0-6 years old. Ms. Kinnari Pandya informed that ICDS has helped reduce nutritional deficiencies and infant mortality in children in India over the years. And while it provided the stimulating environment and early learning opportunities for young children, it has not been able to make a significant difference to their psycho-social development.

The Medak Early Childhood Education Initiative of the Azim Premji Foundation begun an effort to enable an *Anganwadi* center (AWC) to become 'a learning' center. A baseline study was conducted in 157 *Anganwadi* centers to understand the status of its pre-school education component, the perceptions of *Anganwadi* worker (AWW) and *Anganwadi* helper on early childhood education and its importance.

The research was a quasi-experimental research, designed with experimental and control groups. It explored the idea of mentoring as a way or factor to improve the capacity of early educators.

Findings from the baseline study indicated that while aspects such as toilet training, gender and social sensitivity, knowledge of children's language or mother tongue interaction amongst boys and girls were seen in over 70 percent of AWCs may seem general and obvious in the context of children, it is worthwhile to acknowledge the conscious effort put by the AWWs in providing a conducive environment for children.

The efforts, thus far, denote that a very intricate partnership in the form of 'mentorship' is required for helping the *Anganwadi* worker become an 'effective' adult in the child's environment.

Issues and challenges for Early Childhood Care and Education workforce in Asia: Looking for collaboration between ARNEC and OMEP Asia Pacific region

Prof. Eunhye Park discussed and identified the issues and challenges pertaining to the qualifications, education and professional development of the ECCE workforce in initial

teacher training, professional and career development, and in improving their working conditions.

- ❖ Initial teacher training requires the raising up of the quality of the initial education programmes and requirements. This would need the setting up (or revision) of outcome standards or curriculum and the alignment of the qualifications between kindergarten teachers and child care providers and between pre-primary and primary teachers.
- ❖ Professional and career development would need more investments, funding and support for institutions and for individuals. Professional development should be able to focus on quality enhancement.
- ❖ Improving working conditions that raise the status of ECCE professionals and providing opportunities for promotion and mobility are crucial. The ECCD workforce should also be offered with status, benefits or social values equal to other professions in education. This also means the need to improve their salaries, minimum wages and other benefits.

The collaboration between ARNEC and OMEP can pursue the development of a database on the workforce in ECCE in Asia and the development of policy guidelines on the promotion of decent work for them.

The policy guidelines should be able to include the following:

- attract the best candidates to teaching, fill teacher gaps and get teachers to where they are needed most;
- train teachers to meet the needs of all children, equip them with innovative curricula to improve learning, and develop classroom assessments to help teachers identify and support students at-risk of not learning;
- prepare teacher educators and mentors to support teachers and improve teacher governance to maximize impact;
- use a competitive career and pay structure to retain the best teachers; and
- provide better data on trained teachers.

For countries which are in the process of improving or amending their policies on ECD, like Nepal, it will be useful to conduct a research to find out what works and what do not work based on the criteria for facilitators. In terms of teacher quality in Korea, parents are recruited based on commitment and there is no data or research on this specific issue.

Early childhood care and education for indigenous (tribal) children

India, known for its diversity, is characterized by societal multilingualism. Every state has government schools where the medium of instruction is in the official state language.

Mr. Sudhir Kumar Digal focused his discussion on Odisha, home to more than 62 tribes, which includes 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups. These groups speak their own dialects which is entirely different from the state language Odia. Children of these tribes cannot understand tribal language and culture; when children come into conventional schooling, learning becomes a challenge and dropout rate increases as children do not understand Odia which is the medium of instruction.

The People's Rural Education Movement (PREM), in association with Bernard van Leer Foundation, has been working on Early Childhood Development (ECD) focusing on mother tongue-based multilingual ECE in Odisha since 2007. This project provides integrated support to children (0 to 6 years) through home-based and center-based care.

The National Advocacy Council for Development of Indigenous Peoples advocated and enabled the inclusion of 'mother tongue-based multi-lingual early childhood education' in the National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy passed by the Government of India in 2013.

Concurrent Session 3

Concurrent Session 3 further expounds on partnerships and alliance building for ECD at different levels - community, local government, regional and national levels. The Session Moderator was Ms. Melissa Kelly, Senior ECD Advisor, ChildFund International. The Discussants were: Ms. Abigail Belza, Programme Officer, Consuelo Foundation, Philippines; Ms. C Putri Mumpuni, Community Managed ECCD Project Manager, Plan Indonesia and Ms. Le Thi Bich Hanh, Education and Parenting Programme Manager, Plan Vietnam; and from India, Ms. Sudeshna Sengupta, Senior Manager State Advocacy, National Level and Ms. Chivashee Ghosh, Senior Manager State Advocacy, Regional Level.

Strengthened ties lead to stronger ECD services

Ms. Abigail Belza discussed the Consuelo Foundation's programmes and projects and ensuring their sustainability with support from ECCD structures and local governments.

Healthy Start programme is the flagship programme of Consuelo Foundation which targets high-risk families with children aged 0-3 years old. Upon reaching the age of 3, the child is referred to another programme. High-risk children are identified based on

the presence of risk factors such as their asocial isolation, unrealistic expectation of child, unwanted pregnancy, presence of substance abuse, domestic violence.

The main intervention is parenting education with monitoring so as to link them to proper services. Home visitation is conducted on a monthly basis, depending on the needs of the family and based on an assessment of parent-child interaction.

A *Growing Great Kids (GGK) and Growing Great Families (GGF)* curriculum is used for the programme. It focuses on parents' understanding of health care and nutrition, need for parent empathy, how to make developmentally appropriate toys, and, how parents will be able to promote language skills and the social-emotional development of their children. The curriculum is translated from English into the local language.

An evaluation of the Consuelo Foundation's programme revealed that: target children displayed improvements in their health status and welfare; safety in the home also improved; and establishment of a stronger support system for parents to ensure sharing of child-rearing responsibilities.

In order to ensure sustainability and expansion of the programme, Consuelo Foundation signed a Tripartite Agreement with the ECCD Council and the Local Government Unit (LGU) concerned. With this agreement, the local government assumes the costs of the programme. Once the local government committed to endorse the programme, Consuelo takes on a leadership role in community preparation to move it ahead.

Cambodia expressed interest in learning more about the tripartite agreement.

Plan parenting in Asia – approach, implementation and partnerships

The discussion of Ms. Putri Mumpuni and Ms. Le thi Bich Hanh centered on Plan's parenting approach, its context and how it is implemented. Also discussed was partnership and alliance building as entry point for pursuing a holistic ECCD and for scaling-up.

The key parenting principles adopted by Plan in its programming are two-fold: first, identification of what parents need for childcare by building on their own parental knowledge and skills; and second, the identification of such shall be dialogue-driven and community-driven, with parents as stakeholders and duty-bearers, through parenting groups as an entry point for discussion and action.

A case study on co-ed parenting, with a fathers group and mothers group was presented. The fathers group had a more specific and shorter curriculum (compared to the mothers group). Fathers prefer more action-oriented activities. The study showed that fathers role in childcare had increased. The regular curriculum is used for the mothers group.

Parenting empowerment is an important strategy. When parents know what they want for their children and they are equipped with parenting skills and knowledge, they can achieve the goals for their children's well-being. The facilitator's role is important in dialogues with parents and the community but he/she should not try to solve the issue but encourage others to answer.

Alliance building for the rights to ECD in post-2015 agenda

Ms. Sudeshna Snegupta and Ms. Chivashee Ghosh provided the national and regional perspectives of alliance building perspectives.

Alliance building is strategic to India's ECD policy development and amendment process. The process of instituting a comprehensive policy that weaves in recent policy gains and other policy changes in 2013, specifically the new ECCE Policy and ICDS in Mission Mode, had been slow and tedious

Alliances are buy-ins for a particular issue. It brings multiple actors/stakeholders together to build a strong voice for lobbying. Individual institutions and groups alone are not strong enough to push an agenda. Centripetal and centrifugal forces to the movement are needed.

The following alliance building strategies can be done:

- ❖ Focus on common, agreed short-term and long-term agenda;
- ❖ Mapping of interest groups (practitioners, academia, and research organizations) that include a diverse group for diverse perspectives;
- ❖ Synchronization of advocacy strategies for the common goal at all levels;
- ❖ Adoption of a twin-track approach – broad basing the agenda through multiple doors;
- ❖ Active participation and communication to keep the agenda alive; and
- ❖ Participatory decision-making and resource mobilization for alliance building.

A case study on the right to food campaign was shared. The discussants identified its networking and advocacy strategies which included participation in law drafting, reference to constitution rights, influencing institutions. The outcome was a draft alternative national food security bill and, in 2013, the National Food Security Act was passed.

Concurrent Session 4

Concurrent Session 4 was on ECCD partnerships and collaboration based on in local settings of two countries – in the Municipality of San Francisco in the Philippines and in Alor island in Indonesia. The Moderator for the Session was Mr. Tomas Jensen, Chief Local Governance for Child Rights, UNICEF Cambodia. The Discussants were: from the Philippines - Mr. Enrico Baloro, Plan International and Mr. Giecer Canon, Department of the Interior and Local Government; and from World Vision Indonesia - Ms. Nurman Siagian and Ms. Fiona Winoto.;

Partnerships and alliance building for ECD

The main focus of the presentation was on ECCD partnerships and collaboration of the municipal government, Plan International, and the ECCD network through the Municipal ECCD team in the Municipality of San Francisco. The presentations and discussions were shared by Mr. Enrico Balor and Mr. Giecer Canon.

ECD partnerships and collaboration was illustrated with the experience of Plan in the the Municipality of San Francisco in the Eastern Visayas Region. An assessment and community level consultation with parents and *barangay* officials were done prior to the programme start-up. The community’s awareness about ECCD was heightened after community members were briefed and educated on ECCD. As a result, the community initiated the improvement of its day care facilities. Coordination among officials and parents improved and community-based funding was made possible.

Local government support and funding for ECCD, such as for capacity building, was limited. Furthermore, some of the officials appointed to work on ECCD were not interested or supportive. In spite of these concerns, the Municipal ECCD team is optimistic that the programme will be sustained because the programme is owned by the *barangay* and provided with budget allocation for ECCD. Plan International’s overall budget allocation for ECCD is between 12-15 percent.

Is systems integration for ECCD possible?

Indonesia’s ECD National Strategy is implemented through the three (3) main systems of Posyandu, Paud and BKB.

Ms. Nurman Siagian and Ms. Fiona Winoto discussed the World Vision’s experience in mobilizing various stakeholders in the Alor Island to plan together its Area Development Programme for a “Healthy children through a child-friendly society”. The strategy is both home-based and center-based, focused on learning skills of children. Children under-six years old in two villages were targeted.

Based on research and assessments at community level, sustainability is established through supportive government policies that also make possible the replication of the ECCD strategies in other areas.

Day 2: Contributing to Sustainable Development through ECD

Plenary Opening

Global Keynote

Early Childhood Development with Quality at National Scale in the Context of the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals

Mr. Hirokazu Yoshikawa, University Professor, New York University; NYU Global TIES for Children Center Co-Chair, Workgroup on ECD and Education, The United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN SDSN)

Mr. Yoshika's keynote covered the following: (a) making the case for ECD in the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals – the process undertaken to date and the next steps; (b) implementation of quality ECE at a national scale; and (c) examples of quality improvement with networked learning communities in preschools.

ECD achieved a milestone with its successful inclusion as a specific target in the post-2015 agenda to ensure learning for all children and youth for life and livelihood. The target is for all children under the age of 5 to reach their development potential through access to quality ECD programmes and policies. The goal also conservatively targets that all children receive at least one year of preschool education. These are identified among the proposed set of Sustainable Development Goals.

ECD is the foundation of sustainable human development. Decades of science from many disciplines all point to the same conclusion. Mr. Yoshika believes that arguments for ECD have to be put forward in the agenda “in an elevator speed”.

Sustainable Development Goals

(Proposed as of February 2014)

1. End extreme poverty including hunger
2. Achieve development within planetary boundaries
3. **Ensure effective learning for all children and youth for life and livelihood**
4. Achieve gender equality, social inclusion, and human rights for all
5. Achieve health and wellbeing at all ages
6. Improve agriculture systems and raise rural prosperity
7. Empower inclusive, productive, and resilient cities
8. Curb human-induced climate change and ensure sustainable energy
9. Secure ecosystem services and biodiversity, and ensure good management of water and other natural resources
10. Transform governance for sustainable development

Investing in ECD has lifelong benefits

The healthy development of children provides the strong foundation for healthy and competent adulthood, responsible citizenship, economic productivity, strong communities, and a sustainable society. Children are the common basis for all dimensions of sustainable development. No advances in sustainable development will occur in long decades without the contributions of multiple generations.

According to Mr. Yoshika, a conservative estimate to raise preprimary enrolment to 100 percent in low and middle income countries has a benefit/cost ratio of 7 to 15, depending on discount rates. The estimate is based on school attainment/earnings effects, not considering other dimensions such as socio-emotional effects. A high co-relation exists between the HDI (Human Development Index) and the ECD index. The countries that invested in ECD have higher indexes with about 0.9.

Quality improvement in ECD should look into structural and process quality.

Improving and supporting structural quality is more easily and better understood as it looks into physical settings, staff and personnel, among others, than knowing how to improve and

support process quality. Yet process quality is more directly and strongly related to children's learning and developmentally specific and engaging activities that support a full range of development potentials.

Quality in pre-primary settings in the context of low and middle income countries (LMICs) can consider a range of other vital interventions, including support to socio-emotional developmental potentials. The need for both demand and supply-side interventions is emphasized.

An example was given of quality improvement in learning communities in multiple regions of Chile based on the experimental evaluation and scale-up of “*Un Buen Comienzo*”. There were two phases and areas of implementation and evaluation. Class subscales were used in measuring the process quality: emotional support, productive learning time used, and instructional support. Some observations showed that the levels of instructional quality are low in class subscales – emotional support and classroom organization more easily improved, reasonable support unlike instructional support which allows only a few minutes spent. Measuring the effects on children need to take into account absenteeism.

Governments have to be convinced about quality processes through motivations of people, not just teachers but higher levels, trying to engage different levels including sub-national professional development staff.

Work in progress and way forward

The global effort shall move forward in refining the ECD goals and targets and continue with the next steps to focus on the following in January 2015:

- ❖ Development of early childhood indicators, with the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at the forefront, wherein ARNEC can provide regional inputs, especially with the indicators already identified in the study on the East Asia and Pacific ECD scales.
- ❖ Age disaggregation 0-2, 2-5 that can be applied to the more than 30 targets under other SDGs.
- ❖ Definition of quality in ECCD programmes and policies.
- ❖ Guidance for member nations in implementing the ECD target and indicators: data systems revolution; costing models (meetings to September 2015; Lancet series 2015; World Bank; many other efforts).
- ❖ Across all SDGs, UN SDSN World in 2050 project: Operational guidance for member nations regarding tradeoffs across areas of SDG’s (economy, demography, technology, environment, climate, human development and planetary boundaries).

Participants to the Conference affirmed the importance to move forward to implement ECD with quality. Cambodia would like to learn more about studies on emotion, if there are any, and the difference in incentive structure for ECD workforce across countries.

The difference among ECCD facilitators, female or male, mother or father, when drawn into community workforce was discussed. Many more studies are needed beyond home visitation functions of ECCD facilitators, such as what circumstance can be brought to scales.

The Philippines’ Pediatrics group shared that much like the policies of the American Pediatrics, they now underscore the importance for parents to start talking to children

early and continue talking to them, promoting early language development, reading to children from infancy up to before going to school.

The medical community is coming up with an integrated and comprehensive view of children's health and behavior, a comprehensive view spearheaded with UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake going into leadership role together with the WHO.

The *“Un Buen Comienzo”* study did not delve into a comparison of parents who attended preschools vis-à-vis those who did not attend. However, virtually all studies showed the benefits to children's cognitive skills but with large effect on process quality in addition to instructional quality.

Plenary 4

ECD in the Post 2015 Development Agenda

The scope of discussions on ECD in the post-2015 development agenda, while coming from different perspectives, was one in underscoring the importance of ECD to human development. National policies and programmes were presented, and not without problems; discussants enumerated the challenges that continuously hound ECD such as the underinvestment in ECD and the lack of equitable access to and quality ECD services.

An overview of the global and regional situation of children, especially the very young, was provided by Plan International. A country situationer, including the history of policy development and issuances, was presented by the Philippines. China illustrated the challenge of a young girl living in a remote village finally having access to ECD services through a video presentation.

On top of the pursuit of the post-2015 development agenda, are wide advocacy initiatives for governments, national and international development agencies and other stakeholders for increased investments in ECD. A cost-benefit analysis can be considered for increasing resources for ECD as “a robust investment pay back to societies.”

The Moderator for Plenary 3 was Dr. Ghazala Rafique, Interim Director, Aga Khan University, Human Development Programme – Karachi, Pakistan; Chairperson, Executive Committee, ARNEC. The Panelists were: Dr. Teresita G. Inciong, Executive Director, ECCD Council, Philippines; Ms. Divya Lata, Early Learning and Education Advisor, Plan Asia Regional Office; Mr. Lu Mai, Secretary General, China Development

Research Foundation; Mr. Edward Olney Jr, Country Director, Save the Children Philippines.

Philippines National ECCD Council

Dr. Teresita Inciong presented the situation of ECD in the Philippines, the major policies that govern ECD, the accomplishments of the newly-established National ECCD System, and the post-2015 agenda of the National ECCD Council to address the gaps in ECCD in the country.

The Philippines has a long history of support and commitment to children, especially young children reflected in major policies initiated past several decades. The more prominent and specific ones are:

- a. the Child and Youth Welfare Code (Presidential Decree (PD) 603, 1974);
- b. the Day Care Act which establishes a day care center in every *barangay* (village) (PD 1567, 1978);
- c. the Total Development and Protection of Children Act (Republic Act or RA 6972) which reiterates the establishment of a day care center as a concern for the total development and protection of children (Republic Act (RA) 6972, 1990);
- d. the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160) which defined that health and social welfare services, at the local level, shall include the maintenance of barangay health centers and day care centers;
- e. the ECCD Act which is the promulgation of a comprehensive policy and a national system for ECCD (RA 8980, 2000) and amended by the Early Years Act of 2013 which recognized the age from zero (0) to eight (8) years as the first crucial stage of educational development and the strengthening of the ECCD system.

Philippines

Population: 105.72 million

Child population 0-6 years old: 17.20 million or 18% of total population

3-6-year-old children in day care, preschools, grade one class: approximately 6 million

7 of 10 children 0-6 years old received some form of early care

No. of day care centers across the country: 49,712

With the formal establishment of the National ECCD Council, the following were done:

- * Expansion of equitable access and quality ECCD programmes and services with the creation of 200 national child development centers (NCDCs) across the country;

- * A comprehensive capability building programme that consists of: training for child development teachers (CDTs) and teacher-assistants (TAs) with an Early Childhood Teacher Education Program (ECTEP) scholarship programme; induction programme for child development workers (CDWs)/teachers in 20 cities and 65 municipalities;
- * development of the National Early Learning Curriculum (NELC) which contains developmentally appropriate content and the Learning Resource Package (LRP) designed as NELC implementation guide for CDTs, CDWs, parent-mentors;
- * Organization of 56 Local ECCD Committees, headed by City and Municipal Mayors.

The NECCDC aims to address the gaps in ECD implementation by 2020:

- a. Equitable access to quality services to ensure that 100 percent of 5-year-old children are kindergarten-ready:
 - i. establishment of National Child Development Centers in priority areas
 - ii. inclusion of young children with disabilities and special needs, at-risk, vulnerable and disadvantaged
- b. Capability building for ECCD service providers
 - i. roll-out of the standard National Early Learning Curriculum and corresponding Learning Resource Packages to all CDWs/teachers
 - ii. establishment of a mechanisms for the professionalization of ECCD service providers
- c. Increased ECCD budget at both national and local levels through strengthened collaborations and partnerships, advocacy and lobbying; and,
- d. Community and family awareness on ECD.

The presentation concluded with a quote from the PD 603 – *“The child is one of the most important assets of the nation. Every effort should be exerted to promote his/her welfare and enhance his/her opportunities for a useful and happy life.”*

Plan Asia, Regional Office

Ms. Divya Lata provided a global perspective of the situation for children and the global initiatives for a post-2015 agenda to realize the aspirations for a better world for children, especially for the young children.

Ms. Lata further analyzed the prevailing conditions where 200 million under-five children are at serious health risk and 250 million primary school age children not learning the basics:

- o 3:1 probability of heart disease with 6 or more risk factors in early childhood
- o 90-100 percent likelihood of developmental delay with six or more early risk factors

- 2:1 difference in size of speaking vocabulary between responsive and poor care setting

The global rate of out-of-school children is stagnant at 9 percent (54 million) – because of gender, conflict, remoteness, disabilities, ethnicity, among other factors. On average, only 17 percent of children from the poorest population have pre-primary access.

The aspiration is for “A better world post-2015 and EFA with: 700 million fewer living in extreme poverty; 2.3 billion more access drinking water; 2 billion more have improved sanitation; 8.3 percent fewer in developing countries are undernourished; 47 percent fewer mothers die during childbirth; under-five (U5) mortality decreased by 45 percent, under-weight by 38 percent and stunting by 35 percent; preprimary enrolment increased to 54 percent; primary enrolment in least developed countries increased to 81 percent.”

Global and regional partnerships for education have contributed largely to global goals on education resulting into their integration to country programmes and numerous successes have so far been shared and learnt from.

Plan International endorses the development of a holistic and inclusive ECD framework and its global ECD review includes analyzing advancements in this approach. New research and data shall provide the bases for developing standards for quality ECD programmes.

At the core of Plan’s programme is the role of parents – how it evolves in different stages of a child’s life, how to continue their role and how they can be supported by Plan. It is wholly addressing pre-natal needs until children gradually move into transition to formal school. Towards a timely comprehensive support, the following are pursued:

- Strategic integrative partnerships – child survival, development, protection and participation (Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition, ECD, WASH, and Child Protection)
- Reduction of early childhood risks – mortality malnutrition, frequent infections and poor growth, lack of responsive care, psychosocial support and positive parenting, maternal depression
- Mainstreaming gender transformative programming – gender in ECD reviews, fathers’ engagement (address power relations in a family by getting fathers engaged in the programme)
- Tackling exclusion – advancing mother tongue-based learning, early attention to parental concerns indicative of disabling conditions

China Development and Research Foundation

Mr.Lu Mai surmises that promoting ECD in the post-2015 development agenda is imperative because -

- ECD is key to human development and poverty elimination (Amartya Sen);
- ECD gives the highest return to human capital (James J. Heckman);
- ECD is the critical period for genes and brain development;
- ECD can contribute to the reduction of inequalities.

The foregoing indicates that ECCD is a clear investment and more resources should be allocated for it. Yet, governments are still reluctant in putting its resources to ECD.

While the arguments for putting ECCD in the Post-2015 Development Agenda have been enunciated, remaining challenges need to be addressed to counter the lack in consensus of stakeholders on ECCD, national action and plan, ECD practice of easy operation and easy replication, funding, long-term research and evaluation.

A video presentation from a remote village in China was shown by CDRF. It was about Peng Ya, the young girl who grew up in the basket of her grandfather while her parents lived far away to work. Her grandfather could not teach her to paint or sing. It was only when the first kindergarten in their village was established that a new world of ECCD was opened to her.

CDRF conducted social experiments on ECD through the China REACH programme. These involved parenting and nutrition interventions and the provision of low cost quality preschool education in accessible VEEC (Village Early Education Centers). It included a school feeding programme and a school meal trust. The CDRF conducted an evaluation of developmental outcomes among the children beneficiaries using a comparison with a non-pilot group. It showed that children in the pilot centers scored higher in their language, motor skills, cognitive and memory development. It also showed a reduction in anemia among infants and children who received nutritional interventions.

China's education policies are reflected in the Preschool Education Three-Year Action Plan (2011-2013). It also has policies for nine-year compulsory education and vocational education. Another policy provides central fiscal payment of 300 million yuan to cover 800,000 infants in 300 counties in eight contiguous poor areas. In 2012, with a full scale-up, central fiscal investment reached RMB 16 billion, benefiting 26 million rural children attending compulsory education.

President Xi Jinping approved the policy recommendations of CDRF to formulate a national plan to enhance child development in poor rural areas in 2013. And just about two weeks before the Conference, the National Plan for Child Development in Poor Areas 2014-2020 was approved by the State Council.

The ECD post-2015 agenda of China shall:

- Adopt a lifecycle approach in policymaking and provide a comprehensive ECD intervention package
- Increase investment in ECD
- Support long-term evaluation and research on ECD intervention programmes
- Inform the public of the significance of ECD and strengthen the experience sharing among nations

Save the Children, Philippines

The global and regional ECD community have been underscoring the importance of investments of respective agencies in ECD. Mr. Edward Olney, however, expressed the concern about how ECD is prioritized in societies - as individuals, as communities, as nations – because different communities have different priorities.

Mr. Olney surmised that differences are reflected even in the process of evolving the post-2015 agenda and in the determination of priorities and targets being done by a high level panel in the United Nations system.

Decisions have to be made, specifically considering doing good for every dollar spent and discussing the rate of returns. The Copenhagen CBA identifies an investment as phenomenal if there is a robust investment of more than USD15 dollars, good at between USD5-USD15, and, poor if there is less than USD1 return. A cost-benefit analysis of the 169 MDG targets has not been considered in the UN process, although some countries have actually done it at their level.

Of particular significance is that one of the highest returns on investment on children which showed 33 times of dollars invested is derived from acting early. Evidence showed that returns (results or impact) are high at relatively low cost. Other education targets include poor returns, such as at the secondary level. There is a need to improve bad targets to make them good or phenomenal and focus to create a profound impact on humanity.

Save the Children is still discussing the quality of its investment, as embedded in targets identified in a matrix, the progress towards achievement. It has done much on 0-3 cohorts with early stimulation, leaving no one behind, equity piece, as articulated in its present goals.

In the finalization of new targets in the post 2015 agenda, the application of a cost-benefit analysis can be considered for increasing resources for ECD as a robust investment pay back to societies. Any new initiative must be informed by perspectives from the global community and all other stakeholders.

Plenary 5

Regional tools development initiatives to improve the quality of ECD

The Asia-Pacific region spearheaded the development of regional tools and these were shared during the Conference: (1) the EAP ECD scale developed and supported by HKU, ARNEC, UNICEF, and OSF; (2) the Pacific guidelines of the PRC4ECCE for national quality frameworks that defined systems components to ensure that the countries are on-track according to international standards; and; (3) the SEAMEO guidelines that promote quality pre-primary education teacher development in Southeast Asia. These initiatives were a result of defined and wide-ranging consultative processes, evidence-based studies and sound research methods, all done in collaboration with and cooperation by various countries and entities in the region.

The Moderator for Plenary 5 was Dr. Mugyeong Moon, Director of Trend Analysis and International Cooperation Team, Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, Republic of Korea. The Panelists were (a) for the EAP-ECDS Research Team - Dr. Yvonne Becher, Head of Psychological Services, Child Development Centre and Dr. Sun Jin, Assistant Professor, The Hong Kong Institute of Education; Director Prak Kosal, Deputy Secretary-General of National Committee-Early Childhood Care and Development and Director of Early Childhood Education Department, Cambodia; Dr. Tsendsuren Tumeer, ECD Specialist, UNICEF Mongolia; (b) Ms. Teimana Avanitele, ECCE Officer, Education Department, Tuvalu and President, Pacific Regional Council for ECCE (PRC4ECCE); and (c) Dr. Mami Umayahara, Chief of the Director's Office and Programme Cycle Management Specialist, UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education.

East Asia and Pacific ECD Scales: Development and findings

A collaborative effort was undertaken by UNICEF, ARNEC, Open Society Foundation, and the Child Development Centre of Hongkong to evolve the Asia-Pacific ECD Scale (ECDS). UNICEF had been pursuing the development of globally accepted (and tested) early learning and development standards for evidence-based decision making. While there were earlier initiatives in this regard, there are yet no globally accepted tests for ECD.

Dr. Yvonne Becher shared the process and phases in the development of the regional scale:

Phase I – Selection of items to be used in a tool

An indicator data base was established. It consisted of 1,738 indicators for children ages 3, 4, and 5 from seven different countries. Seven categories were developed plus sub-categories for a determined number of indicators and converted into items.

Phase II - Pilot studies in Mongolia, Fiji and China

The draft categories were checked and field trials were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of scales – its reliability, validity, appropriateness considering cross-cultural differences. The scale was revised considering the domains approaches to learning, cognitive development, cultural knowledge and participation.

Phase III – Validation of the EAP ECDS in six countries

A sampling method was used for the validation of the EAP ECDS in Cambodia, China, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Vanuatu. The samples included both boys and girls residing in urban and rural settings, attending preschool programmes and those who did not. Sampling in all countries was stratified by child's age, gender and urbanicity and certain adaptations were done by language, arrangement of picture items, letters/characters, wordless picture book, recognition of danger signs.

Overall findings and lessons learnt from the study

The scores across the AP-ECDS domains were internally consistent. Correlations between parent ratings and EAP-ECDS domain and total scores were found. Age, gender, urban-rural differences figured out in the total EAP-ECDS scores.

The ECDS has potential uses as evidence to decrease urban/rural gaps, decrease gender imbalances, promote parental involvement, advocate for early childhood education and care, guide ECCE curriculum development/review.

There were important lessons learnt from the conduct of the study: the need for a low-resource tool particularly for hard to access areas, language selection should never be skipped in the (back-) translation process (meanings get lost), be culturally appropriate (item flexibility vs. standardization), consideration of direct vs indirect assessment (very complementary), ensure the training of tool users/administrators.

This first regional assessment tool was initiated using a bottom-up approach to its development. Enormous resources were put into ensuring context-sensitivity items.

Timor Leste and Cambodia have shared their follow-up plans after completion of the ECDS development.

A national conference in Timor Leste will be done to raise the awareness of parents, community leaders, and political leaders. Mechanisms will be established with line

ministries of the Vice Minister's office. With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Education shall assess the current framework of preschool curriculum using the findings of the ECDS study. The findings will be shared nationwide.

In Cambodia, the results and findings of the AP-ECDS will be used to provide feedback for curriculum revision, identify weaknesses, and improve the ECCD programme for minority groups. The findings will be translated to the local language and widely disseminated to relevant ministries and other government entities.

Pacific ECCE Quality Guidelines

Ms. Teimana Avanitele talked about the Pacific Regional Council for ECCE (PRC4ECCE) and its components and the relevant guidelines.

The PRC4ECCE, established in 2010, has five system components:

1. Policy, legislation and governance – overall policy, costing, issues
2. Human resources – qualifications, who will work with children, ongoing professional development, recruitment
3. Curriculum, child assessment and environment
4. Performance monitoring and assessment – including ongoing monitoring and assessment and tools that need to be used
5. Family and community partnerships – ownerships and partnerships, community-based management

The PRC4ECCE formulated the guidelines so that countries can use the relevant system component for the preparation of their respective situation analysis and for addressing gaps in their ECCD programmes/policies. The PRC4ECCE undertakes regular review of the guidelines to ensure that they are on-track according to international standards, remain focus on ECCD, and ensure the quality of ECCD. The adoption of the guidelines is purely up to each country.

Guidelines for pre-primary education teacher development in Southeast Asia

The preparation of the guidelines for pre-primary education teacher development in Southeast Asia is still a very new process and work in progress. It started in 2014 as a project of cooperation between UNESCO and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and other project partners include the Japan Funds In-trust, ARNEC, the International Labour Organization and the 11 SEAMEO countries.

SEAMEO countries have developed national ECCE standards or curricular frameworks, including early learning and development standards. This accounts for an increase in preprimary gross enrolment ratios in Southeast Asia; however, as have been pointed out many times during the Conference, equitable access to quality ECCE remains a problem in the region due mainly to:

- a large number of children in low-income countries enter primary school without any ECCE experience
- comprehensive ECCE is out of reach for many children living in remote areas or disadvantaged and vulnerable situations
- investment in early years can yield a high return but public education investment in preprimary level is very low

The objective of the project is to contribute to the qualitative improvement of pre-primary education by supporting the professionalization and capacity development of pre-primary teachers and strengthening the capacity of Southeast Asian countries to comprehensively analyze the scope of preprimary education.

Each country is free to consider age groups and programme types as relevant to the country context.

- Educational properties of programmes – but typically designed with a holistic approach to support children’s early cognitive physical, social and emotional development and introduction of young children to organized instruction outside of the family context
- Institutional context – school, center-based, community-based, home-based
- Typical target age – ECE programmes for 0-2, preprimary education usually for children 3 years the age when they start primary education
- Programme intensity/duration – at least the equivalent of 2 hours per day and 100 days a year of educational equivalent

The (expected) project outputs include: an analytical synthesis report, guidelines which involved the preparation of a zero draft, a second workshop to revise the zero draft, submission of guidelines for the endorsement of SEAMEO Ministers of Education, and country action plans.

The draft guidelines follow the outline below:

1. Preparation for the profession
2. Pre-service teacher training
3. Qualifications, certification, accreditation and licensing
4. Continuous professional development
5. Monitoring, evaluation and performance appraisal
6. Professional ethics
7. Competencies
8. Recruitment, deployment

9. Salaries, benefits and incentives

In closure, Dr. Umayahara emphasized the imperative to integrate ECD in the work of SEAMEO and UNESCO. She acknowledged the importance of being grounded in the work being done especially with all stakeholders, not just with higher level officials. Collective efforts will result into regional and global outcomes.

Concurrent Session 5

The topics tackled in Concurrent Session 5 were about two models, one on social returns on investment and the other the Aflatot model for social and financial education. The Session also discussed the case of horizontal integration and fathers' important role in ECD in Baluchistan.

The Moderator for Session 5 was Ms Binh Thanh Vu, Senior Education Specialist, The World Bank, Australia. The Discussants were: Ms. Melissa Kelly, Senior ECD Advisor, ChildFund International; Ms. Chiara Massaroni, Programme Executive, Aflatoun Child Savings International; and Dr. Jamilla Razzaq, Education Adviser, Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan.

The social returns on investment of ChildFund's responsive parenting model in Carchi, Ecuador

ChildFund International's (CFI) Theory of Change for Infants and Young Children (Conception to 5 years) to make them healthy and secure infants was identified as follows: empowered and responsive caregivers, safe and caring environment, high quality health care and nutrition, high quality stimulation.

ChildFund's empowered and responsive parenting programme was elaborated because these resulted to individual transformation and provided an enabling environment wherein caregivers become champions with voice for children's rights.

The curriculum for parenting education focuses on households identified by the community as high risk (e.g. with alcohol problem, lack of schools).

Also described was CFI's child protection strategy, bearing in mind that formal mechanisms for protection of children do not reach certain groups. A non-formal mechanism has been developed to have members in the community look around for

telltale signs: if they see children exploited, vulnerable, neglected, then they report to mother guides who know the village people.

In view of the foregoing, CFI embarked on a study on social return on investing (SROI) in ECD, instead of delving only into the usual economic returns on investments to determine:

- How much social change is attributed to this model?
- How much social value is created for every dollar invested?
- What are the costs and social benefits – in dollar amounts – of this model?

The SROI measured important changes and the impact of the programme from the stakeholders' perspectives: the improved physical development of children, the knowledge and skills, self-esteem, participation in decision making of parents and families, and the improved competence and skills in imparting knowledge and facilitating processes of mother trainers.

The SROI looked at financial costs of monitoring, awareness raising, making parenting model and etc. and the economic cost of time inputs and in-kind donations (time to participate, space for the meeting and etc.), It then analyzed the return on investment i.e. for every 1 USD invested, 2 USD was obtained in return, and 2 years from now, the expected return will be 3.5 USD.

Participants wanted to learn more about the study and Ms. Kelly responded to the questions raised.

Background of the community. The indicators of near/extreme poverty in this community in Carchi are double the national average. The community is located along the border of Ecuador and Columbia which explains the large number of migrants from Columbia to Carchi..

Project duration. Although the project itself was for nine months, ChildFund International had been working in the community for about 2-3 years, so the people in the community were already familiar with CFI and vice versa.

Objectivity of the study. The results and findings of the study were based on focus group discussions, programme data, key informative interviews and child development tools that mother trainers used. Although self-assessment methodology was mostly used, the score cards and the child development tools were assessed to ensure the objectivity of the study. Nevertheless, the study was more about taking a more specific insight into values and factors that are not normally captured (which is subjective) and analyzed these based programme data.

Translation of benefits in dollar values. The programme followed a very strict existing table for analysis of benefit/dollar value. With evidence-based dollar figures on

immediate return on investment, it sent a powerful message to influence policy decisions for the government of Ecuador.

Child protection. Child protection issues are admittedly ‘invisible’ for infants and young children. If the child is left alone (neglected) or there is a family member with alcohol problem, it will be put on record that a child protection problem exists within the household. Ms. Kelly noted that a study on the environmental return is something interesting that should be done in the future.

ChildFund global policy. A staff member from the ChildFund Country Office asked about ChildFund International’s theory of change and livelihood (note that the presenter is senior advisor for ECD at the CFI Headquarters) since it is committed to staying in a community only for a certain number of years. The presenter explained that traditionally ChildFund International looked at the issue of livelihood from the youth perspective, not ECD. Ecuador is trying to look at it from the ECD perspective now. Parents and community people are usually eager to participate in savings programmes, and this is a good entry point for advocacy and parenting education.

Early childhood social and financial education for a sustainable society: the Aflatot model

A social and financial education model for early childhood was presented by Ms. Chiara Massaroni to highlight its contribution to sustainable development as it goes well beyond environments, needs, community, resources. From a global perspective, sustainable development can be defined as the timeline between generations and with responsibility of everyone and individual environment.

Social and financial education has a role in providing the required skills that can contribute to sustainable development. With rapid advancements in this modern age, it is crucial to learn 21st century soft skills.

The three pillars of education for sustainable development were identified as economy, environment, and socio-cultural phenomena. All these relate to sustainable development because it is about human diversity, accepting and learning, not just tolerating.

Aflatoun is a network organization with different types of organizations in 32 countries. Aflatot was piloted in the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka. Its concepts and curriculum were developed along five core elements: (a) how to embrace the future; (b) personal understanding of exploration; (c) rights and responsibilities; (d) planning and budgeting; and (e) social and financial enterprises.

The main tool is the Aflatoun activity box, wherein children collect different objects and learn about ‘value’ when they are asked to keep only the things that are most important

to them. Later, children start to work with coins, learning about basic numeracy and financial literacy. More detailed activities and curriculum for the classroom were shown through samples displayed in the Conference room.

The Gross Happiness Indicators used in Bhutan are closely linked to sustainable development. Aflatoun looks into levels of 'happiness' for young children.

Aflatoun is still in a pilot stage, developed only over a year and a half, with plans to be updated in 2015. It is an open-source project - different partners can contextualize the project as they see fit.

Fostering social entrepreneurship and connecting young children internationally can be a new area for Aflatoun. This suggestion emanated from current initiatives to connect young children at the international level, for which an example was cited. Sri Lankan kids work together with Norwegian kids in tea plantations to do packaging and selling the tea as a product, and sharing the benefits. It is essential to train children early enough to prepare them to survive the new era with harsh realities of no government jobs, effects of climate change and natural disasters such as cyclones, droughts, famine, and typhoons.

Aflatoun works with children in school only, but creating a programme for out-of-school children could be an area which can be explored further.

Early Childhood Development Programme in Baluchistan, Pakistan: A case of contextualized horizontal integration

Dr. Jamilla Razzaq discussed the work of the Aga Khan Foundation and its priorities. The focus of Aga Khan Foundation is on medical services linked to ECD. At the same time, it is working to advocate for ECD integration for the improvement of early year learning (school intervention and in bringing in the community and parents together for the realization of the ECD integration policy).

The project approach demonstrates horizontal integration, cultural sensitivity, flexibility and localization. It works in three categories of districts in Baluchistan (capital town, very conservative, with ethnic population) with cross-sectional integration of care, health, and education. Localized strategies are adjusted and adapted based on the situation, physical conditions, social practices and culture of the community such as cyclone-resistant school designs, separate sessions for mothers and fathers, day time sessions for mothers and evening after-work sessions for fathers.

Fathers' engagement in ECD figured prominently in discussions during the Conference. Fathers' engagement is challenging, especially because the programme is being implemented in a very conservative society where taking care of a child is not considered

as a father's job. The ratio of father to mother participation in the parenting education is only 1:10. The involvement of respected community members can influence the participation of fathers in parenting sessions.

Additional ECE information in Pakistan was generated in the course of the discussion:

- The country has two types of preschools – one is for a two-year term and the other for only one year.
- Parenting education is linked to the formal education such as kindergarten and preschool.
- The family resource center is run and managed by a project staff. A technical partner provides modules and training and the other partner is in charge of implementation. In the presenter's opinion, the center can be sustainable if they can bring health and education together – once this is done, the center can be run by the Department of Health.

A major concern of Aga Khan Foundation is to work closely with the Government to have an ECD policy for the region. However, the Government wants ages 0-3 years out of the policy framework and to focus only on 4-8 years.

Concurrent Session 6

The topics discussed in Concurrent Session 6 were about a proposal to document noteworthy practices in the region, the role of parents and teachers in the transition of young children to formal schooling, and the community-based ECD interventions dubbed as the Supervised Neighborhood Play.

The Moderator for the Session was Dr. Jessica Ball, Consultant, Open Society Foundations. The discussants were: Dr. Emma Pearson, Senior Lecturer, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam; from VVOB Vietnam - Mr. Filip Lenaerts, Education Advisor and Dang Tuyet Anh, Programme Coordinator; and Ms. Corazon Villareal Obra, Programme Officer, ChildFund Philippines.

Constructing an evidence-based innovations in early childhood care and education (ECDE) within the Asia Pacific region: A Proposal for documenting noteworthy practices

The proposal for evidence-based documentations of innovations and programme practices for children in diverse communities was presented by Dr. Emma Pearson. A rigorous research methodology will be undertaken to reflect multiple stakeholder needs for quality ECDE. It will build on noteworthy practices to document and analyze programmes to find out WHY and HOW they work well.

The research will aim to ask the key contextual process factors that underpin success and perceived observed benefits of selected programmes. Process outcomes and unintended outcomes shall be drawn from various perspectives/environments e.g. communities, programme staff, caregivers, family, policy drivers.

Qualitative and interpretive methodology will also be used such as documentary analysis, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews (most significant change stories), participant and non-participant observations (home visits), video documentation (supported by ARNEC). The information that will be derived can be used both regionally and internationally.

The proposed research project shall not deal with the huge issue of data collection, verification and reliability. Practice- based evidence will be used. The moderator points to a desperate need for a more systematic research agenda to capture what works in low resourced areas of the world.

The challenge of the proposed project is to establish focus and limit its research on diverse practices only. Generalization of data will be limited; however, these will be used to understand the processes that underpin effective programming.

Promoting equity in early education: strengthening the role of parents, teacher and school leaders in supporting children's transition from kindergarten into primary school in Vietnam

The transition of a young child from home to preschool to primary school is critical to his/her development. In Vietnam, the following gaps in perception of ECD transition were observed:

- Parents say that a child is anxious about school
- Teachers say most children adapt well, others say that grade 1 is hard because it involves teaching as well as care-giving
- At the start of the school year, media reports can be read about first graders being depressed, scared after classes start

Mr. Filip Lennerts described how the VVOB team worked with the Ministry of Education and the Women's Union to support all children for a successful transition. National

consultations were conducted with stakeholders exploring the concept of transition and practices and the links between transition and pedagogy. A successful transition entails a readiness triangle that involves school, child, and family readiness. As they grow up, children face changes in their learning environments, pedagogy, initiative, relations, and expectations. Bridging in practices that address space, climate, initiative, language, method and interaction are needed.

The model used in Vietnam has three components: (a) strengthening the link between primary school and kindergarten; (b) enhancing the collaboration between schools and WU clubs; and (c) better preparation of student teachers and in-service teachers.

Role of teachers. The role of preschool teachers is to support children early, change the preschool learning environment, assess readiness (using standards), and organize bridging activities. The role of the school leader is to develop smooth transition plans and build links between preschool and primary school.

Role of parents. Parents, on the other hand, have the role to prepare their children to play less – it would be helpful if the parent is a volunteer (in an ECD activity), provide an effective environment for their children, encourage enthusiasm, interest in learning and high expectations (trust in child), without external rewards.

Children have the rights and need for equal access to education, including access for children with disabilities (CWDs). Several approaches have been used or recommended for use for CWDs in transition. CWD is an important group not represented in preschool or primary in some countries; others have policies or a law on disability.

A play for learning: A case study of Bicol's Supervised Neighborhood Play (SNP) Programme

The Supervised Neighborhood Play (SNP) in the Philippines or play for learning is an alternative ECD modality for children without or have difficult access to center-based services. The interventions for the SNP were shared by Ms. Corazon Obra.

The SNP offers the following:

- Parent education (health care, nutrition, responsible parenthood, etc.)
- Health and nutrition – ensure regular monitoring of weight and check-ups and supplementary feeding
- Early Learning through play (120 hours)
- Capacity building for service providers (orientation and training for volunteers)

SNP is not static and can be mobile. The quality of its sessions is improved through the use of local and indigenous learning and play materials.

Families of malnourished children in the SNP are also provided with seeds for planting and growing nutritious foods.

The SNP covers 85 percent of children in 25 villages and 97 percent of mothers of children in the SNP have completed parent effectiveness sessions. So far, no evidence of outcomes had been reported but the assessment of the SNP is expected to be conducted in the following months.

The SNP also showcases the involvement of parents as volunteers and the cooperation and partnership with the local government and NGOs.

The presentations have provided very interesting insights into effective initiatives, highlighting the need for research and documentation that explains the critical success factors. The importance of engaging communities and understanding multiple perspectives is essential in order to understand why programmes are successful.

Concurrent Session 7

Concurrent Session 7 was about two different topics. The first was on using a situation assessment for the preparation of an ECD project in Myanmar; the other topic was on disaster preparedness. The latter discussed the different phases of disaster response to Typhoon Haiyan done in the severely affected areas in the Philippines and the disaster risk reduction and management for ECD in Indonesia.

The Moderator for the Session was Ms. Marilyn Manuel, Independent ECCD Advisor, Philippines. The discussants were: Mr. Tin Tun, ECCD Programme Manager, Plan International Myanmar; Ms. Beverly Bicaldo, Country Advisor for Early Childhood Care and Development, Plan International, Philippines; and Ms. Joanne Hashim, Programme Director, ChildFund Indonesia.

Situation assessment on child wellbeing in Toungup township, Myanmar

Mr. Tin Tun talked about a qualitative research which was conducted in selected villages in Toungup Township as a startup phase for the establishment of the baseline of the three-year ECCD Project of Plan's Country Programme in Myanmar. The objective of the research was to understand the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of people in the target area, a site where coverage in ECCD, school readiness and parent education is low compared to other parts of Myanmar. Research methods include observation, FGDs, and interviews,

Key findings include:

- Health care and nutrition. Health mobilization in the community is strong (in terms of promoting nutrition, immunization, and hygiene). In spite of these efforts, exclusive breastfeeding is rarely practiced in the community and 30 percent of children are still malnourished.
- Socio-emotional development. Communities contribute funds for primary schools. Moral and cultural activities are organized regularly. However, primary schools are overcrowded, the pre-school experience of children is limited, and the learning methodology is still rote-based.
- Child protection and safety. The findings suggest that there is a wide neighborhood network engaged in looking after children. But, these lack safety precautions at home.
- Birth registration. The number of children who were not registered at birth is high. The Government is now ready to promote and facilitate birth registration of newborns. Steps are starting to be undertaken towards it.

Plan Philippine experiences on ECCD in emergencies during Typhoon Haiyan

Haiyan (Yolanda), one of the strongest typhoons to hit the Philippines, had caused thousands of deaths and left severe devastation in many parts of the country especially in the Visayas Region.

The experience of Plan Philippines on ECCD in emergency interventions was shared in the Conference by Ms. Beverly Bicaldo. Plan supported several municipalities in two provinces (Eastern and Western Samar) where around 14,000 children were affected. Interventions were divided into levels of child development and response modes of Pre-Disaster, Emergency Relief, and Rehabilitation Phases.

Pre-Disaster interventions involved the distribution of infant kits and training of Nutrition Action Officers and Barangay Health Workers.

Emergency Relief included mobile ECD Daycare services which provided training to 300 Day Care Workers (DCWs) on psychosocial support and on the production of indigenous toys, distribution of ECCD Kits with lightweight water resistant materials, and provision of cash for work for DCWs for 15 days.

The Rehabilitation Phase comprised the following: (a) collaboration with ECCD sub-clusters in the Visayas Region for assessment and addressing the needs of children post-disaster; (b) provision of cash for work for fathers for rebuilding Child Protection

Centers; (c) rehabilitation of damaged Day Care structures; (d) Supervised Neighborhood Play; (e) Back-to-Day Care Campaign; and, (f) provision of Back to School kits for 2,500 children.

Initial results revealed that, in spite of the disaster, the participation of children in ECD activities increased, the capacities of members of ECCD clusters in the performance of their duties amid the devastation were enhanced, and the collaborations among NGOs and GOs were strengthened.

Multi-stakeholder efforts in building resilience from an early age

The 2007 Disaster Management Law of Indonesia has minimal provisions for children-related issues. This led AusAid to support and fund the ChildFund programme on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) and Child Protection for ECD teachers and cadres. Sumba was chosen as the site for the DRRM programme on ECD because it is the poorest province in Indonesia and it is also prone to disasters.

Ms. Joanne Hashim presented the DRR in ECD programme in Indonesia which aims to: (a) improve the capacity of tutors in early warning systems and integrate safety in daily lessons both at home and in school, (b) conduct simulation activities for different disaster-related scenarios; and (c) improve and ensure that the environment is safe.

These resulted into a strengthened collaboration among partners, parents, ECD teacher association. Parental involvement and teacher attitudes towards the programme were highly positive. The *Bunda Paud* or “wife of leaders” helped generate interest to ECD and helped focus funds, because as the wife of a local Government Supervisor for ECD Center, she can influence local officials’ decision-making, budget allocation, and increase support in making quality ECD a priority. the *Bunda Paud* is a government position, and not a position created by ChildFund.

DRRM implementation in rural area poses a great challenge to overcome and change a cultural belief that disasters are fate-related and cannot be avoided. Gender issues are also evident in the role and involvement of men and fathers in ECCD.

As next steps, a research will be conducted to determine the post-traumatic response and interventions that are most appropriate and advantageous for young children. This will be used to develop a strategy to incorporate the role of reading in emergency settings (may replicate the Philippine model). In addition to DRR, capacity building for parents will be done to increase birth registration.

Concurrent Session 8

The Session was about assessment tools - Gender in ECCD Self-Assessment and the International Development and Learning Assessment, and the Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning programme to address deficits in school readiness and learning outcomes.

The Moderator for the Session was Dr. Sukhdeep Gill, Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Penn State University, USA. The discussants were: Mr. Somxay Inthasone, ECCD and Education Advisor, Plan Laos and Mr. Iqbal Hossain, Quality Primary Education Advisor, Plan International Bangladesh; Dr. Ivelina Borisova, ECD Advisor, Save the Children USA; and Ms. Binh Thanh Vu, Senior Education Specialist, World Bank Australia.

Gender in ECCD self-assessment study, Plan Asia

Plan International believes that gender equality and inequality begin in early childhood. Home, preschool, primary school environments are key sites for transforming gender norms.

The commitment of Plan to gender equality in ECD is reflected in the following:

- Synthesis reports of six studies on gender dimensions in ECD programmes
- Gender and ECCD self-assessment tool developed to explore the programme to reduce a tendency of programme designs to be ‘gender-blind’
- Focusing on accessing parenting programmes, early learning centers and early graders of primary school, as well as staff skills and organizational capacities in promoting gender equality

In Plan’s gender and ECCD self-assessment, a wide-range of areas was reviewed, although not all are aspects of holistic ECCD, to ensure gender equality: enrollment and attendance, print materials, center facilitators/teachers’ perceptions and understanding, classroom observation, parenting programme, mother and father engagement, Plan and partner capacity assessment, pattern of human resources in ECCD programme, individual skills self-assessment.

The assessment revealed that trends in gender difference in enrolment and attendance in preschools were insignificant; although, seasonal work negatively influenced boys’ attendance. Boys’ participation was visible but inconsistent; while girls were quiet but persistent. Teachers had to spend more time disciplining boys.

Gender differences were more evident in the roles of parents. Children were normally brought to schools, mostly done by females. It was also perceived that the father is

more knowledgeable than the mother on external issues. Women believe that men can never help them in their household chores and in taking care of their children, while men perceive women as a barrier.

There is also a predominance of females among the staff of Plan. Men in ECCD professions take only supervisory roles.

Based on the results of the review and self-assessment, Plan will do the following:

- Incorporation of gender indicators in existing monitoring, evaluation and reporting system
- Build the capacity of its staff and partners on gender and ECCD
- Review country level programmes to address gender issues
- Review its tools to give it a final shape following more country level review in Asia, as well as East and Southern Africa

Gender issues are generally embedded in cultural practices of some countries. Females working in centers, are transformed externally, but their own perceptions are still very gender-entrenched. Gender parity indicator is not sufficient. Women are the gatekeepers for gender equity.

In Bhutan, cultural norms and social norms influence perspectives. Gender perspectives are quite established. Teachers' perceptions are important in guiding a positive change to gender perspectives.

International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA)

Dr. Ivelina Borisova believes that more than ever, this is the time and period for the ECD community to focus on ECD measurement in a systematic way to finally fill out the huge gap in the global ECD data that are crucial to improving ECD practice and policy.

Various tools that are being used have their own limitations and these are found to be narrow in scope, hard to administer, need extensive cultural adaption, expensive and not validated in low resource settings.

IDELA developed a measurement tool that can be used by all stakeholders, for programme improvement. The tool considered a balance across three key and important dimensions: accessibility and feasibility, psychometric rigor and international applicability, meaningful for comparing data.

The four developmental domains that are being measured are motor development, emergent language and literacy, socio-emotional development, emergent math/numeracy.

The process of development involved the the identification of constructs, review of tools and their adaptation or development of new items, consolidation of the items and validation. Twenty-two core items that focus on the four development domains were formulated.

The average time for the administration of the tool is about 25-30 minutes. It emphasizes continuous scoring over yes/no responses while the home survey component is simple administration. Simple materials (book, pencil, paper, rocks/buttons for counting, 8 picture cards, laminated puzzle) were used. Digital data collection is available. Data-drive consolidation of items was done and items that would be hardest to adapt were dropped. IDELA can assert the tool's strong internal consistency.

The Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning (PEARL)

The PEARL programme was designed to address the quality and learning outcomes in the early years of schooling in the Pacific. The programme more specifically aims to reduce reading deficits in the early grades through a dual approach by addressing both school readiness factors and instructional approaches in the early grades of primary education.

The interventions that were proposed and identified were based on empirical evidence on the links between school readiness, literacy preparedness and reading outcomes in the early grades as well as on data reading deficits collected through EGRA assessments in Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.

The EGRA or the Early Grade Reading Assessments in Tonga, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea showed that education systems in the Pacific are unable to produce emergent readers at different levels of proficiency in the first grades of primary education schooling.

Day 3: Building Social Cohesion through ECD

Plenary Opening

National Keynote

Strengthening Legislative Oversight: A Way Forward

Hon. Thelma Almario, District Representative, Davao Oriental

The keynote speaker worked in both her current capacity as a legislator and, formerly, as a local chief executive. She provided her views and perspectives to ensure the implementation and enforcement of the provisions of the Philippine law on ECCD.

The Early Years Act of 2013 is considered a most important legislation for young children in the country. It is pioneering, innovative and groundbreaking. It recognizes the first crucial development at age 0-8. The State institutionalized a national ECCD system, involving multi-sector collaboration at national and local levels.

A key consideration is the understanding of how the law will be implemented efficiently and adequately. The programmes and interventions and those who are accountable for their implementation were identified in the Early Years Act. These have to be followed through by strengthening the legislative oversight.

Each and every step to implement the provision of the law poses many challenges. The promulgation of the law is only a first step followed by the implementation phase. It is not enough for the executive department to implement the law, but there is a need to provide the oversight in its implementation without transgressing into the mandatory separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government.

An economist by education and professional expertise, Representative Almario used her 'eagle eyes' to look in detail at the financial aspects that the law entails and how they can contribute to children's development. She helped define the provisions to render oversight in implementing the programme.

Peacebuilding and Early Childhood in Asia and the Pacific

Peacebuilding is emerging as an important concern in early childhood. The discussion of this topic commenced with the sharing of the key findings of a rapid appraisal of existing research done by Dr, Lyn Aung, Senior Lecturer, Department of Early Years and Primary Education, Institute of Education, University of London, UK.

This was followed by a fishbowl discussion by the Friends of ARNEC as represented by Ms. Mahmuda Akhter, Executive Director, Institute of Child and Human Development (ICHD), Bangladesh and Dr. Mridula Bajaj, Executive Director, Mobile Creches, India. They deliberated on the various perspectives and recommendations for expanding the evidence and knowledge base on the significance of peacebuilding in ECD. The study, together with other venues for building consensus such as maximizing the ARNEC webinars, can provide the basis for ARNEC's regional research agenda.

Launch of Literature Review on Peacebuilding and Early Childhood in Asia and the Pacific

“No society can rebuild from the effects of conflicts without peacebuilding.”

Dr. Lynn Ang presented the results and findings of the review of literature review on peacebuilding and early childhood in the Asia-Pacific Region, a study which was commissioned jointly by ARNEC and UNICEF EAPRO to appraise existing research on the relationship between ECD and peacebuilding and identify gaps in them.

The study revealed that the definitions of peacebuilding and ECD are continuously evolving and that they vary because of cultural diversity and ideological perspectives and other key concepts.

Peacebuilding emerged in 1970, popularized in 1990 and first used in a UN policy document was a comprehensive effort to identify and consolidate peace and wellbeing of people, respect for human rights, conflict resolution – a general term that cuts across diverse cultures.

From a conceptual view, ECD and peacebuilding can be categorized according to the following approaches: rights-based, participatory and pedagogical. The rights-based approach stems from the basic universality and holistic principles of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. The participatory approach is where children could be active participants to conflict resolution processes and not just as victims of conflicts. The pedagogical approach is the integration of peace education in the curriculum and in the teaching and learning processes.

Early childhood in peace building is multi-dimensional and provides linkages with important societal agendas. It is a key concept to link with education, social cohesion, community building, social justice, among others.

Perspectives on peacebuilding and young children

The Friends of ARNEC worked on peacebuilding for young children to: (a) strengthen regional knowledge based on ECD and peacebuilding; (b) generate important knowledge and understanding of peacebuilding to shape future projects and programmes on ECD and peacebuilding; (c) involve children's voices and participation in documentation and research; and (d) evaluate evidence-based practices to offer greater leverage for future scalability and sustainability of ECD programmes.

A population study was done in order to determine the extent and scope of understanding ECD and peacebuilding in the region. ARNEC developed the questions that solicited perspectives from children and parents and promoted non-violence among children.

Achieving peace is mostly dependent on the action of other people. The result of the study affirmed the need for understanding among people and the stability of family income for meeting basic needs to have a peaceful environment. It also disclosed that children are capable of solving issues but they need to experience non-violent examples from families

The contribution of peacebuilding to the ECD scenario needs to be explored more. A study done in a smaller scenario such as the classroom can result into limited findings whereas laying the foundation in a bigger horizon can identify reduction in prejudices.

Participatory tools, peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity tools should emphasize a "do no harm" approach and making sense of turbulent contexts and understand the roots of conflict.

Project model frameworks that empower children as peace-builders and agents of transformed family relationships can be disseminated for replication. The Philippines developed a center for learning peacebuilding. It can show how children are engaged as key actors and players – trainers training for children – trained child leaders, child-led local capacity workshops, contextualization of ECAP modules. Institutional partnership for "peacebuilding in schools" was forged with the Department of Education.

A video presentation taken in Davao, Philippines showed how children and youth can become peace-builders. Children have the potentials, capacity and competence for peacebuilding. They just need to be tapped and given the opportunity to lead. Capacitating and transforming values of children, at very young ages, can be crucial to peacebuilding.

Plenary 6

Social Cohesion: Living together, living in harmony

Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, the Moderator for Plenary 6, elicited the understanding and definitions of “harmony” from among the Panelists. They believe that “harmony” means the ability of people to be able to work together, and reach an agreement, even if they come from different backgrounds or they differ in perspectives. Harmony also means the absence of conflict and respect for diversity and difference. Effectively, it is a pleasing accommodation of several elements into one whole.

The discourse on social cohesion and harmony covered three topics. First, the “Tahderriyah in Southern Philippines” of the Bangsamoro Development Authority, a strategy that provides the young Bangsamoro children with the opportunities to live in a harmonious society with their exposure to kindergartens that embed ECCD principles with standard modern perspectives and curriculum. Second, the gross national happiness goal in Bhutan which can be attained with harmony among individuals that begins at early childhood. Third, in addition to more definitions of harmony are the ethical principles and the essential elements for people to live in harmony together.

The Moderator for the Plenary was Dr, Sheldon Shaeffer, Member, Board of Directors of ARNEC. The Panelists were: Ustadz Mohammad Yacob, the Executive Director of the Bangsamoro Development Agency; Mr. Karma Gayleg of the Ministry of Education, Bhutan; and Dr. Jessica Ball, Consultant, Open Society Foundation.

Tahderriyah in the Philippines

Tahderriyah, an Arabic term for preschool curriculum, is tailored to address the educational needs of Bangsamoro children in the Philippines that are in harmony with their culture and religion. Ustadz Yacob informs that the Tahderriyah is consistent with ECCD principles, contents, learning competencies, and approaches.

The processes and phases involved in the development of the Tahderriyah were as follows: (a) the preparatory phase which included advocacy interventions, instructional materials development, capacity building and training of trainers, radio programmes in local stations, community orientations, story book development; (b) the curriculum writing phase for the benchmarking of local and foreign ECCE curricula and the scrutiny and validation of the draft framework of the curriculum; (c) the implementation of phase 1 with a pilot and completion of 13 pilot madaris (madrasahs) and expansion to

300 madaris; and (d) phase 2 which is the expansion of Tahderriyah to another 500 madaris.

Ustadz Yacob believes that by mainstreaming ECD with a Tahderriyah curriculum for Muslim children contributes to peace and harmony in the more than 500 madaris in Southern Philippines. It shall continue to bring the perspective from the community, rising from conflict to have access to modern education system and the integration of ECD perspectives in religious schools or the madaris. Through the Tahderriyah, young children are given the exposure to modern curriculum.

Harmony and ECD in Bhutan

The world has become a global village and people can no longer afford not to be in harmony at the village level, in school, in the community where people live, the country, and globally. Mr. Gayleg believes that the understanding of a globalized world and the thoughts and actions that affect each other, is now possible more rapidly and easily than before.

Gross national happiness. In Bhutan, the ultimate goal in human endeavor is happiness. Gross national happiness is more important to them than gross national products. Happiness is embraced within one's self, with nature, with procedures and systems of human society. All developmental efforts have been guided by the noble vision.

Happiness and harmony start early in life. In order to have harmony in groups, there should be happiness in individuals. Happy individuals, happy children will make happy child centers and happy schools.

Everyone has a huge task in providing children to learn all aspects of where they live, who they live with, appreciate and respect so that children grow up to be more kind and caring members of society and become responsible citizens. There must be conscious effort to build in children the elements of happiness and harmony by developing the skills and competencies they need in life.

Bhutan's policies reflect the importance of both happiness and harmony. These are translated into the local language to make sure that aspects of child development and aspirations of harmonious relationships are reflected in guidelines and curriculum. The country further strives to build the values of living together and in cohesion, in the ECD ethos, in ECD centers. It is hoped that these get documented in the near future.

The aspirations to provide children of Bhutan the opportunities to learn, know, understand, appreciate, respect have yet to be translated in real and actionable terms. Children of the 21st century can aspire as global citizens and adjust to issues of the

world. All children continue to live together and it is imperative that they live together in peace and harmony throughout their lives and this can be realized through ECD.

Social cohesion – living together, living in harmony

Dr. Jessica Ball expanded the definition of harmony to also mean a pleasing combination of elements into a coherent and balanced whole. More importantly, she identified that there are ethical principles in harmony “doing it in a good way” as being done in ECD, bringing forward the values of harmony among children– with a right heart, right mind, right and good intention, engaging in mindful action. There are five Rs to do ECCD in a good way – respect, results, relevance relationships, responsiveness.

Harmony in a diverse region. The presentation centered on how ECD can advance living together and living in harmony especially within a region that is widely diverse in culture, traditions, practices, and philosophy.

Harmony in ECD ensures that young children are sensitized to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, human rights and gender equality. It is understanding, respecting and even celebrating differences (not merely tolerating) – in terms of sex, (dis) abilities, culture, language, economic status, religion, sex orientation

Dr. Ball emphasized that there is a need to focus on the issue of language to promote social cohesion and harmony particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. About 3,000 languages are spoken around the world and almost half of these are in Asia Pacific, although 40 per cent of the languages (spoken around the world) are dying or are almost dead. The combination of different languages can enrich the way of life. People see harmony in different perspectives. Bhutan’s view is narrowly restricted. A room for expansion and basis for conceptual framework should be looked into to capture the important aspects of the concept of harmony, including language. The medium of instruction in Bhutan is the English language.

There was a rich and engaging discourse on harmony and social cohesion. Harmonious relationships can be viewed along different perspectives and contexts.

The issue of language in multilingual and diverse settings was dwelt upon. Language can be a barrier in respecting diversity, respecting culture. A case in point is the facility for the English language which is an enabling factor for better success of employment and ability to move forward.

The ARNEC Conference opened the minds of participants to do more beyond specific roles – to bring harmony – in language issue, in policies, aspirations, laws, trainings.

Concurrent Session 9

Concurrent Session 9 proceeded from the previous sessions with continuing discussions on social cohesion and peacebuilding in fragile contexts and experiences from armed conflict and disasters. The other topic was about the engagement of communities for ECD sustainability.

The Moderator for the Session was Mr. Filip Lenaerts, Education Advisor VVOB (Flemish Association for Development and Technical Assistance) Vietnam and, concurrently the ARNEC Country Coordinator for Vietnam. The discussants were: Ms. Nanditha Hattitatri and Ms. Yany Lopez, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University Australia; Dr. Leonor E. Diaz, College of Education, University of the Philippines; and Ms. Chandreshelka Prendey, ChildFund India.

Building social cohesion through young children's participation in play in fragile contexts: experiences from armed conflict affected Sri Lanka and disaster-prone Philippines

The discussion focused on the power of play in the context of fragile conditions, vulnerable situations, internal and external shocks in Sri Lanka and the Philippines. Two empirical studies showed that play can serve as a healing experience.

In disaster-prone Philippines, young children lived experiences and their voices were heard as they become active participants in play. Banana fritter exercise was used for 6-8-year-old children. There was cooperation, division of labour and sharing. Children planned and resolved together, took responsibility for the failure to reach their goal. They supported each other, looking after and sharing responsibility for younger siblings.

In the post-armed conflict Sri Lanka, group play in children's group for ages 3-7 years old was conducted by establishing special networks, social and cultural cohesion. Children's voices were heard. They had paintings, narratives, stories. Play emerged as a recurrent theme. Special games/activities, through group plays, enable children to return to their normal lives.

Celebrating diversity and nurturing the seeds of Peacebuilding through ECD: Impact of the ALIVE programme

The ALIVE programme of the Philippines stands for Arabic Language of Islamic Values and Education. The programme originated from the road map of Muslims development goals for Upgrading Muslim Basic Education Philippines (2002-2008). ALIVE is integrated within the basic education curriculum targeting children 6-12 years old. Madaris (or madrasahs) are not present everywhere; hence, the need to focus on Muslim identity through the ALIVE programme.

Dr. Leonor Diaz of the University of the Philippines presented a part of the larger research to assess the efficiency, impact, effectiveness, and sustainability of ALIVE. Desk reviews, field visits, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted for a period of ten (10) months in seven regions of the country.

The research showed that ALIVE provided access of Muslim children to quality education, harmonious relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim children have been established, and peacebuilding initiatives are being pursued. More specifically, there was an increase in enrolment of Muslim children in basic education.

In ALIVE, the self-esteem of Muslim students was enhanced. It imparted a recognition of Muslim capabilities, nurturance of Muslim heritage and knowledge of Islamic culture, promotion of national identity. Its curriculum also included value transformation, community integration and concern for the environment.

ALIVE is now recommended to begin at the preschool level for which a government order from the Department of Education has to be issued. The possibility of integrating Madrasah in mainstream education was also discussed.

Engaging communities for sustainable ECD of ChildFund India

The presentation focused on the programmes of ChildFund in India in engaging and the community-based Bal Veikas Committee (BVS).

ChildFund India promotes the well-being of children. It focuses on deprived, excluded and vulnerable communities and works in 14 states and 1 UT, 1,680 communities, 60 districts, in 2,000 ECD centers in India.

The programme covers Safe Motherhood, Child Survival and Development, Community Engagement. It supports home-based, center-based and community-based ECD. Networking and linkage with the Government is a key strategy it undertakes to contribute to sustainability.

It supports the formation of Bal Veikas Committees (BVS) in the community to demand services, ensure good quality, establish linkages and solve local problems and take the responsibility for monitoring growths. Key influences are mothers, ANM, ASHA,

government functionaries, teachers and local bodies. It resulted to increased enrolment and retention in preschool.

Unfortunately, however, the government has sanctioned the operation of community-driven preschools. And after 20 years of work with the communities, ChildFund is withdrawing its support. On the other hand, contributions of the local government to sustainable solutions to promoting ECD were recognized.

Concurrent Session 10

Concurrent Session 10 was about improving ECD services for children of marginalized and vulnerable families. These are center-based or facility-based services and alternative interventions for hard-to-reach communities through playgroup models and schemes.

The Moderator for the Session was Dr. Zenaida Domingo, Philippines. The discussants were: Ms. R. P. M. Snadamali, Technical Specialist – Nutrition, ChildFund Sri Lanka; Ms. Marie Stuart, Early Childhood Education Care and Development Technical Advisor, Save the Children Australia; and Dr. Lang Ma, Education Officer and Dr. Xuefeng Chen, Education Specialist in ECD, UNICEF China.

Providing ECD services to children from marginalized tea estates in Sri Lanka

Child-friendly estates were established in eleven tea estates in Sri Lanka. ChildFund worked with T-Field Child Development Federation in these estates for the upgrading of creches and ECD centers in both physical facilities and quality services. In general, these two facilities provide child care only for different age groups thereupon depriving children 3-5 with opportunities for their developmental potentials.

Forty (40) ECD centers located in these estates were upgraded by ChildFund in accordance with government standards. Support was provided for the improvement of infrastructure facilities, provision of learning-teaching materials, strengthening of ECD center management committees, skills upgrading of caregivers and enhancement of parents knowledge on age- and developmentally-appropriate child rearing practices.

A recent study showed that there was an increase of regular attendance of children 3-5 years old in said ECD centers from 39 percent to 78 percent. More than 70 percent of mothers and other caregivers have changed child caring behaviours and habits.

Engaging the most vulnerable families on the early childhood journey

A playgroup model called Intensive Supported Playscheme model was presented to highlight the importance of play for vulnerable children and their families and the support provided them by a playgroup. The strategy, supported by Save the Children Australia, is aligned with the Australian National Early Years Framework.

A review of different models of the strategy was undertaken by the National Early Childhood Care and Development Programs Desk Top Study. It focused on the role of play and the use of other playgroup models for strengthening young children's physical and psychosocial development. Playgroup schemes can be used replicated for use in vulnerable communities and other groups.

Promoting inclusion through ECD in China: A case study of Songpan County

The case study showed the improvement in the access and quality of ECD services for ethnic minority children in hard-to-reach communities in Songpan, a poor province at the edge of the Tibetan Plateau, southwest China.

Over a six-year country programme between the Government of China and UNICEF (2006-2014), the number of kindergartens in Songpan increased from three to 80 with 2,421 children 3-6 years old enrolled in these kindergartens. Kinder enrolment rate (for 3 years old) more than doubled from 29.15 percent to 67.50 percent, higher than the national average.

In addition, two approaches were adopted. Community-based play groups (akin to the Supervised Neighborhood Play of the Philippines and the Intensive Supported Playscheme model in Australia) and village-based mini kinder classes that cater to children living in far-flung and hard-to-reach areas in Songpan were established to bring ECD services to these children.

Concurrent Session 11

The Session adds to the discussions on inclusive ECD. These were on ECD models designed and interventions for children with disabilities, children displaying behavioural challenges, and socially excluded populations.

The Moderator for the Session was Dr. Yolanda Quijano of the Philippines, The Discussants were: Ms. Maria Fe Cimafranca, Project Officers, Leonard Cheshire Disability Philippine Foundation, Inc. and Ms. Mary Ann G. Santos, Save the Children, Philippines; Dr. Sharon Davies, Senior Management and Ms. Sarah Thomas, Professional Learning Facilitator, Child Australia; and Ms. Sophia Saritha, Project Manager – Kalaiselvi Karunalaya Social Welfare Society (KKSWS), Childfund, India.

The prevalence of children with disabilities in three urban sites in Metro Manila, Philippines and the hope for a sustainable inclusive ECCD model that provides learning opportunities for all

The Leonard Cheshire Disability Philippine Foundation, Inc. and Save the Children conducted a joint study on the prevalence of disability and to determine the different types of disabilities exhibited in children living in poor urban communities in the cities of Paranaque and Taguig and in the municipality of Pateros.

A report on the study was presented by Ms. Maria Fe Cimafranca and Ms. Mary Ann Santos. They informed that the study, further elicited the perceptions of the community on children with disabilities and that these were examined particularly in relation to their rights.

From the findings of the study, a design for a sustainable inclusive ECCD model was crafted to provide equal learning opportunities for all children, regardless of ethnicity, gender, race or disabilities. Child protection, education and support services are being made available to children with disabilities.

The KASALI project of Save the Children, which stands for *Kabataang Aralin Sa Lahat Ibahagi*, aimed to inspire breakthroughs on the way people treat children with disabilities.

Promoting diversity and inclusion through understandings of self-regulation

Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) – Western Australia, provides professional development, advice, access to additional resources and inclusion support among educators on early childhood education and care services.

IPSP demonstrated the need for increased support to children displaying behavioral challenges. Relative to this, Child Australia created a community-based approach to ensure inclusive environment for all children. Various strategies to embed Self-

Regulation into the National Quality Framework and curriculum development became the basis of professional learning. Training on Self-Regulation for early and middle educators is now provided through various models of professional development like onsite modeling, coaching, online courses and professional training.

Addressing social exclusion to protect rights of young children in India

Child Fund India supported gypsy communities, otherwise known as the socially excluded population in India, through the following interventions: (a) linked eligible children to local Primary Health Care; (b) ensured deliveries in institutions; (c) registration of births and deaths; (d) provision of access to government entitlement e.g. ration cards; (e) skill-based training e.g. hand worked and bead work; and (f) awareness drives and programmes on cleanliness.

Ms. Sophia Saritha of the Kalaiselvi Karunalaya Social Welfare Society (KKSWS), Childfund, India, reported that the interventions resulted to positive outcomes: (a) successful integration of gypsy children in the community; (b) active participation of gypsy children in preschool; (c) increased sanitation and hygiene practices; and (d) caregivers understanding the importance of early childhood education.

Video Presentations

[The Permanent 2nd Parents – the Experience of the Municipality of San Jose de Buenavista, Province of Antique, Philippines.](#) The visual presentation reinforced Mayor Rony Molina’s discussion on the institutionalization and permanency of day care workers in the local government plantilla. It further featured the achievements of the Municipality under his leadership starting with the Day Care Programme, other successful initiatives and support to disaster risk reduction and management, people with disability, peace and order through its local police and other developmental efforts and governance for which he was recognized with a Presidential award.

[CDRF “Village Early Education Centers”: Peng Ya.](#) The video was about Peng Ya, a four-year-old child who grew up on the basket of her grandfather, in a remote village in China. Her grandfather took care of Peng Ya whilst her parents migrated somewhere else to work away from home, with nobody to teach her, to paint and sing with her. Hope flashed for Peng Ya in a new world outside of the basket when the first kindergarten, supported by CDRF, was established in their village. The video was used for media advocacy and political support.

[Consuelo Foundation and stories of “hope” of children survivors of abuse.](#) The video presentation of Consuelo Foundation tells the stories of “hope” – from children survivors of abuse from caregivers who benefited from the Foundation’s prevention programmes such as Healthy Start, Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Network and Life Skills Plus and Protection and Recovery Programme for Survivors of Sexual Abuse. Despite numerous roadblocks, the fervent hope is that one day, no child will ever be neglected, abused or exploited, and that families and communities will take care of all children and nurture them in a safe environment.

[World Vision Philippines and children as agents of peace.](#) The video presentation focused on promoting a culture of peace. It featured children and youth who have been empowered as agents of peace and agents of transformation. These children talked about their experiences, what they learned, the values that they have acquired and have practiced as peace-builders despite differences among tri-people of Christians, Muslims and Lumads in southern Philippines.

Poster Presentations

Poster presentations - prepared by different countries – were done in a gallery in two sets.

The first set of poster presentations were made by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, and Malaysia. The second set of poster presentations were by India's Integrated Child Development Services, West Bengal, Timor Leste, Philippine ECCD Council and Save the Children Fund Philippines.

The posters described each country's vision, different programmes/projects, strategies, and voices (quotes) from different stakeholders particularly from high level government officials. Also exhibited were various brochures, IEC materials, examples of guidelines, curriculum, visuals and learning materials for children.

The exhibits reflected very interesting and impressive diversities in designs, features, formats, language. But the message is universal in underscoring the importance of ECD. They featured their successes in the development,, advocacy and lobby efforts, passage and implementation of national policies in ECD, the support of high level officials, partnerships and alliance building, etc.

Bangladesh, for one, displayed quotes from various high level officials such as its Prime Minister and Ministers, expressing their wholehearted support to ECD. It also listed the succession of events organized by BEN or the Bangladesh ECD Network.

Bhutan also put on display the various progress reports of national ECD Congresses, Early Learning for All – Delivering Quality and Overcoming Disparity. Peculiar to Bhutan is its “happiness” goal. It illustrated how various stakeholders joined hands in building a stronger foundation of happiness for children. Also displayed were materials for children such as the ten things which a child needs most during the first year of life.

Pakistan provided a visual description of partnership and alliance building for ECD, a case of networking.

Vietnam's materials on display were in English and Vietnamese. The posters showed the ECCD priorities of Vietnam, coordination efforts, quoted the voices of ECD stakeholders and highlighted successful practices.

A glimpse of ECD in the Kyrgyz Republic was shown in its poster presentation.. It featured Kyrgyzstan alternative short-term models of preschool initiatives and the Roza Otunbaya Initiative. The latter, done in partnership with UNICEF, promotes the state policy on preschool education, caravan of knowledge, children's school, stars reading to children, education festival.

Malaysia's noteworthy ECCE practices and how the country realized its impact were illustrated. It featured, for example, a national convention on best practices in teaching and learning among preschool teachers.

Pacos Trust, Sabah and Sarawak, an NGO-initiated programme, also showed its Big Books series. The stories and illustrations were done by the Ministry of Education. It showcased public-private partnership.

Korea displayed the salient features of the study one on promoting high quality evaluation system towards ECCE integration.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the key points, breakthroughs and recommendations from the plenary discussions and concurrent sessions of the ARNEC Conference in Manila are recapitulated as ways forward for the Asia-Pacific Region to pushing ahead the post-2015 agenda for young children.

The ARNEC Conference – the Asia-Pacific regional forum and venue for ECD dialogues, conversations, arguments, and opportunities

- * Bringing to mind and assessing whether indeed efforts on ECD have created an impact on children 0-8, whether “children are more loved” and cared for “today than a decade ago”;
- * Ascertaining what else are needed to be done regionally and globally by the Asia-Pacific countries for the caring of the more vulnerable 0-8 year old children cognizant of the diversity of traditional practices and heritage in the region; Generating combined professional knowledge and sharing of fields of expertise to demonstrate once again the importance of ECD;
- * Reiterating the underlying principles and fundamental elements for the advancement of ECCD: the existence of policies, policy frameworks and action plans and the extent of their implementation, viable and functioning inter-sector mechanisms and multi-sector structures and how they can be further reinforced;
- * Venturing into and exploring further new areas such as peacebuilding in ECD; and
- * Underscoring the importance of partnerships, harmony, sustainability, information and communication in ECD.

Advancing the agenda for young children

The 2014 Muscat Agreement on Education for All and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are two major global initiatives that incorporate ECD and specific target in the core of their agenda. While there is a difference in the scope of ECCE participation in the respective targets, far more significant is that finally ECD is now included in these two important international instruments.

The post-2015 Sustainable Development Goal

A fresh update on and the articulation of the work in progress for the inclusion of the global ECCD target in the post-2015 agenda was expounded by the Team Leader of the ECD group of the Sustainable Global Development Solution Network. The Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 include a goal to “ensure effective learning for all children and youth for life and livelihood” wherein the second target is specified for ECD as “all girls and boys have access to quality ECD, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”.

The target is for all children under the age of 5 to reach their development potential through access to quality ECD programmes and policies. There is a conscious effort and demand to shift to quality and developmental outcomes in the proposed ECD target. In addition to measuring the young child's development across different domains, the quality of implementation in both structures and processes also needs to be measured. It is recognized that the quality of processes is more difficult to achieve but it is more directly and strongly related to children's learning.

Indicators to measure the achievement of the target are being considered such as an ECD index that encompasses physical, cognitive, language, literacy, social and emotional domains for learning and development and receiving ECCE opportunities prior to formal schooling.

Arguments for ECD and the importance of investing on young children

The ECD global and regional communities have articulated the arguments that warranted its inclusion as a target in the post-2015 SDG during the deliberations by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network: (a) the healthy development of children provides strong foundation for healthy and competent adulthood, responsible citizenship, economic productivity, strong communities, and a sustainable society; (b) the scientific basis that the ability to change brains decreases over time and requires more physiological efforts to enhance neural connections the older people get; and, (c) the lifelong benefits of investing in ECCD are further underscored.

Early childhood is the most important development phase in a human life span and it is critical for young children to have preventive early interventions through ECD interventions that yield and retain higher results.

From the economic point of view, it is a most powerful strategy to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and helps offset disadvantages and inequality.

Public investment in ECD is tantamount to lower costs in health care and reduction in morbidity, mortality and nutrition rehabilitation. Good quality ECD results in cost-savings and increased efficiency in primary education with higher enrolment and attendance, lower repetition and dropout rates, less remedial and special education, higher educational attainment.

Studies to measure returns of investments

Studies showed that there is a high correlation between the Human Development Index and the ECD index, and a higher ECD index at about 0.9 percent was revealed among countries with investments in ECD.

Return on investments studies are recommended to be undertaken: One, a Cost-Benefit Analysis to measure outcomes vis-à-vis dollar investments. Another is to look not only on economic return but also social return or a Social Return on Investment Study.

Alliance building and partnerships are critical to advancing the agenda for children

Building alliances and promoting partnerships with both the public and private sectors can be spearheaded by government systems and sectors or ECD coordinating mechanisms. The endorsement of high level officials from the President or Prime Minister to Governor or Mayor is very much an advantage.

Multi-ECD stakeholders involving powerful and wide-ranging partners can be tapped. Partnerships with and the support of international and national/domestic partners are critical to promoting and advancing the agenda for children. These can include – multinational companies, the banking and business sectors, the media, international development agencies, NGOs, the academic community.

Regional progress in ECD policies

A steady increase in the existence of national ECD policies (about 100 countries) or policy frameworks in the region is acknowledged. These are supported or aligned with other sector policies. A more effective holistic and integrated ECCD necessitates the amplification of guidelines and regulations.

Many of these policies are with stronger inter-sector coordination efforts and mechanisms. Multi-sector structures have been created in some countries through the creation of national and/or even including local councils for ECCD. Some with common names, mother agency attachments vary but mostly attached to the education ministry.

ECD measurements and assessment tools

In spite of the advances in ECD, only a few countries have standard indicators, measures and assessment tools. There is a lack of identified indicators for some developmental domains especially for social and emotional, moral and spiritual development, creativity and problem solving.

Tools that encompass the various domains and have taken into account cultural sensitivities and ensured integrity and consistency in items and domain selections were shared in the Conference. While most of these are still to be finalized, its use and wide dissemination in the region should already be anticipated.

The East Asia Pacific Early Childhood Development Scales (EAP ECDS) was specifically designed for the region. It revealed the wide variations in HDI indicators, size, early childhood policy, challenges and opportunities. It can be used as evidence to decrease urban/rural gaps and gender imbalances, promote parental involvement, advocacy for early childhood education and care and guide ECCE curriculum development/review.

The Pacific Guidelines for National Quality Frameworks, initiated by the PR4ECCE, identified relevant systems components which can be used to prepare a situation analysis, address gaps and ensure that policies and programmes are on-track according to international standards and ensure the quality of ECCD interventions.

The SEAMEO guidelines for pre-primary education teacher development in Southeast Asia can be used for the qualitative improvement of preprimary education by supporting professionalization and capacity development of pre-primary teachers.

The adoption of the Pacific guidelines for national quality frameworks and the SEAMEO guidelines for pre-primary education teacher development in Southeast Asia is purely up to the decision of the country.

The International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) is a more global tool developed by Save the Children USA to measure children’s holistic development and early learning covering four developmental domains (motor, early language and literacy, early numeracy/problem solving, socio-emotional skills).

Harmony and opportunities for promoting them in ECD

The promotion of sustainability and harmony beginning with young children is an imperative for the future of the global agenda. The ARNEC community and beyond must ensure that skills, values, attitudes and behaviors that promote harmony are reflected in ECD programmes and successfully transmitted to young children.

Peacebuilding, a new area of work for ARNEC - perspectives and insights

Children are most vulnerable victims of conflict but they can have a role in peacebuilding and become active participants to conflict resolutions. They can be agents of transformation and become peace-builders themselves.

While children are capable of solving issues they need to experience non-violent examples from families. Their potentials must be recognized but they need to be capacitated, they need to be tapped, and given opportunities to lead.

Working with children for peacebuilding is important. Nonetheless, the scope of peacebuilding efforts should be widened and the enabling environment expanded to families, communities and others as active agents for peacebuilding.

Evidence-based knowledge with ARNEC as the regional hub

The regional knowledge on ECD and peacebuilding can be strengthened with ARNEC as the hub and with support from “friends” of ARNEC towards advancing the research agenda.

There is probably a need to invest more in finding out the contribution of peacebuilding to ECD and peacebuilding as a thematic issue to reduce prejudices and broadening the ECD scenario beyond classrooms.

Continuing challenges of ECD in the Asia-Pacific Region

The advancements of ECD in the region are indicated by the increase in enrolment rate in ECCD programmes and in pre-primary education and in the number of countries with enabling policies on ECD.

However, in spite of those advances, inequities and disparities in access to ECCD services abound because of social-economic status, ethnicity, and geographical locations.

The implementation of ECD policies are met with challenges in enforcement and implementation. Inter-agency coordinating systems, structures and mechanisms are weak and have difficulty moving forward because of the mandated sector-focus of involved government ministries/agencies with specific roles. These contribute to difficulties in realizing a holistic and integrated ECD. ARNEC can continue to pursue its capability building initiatives on holistic and integrated ECD and strengthen its content with good and effective practices from within and outside the region.

In general terms, the quality of ECCD services and interventions needs improvement particularly along the following areas: service delivery processes and mechanisms of implementation, institutional development, upgrading and professionalization of the ECCD workforce qualifications, competence and skills.

Only a few countries have standard indicators, measures and assessment tools. There is a lack of identified indicators for some developmental domains especially for social and emotional, moral and spiritual development, creativity and problem solving – and harmony and sustainability.

Future Directions of ARNEC and Ways Forward

In response to the conclusions and recommendations, the future directions of ARNEC and ways forward were outlined by its Executive Director, Ms. Junko Miyahara.

1. Pursuing the post-2015 agenda framework: building a stronger and dynamic ECD community in the Asia-Pacific Region; continuing enhancement of communication linkage with ARNEC Country Coordinators; upgrading of the Web portal, as a useful and active platform; and expanding the outreach and representation of ARNEC members in events, gathering points, workshops, conferences and talk about ECD in the post-2015 development agenda.
2. Articulation of the agenda: ARNEC members can help and work together in articulating the agenda; consolidation of resource materials and knowledge, research and perspectives.
3. Working on projects, tools and techniques with specific countries which can be used and shared such as the Asia-Pacific scales and various guidelines.
4. Learning and resource sharing such as the pre-Conference workshops and field visits (as organized during the 2014 Annual Conference) to learn from various lectures and lecturers, cases and from field experiences and promoting the use of online and offline modalities as resource hubs for sharing of success stories. An example is the forthcoming Webinar on ECD in Emergencies on December 11, 2014. All resources shall be uploaded in the website.
5. Developing ECD knowledge in Asia and the Pacific using practice-based evidence and adoption of different techniques.
6. Tapping high-level national champions for their strong and concise voices to showcase regional experiences and share them outside of the region.
7. Participation in events organized by other groups such as the forthcoming Korea World Forum on Education and High Policy Meeting on ECD and next year's (2015) ARNEC Annual Conference in China.

ECD Commitments and Pledges

Vietnam

Vietnam's commitment keep continued our efforts in advocating for a national ECD coordinating body to make sure the holistic is well-integrated ECD programming in Vietnam to bring the best to our children's life and future.

Malaysia

We will keep the momentum towards the transformation of Quality Education in ECCE Malaysia.

Indonesia

National ECCD Coalition together with local/International NGO, government academist, donor, networking (ARNEC) to strengthen holistic Integrative ECCD in Indonesia.

Child Fund, World Vision,

Plan International, Save The Children Compassion,

ARNEC Indonesia

Banladesh

Effective Implementation of CECCD policy with collaborative quality for sustainable development.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is committed not only to establish and run ECD Center but to make it secure for children to get into these centres and learn in peace.

Australia

Pledge to take the ARNEC story back to the Australian Early Childhood Assc, ARACY and future branch "PACNEC" - closing the gap for our aboriginal children.

Bhutan

Joining hands to build strong foundations of happiness for all our children.

Cambodia

Through the strong commitment support of the top leader, ours Prime Minister and through the ECCD National Committee, Cambodia will working together among all stakeholder to ensure that, by 2018, 80% of children aged 3-5years olds get access to quality Early Childhood Care and Education Services.

India

We will work together for successful implementation of Universal ECCE programme in equality.

Myanmar

Myanmar ECCD professionals to share best practices success and challenges through ARNEC to contribute towards expanding partnerships for sustainable and harmonious future for children.

Philippines

To foster alliance in the Asia Pacific Region, the Philippines through the ECCD Council, commits to continuously collaborate with each nation in benchmarking and providing the venue for research as well as share knowledge and noteworthy practices in building strong partnerships toward the realization of Early Childhood Development agenda and goals.

Pacific

We in the Pacific pledge to work together in harmony and peace for sustainable ECCE.

Nepal

On behalf of Government and all stakeholders engaged in promoting ECD in Nepal, we commit:

- to ensure that ECD remains at the centre of constitution; draft national policy on ECD is developed and multi sectorial national strategy is endorsed.
- to expand partnership and increase coverage and quality of ECD centres throughout the country.
- to integrate ECD in plans and budgets of local governments for sustainability and effectiveness.

Timor- Leste

In the next five years:

1. Establish a national coordination mechanism for holistic Early childhood Development (ECD) and have it functional.
2. Develop policy for holistic ECD and prepare action plan for implementation of the ECD policy.

Develop Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) and revise Pre-School Policy Framework and Pre-School Education Curriculum in line with ELDS

Closing Remarks

Ms. Junko Miyahara, Executive Director of ARNEC, expressed her gratitude with Words of Thanks to everybody, for their contributions in varying capacities and in different areas, for the successful conduct of the 2014 ARNEC Annual Regional Conference – the ability to convene a large group of ECCD stakeholders who were able to provide inputs to the substantive discourse and recommend steps and action points for the further advancements of ECD in the region. She thanked --

- the Organizing Committee, who spent the longest time in making the Conference happen – the ECCD Council, Child Fund, and the ARNEC core members,
- with appreciation, forging the collaboration with all partners especially with the major sponsors, ChildFund, the Consuelo Foundation – and for bringing children to participate and for having them appear in presentations,
- Distinguished Guests and Keynote Speakers, for their substantive inputs,
- Moderators and the Chief Rapporteur and Session Rapporteurs, and
- all participants.

She also reiterated her thanks and appreciation to those who worked behind the scenes and whose support begun from the initial process of planning and coordinating for logistics up to the conclusion of the Conference – the ARNEC Working Group, Board of Directors, Secretariat and with special acknowledgment to those who spent the most number of days preparing for and during the Conference, Ms. Evelyn Santiago and Mr. Lito dela Rosa of ChildFund.

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