



# The Transformative Power of ECD for Equitable Development



Fourth International Conference on Poverty Reduction and Child Development and 2015 Asia–Pacific Regional ECD Conference  
Beijing, China, 21–24 October 2015

Final Conference Report  
February 2016

## From the Secretariat

This Conference Report was prepared by the ARNEC Secretariat. If you wish to have a copy, please request from us or visit the ARNEC website at [www.arnec.net](http://www.arnec.net).

The views of the esteemed guests of honour, session chairs and speakers, experts and resource persons, and partners and delegates during the 4-day Conference do not necessarily reflect those of ARNEC. Please contact resource persons and/or the organisations they represented in the Conference directly, if you need more information on session-specific presentations and/or opinions documented in this report.

A report on the evaluation of the Conference is available upon request from the ARNEC Secretariat at [secretariat@arnec.net](mailto:secretariat@arnec.net).

Feel free to get in touch with ARNEC on advancing ECD in the Asia-Pacific Region.

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# About the Organisers



## *Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)*

The Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) is a professional network established in 2008 to build strong partnerships across sectors and different disciplines, organisations, agencies and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region to advance the priority on and investment in early childhood.

### Goals Towards 2015

- By 2015, the Asia-Pacific region will have established a stronger and more dynamic ECD community that contributes to holistic national ECD policies
- By 2015, a holistic and inclusive ECD agenda is articulated, disseminated and adopted in the Asia-Pacific region
- By 2015, the ECD knowledge-base specific to the Asia-Pacific region is enhanced
- By 2015, the Asia-Pacific ECD experiences increasingly influence the global ECD agenda

### Mission and Action Pillars

ARNEC works to ensure the rights of every child to optimal holistic development. To achieve this aim, ARNEC implements programmes in the following activity areas (Action Pillars):

- **Advocacy for Policy Change:** Support national partners and members in their assessment and review of national early childhood policies, frameworks and implementation, and facilitate the exchange of models and tools from other contexts.
- **Knowledge Generation:** Facilitate the continuous analysis and synthesis of regional ECD evidence and research, identify priority areas for further learning, and support strategic research activities.
- **Information Management and Dissemination:** Provide a platform for ECD professionals to share information and resources, ensuring these are easily accessible to all.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide opportunities for professional development and learning related to ECD through strategic ARNEC events and external outlets, and strengthen national networks through targeted technical support.
- **Partnership Building:** Build external partnerships and coalitions to create a supportive environment to leverage resources for ECD and ARNEC's capacity to fulfil its mission.

### History

The concept for ARNEC emerged from the Joint UNICEF-UNESCO Early Childhood Policy Review Project (2006-08) where participants from nine countries (Pakistan, Nepal,

Mongolia, China, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Lao PDR and Singapore) met to discuss the possibilities of forming a regional early childhood professional network that would cross all disciplines and sectors. During the policy review, countries found out that relevant ECD policies were fragmented and uncoordinated and as a result of gaps in policy, implementation gaps also followed. ARNEC would like to share effective policies and practices related to early childhood to all countries in the region.

The ARNEC Secretariat was based at the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Thailand in 2008-2009. In May 2009, the SEED Institute (formerly RTRC Asia) was appointed to host the Secretariat for three years and extended for another year. ARNEC was incorporated as an independent entity in Singapore on 14 January 2010. Since 17 February 2010, the Secretariat has been operating in Singapore.

### **Organisational Structure**

The **Steering Committee** provides direction for the planning and development of the network and its activities. It consists of early childhood experts from countries in the Asia-Pacific region who are elected to serve a term of two years, and representatives from Core Team organisations.

**Core Team** organisations represent key partners who support ARNEC with financial resources and appoint focal points to serve on the Steering Committee.

The **Secretariat** provides effective coordination and communications among ARNEC's membership and partners to facilitate planning, development and implementation of ARNEC's work plan.

**Working groups** develop and guide the key activities of ARNEC. They are time-bound and formed based on project needs. They involve individual members in activities under the leadership of a Steering Committee member, and work in collaboration with the Secretariat.

### **Membership**

**Individual membership** in ARNEC is free and open to anyone concerned with young children in the Asia-Pacific region. The majority of ARNEC members come from East Asia, the Pacific, South Asia and Southeast Asia, but participation of professionals all over the world is most welcome. Interested individuals can sign up via <http://community.arnec.net>

**Institutional membership** is open to networks/forums, professional societies, private sector associations, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, volunteer organisations, universities, and research or policy institutions that actively promote early childhood development.

**ARNEC is supported by the following UN agencies and international organisations:**

- UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
- UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
- UNESCO Asia Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
- Plan International
- Open Society Foundation
- Save the Children
- ChildFund International

**For further information please visit:**

[www.arnec.net](http://www.arnec.net)

<http://community.arnec.net>



中国发展研究基金会  
China Development Research  
Foundation

### *China Development Research Foundation*

The China Development Research Foundation (CDRF) is a public foundation initiated by the Development Research Center of the State Council (DRC). Its mission is to advance good governance and public policy to promote economic development and social progress.

The Foundation has approached its mandate in a number of ways, including support for evidence-based policy research, leadership training, high-level forums and symposiums to promote economic cooperation and development, and the promotion of responsible public policy.

Registered in 1997, the Foundation is a relatively young institution but is already recognised on the world stage as a think-tank on public policy issues. Under leadership of the DRC, the Foundation works in partnership with leading universities, institutions, private enterprises, and government agencies. It also works with international partners in undertaking distinguished programs, such as the China Development Forum and executive training programs.

Financial support for the Foundation is provided by donations from Chinese and international patrons. Funding is used to support policy research, publications, leadership training, development forums, and academic exchanges.

As China continues to move steadily ahead with policy reforms and investments for more inclusive development, the demands for research, transparent and accountable processes, and citizenship engagement are expanding. The Foundation is striving to meet these challenges and to coordinate policy research work which supports the work of government, civil society and enterprises in furthering equitable development in China.



## Message from the ARNEC Secretariat

On behalf of ARNEC, I would like to thank all who joined us at the 2015 Asia-Pacific Regional ECD Conference with the theme *Transformative Power of ECD for Equitable Development*. This year's Conference held in Beijing from October 21-24 was co-organised with the China Development Research Foundation's (CDRF) Fourth International Conference on Poverty Reduction and Child Development.

The Conference brought together more than 600 participants from various countries in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. Ministers, policymakers and other government officials; development partners from the multilateral and bilateral community; advocates from international and local NGOs; partners from the academic and research community; as well as ECD practitioners in the field gathered to share insights and experiences on ECD policy, programs and evidence-based research.

Following the United Nations agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 providing a transformative development agenda calling on all countries to pursue economic growth with social justice and environmental stewardship, this Conference celebrates the inclusion of ECD in the global development agenda and its interlinkages with the rest of the Goals.

The Conference provided an opportunity for countries to commit to implementing ECD in support of the SDGs. It served as a platform for government, civil society, the business sector, communities and individuals to come together to build partnerships to ensure that ECD targets in the SDGs will be funded, implemented, and monitored.

Again, I would like to thank all those who have made the Conference possible. Our special thanks to CDRF for generously hosting this conference. We also recognise the support provided by ARNEC core team and partners: UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and Pacific and Regional Office for South Asia, UNESCO, Plan International, Open Society Foundations, Save the Children and ChildFund International. We sincerely appreciate all the speakers, panelists, presenters, moderators and rapporteurs. Most of all, thank you to all participants for joining us in this year's conference.

Let us continue to share, learn, connect and collaborate for a stronger ECD community in the Asia Pacific Region!

**Evelyn D. Santiago**  
Executive Director



中国发展研究基金会  
China Development Research  
Foundation

## Message from CDRF

To highlight the importance of ECD as one of the most powerful levers for accelerating poverty eradication across all countries and for laying foundation of a country's economic growth and prosperity, the Fourth International Conference on Poverty Reduction and Child Development and ARNEC's 2015 Asia-Pacific Regional ECD Conference was held in Beijing, China, on October 21–24, 2015.

From 34 countries, more than 600 government leaders, policy experts, academics, and representatives of non-governmental organisations gathered for the event. This event was the first international gathering following the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on the post-2015 agenda (held in New York on September 25–27), which adopted a transformative 2030 agenda for sustainable development that addresses not only economic growth, but also social justice and environmental stewardship. A major challenge for the world in the next 15 years is to assure that no one is left behind, especially children. There is a need to ensure that all children have access to the full range of services they need and that their rights are fulfilled.

Among the key tasks to consider are redirection of social policies to focus on young children aged 0–6 years; expansion of education, public health, and social protection models to incorporate the science of early human development; and collection and use of data to track how well children are doing and to quantify levels of inequality in child development across population groups.

The international conference raised awareness of ECD among senior Chinese government officials and increased their commitment to address the bottom 20 percent of China's young children through early childhood interventions (i.e., nutrition and village preschools) in China's current Poverty Elimination Plan by 2020. The event also positioned the need for equitable preschool education in China as an integral strategy in China's 13th Five Year Plan.

During the conference, Asian and Pacific policymakers shared their national action plans and program examples of their accomplishments in ECD policy and interventions. The former prime minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, called on all Asian and Pacific policymakers to increase resources and initiate innovative financing schemes to achieve the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) in education (goal 4.2). The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasised that "Early child development is fundamental to reaching our vision of ending all preventable maternal, child, and adolescent deaths by 2030 and ensuring the well-being of all children, everywhere. It is also among the keys to reducing poverty and advancing progress on all of the SDGs."

Hence, it is my deep conviction, from our gathering in Beijing, that, together, our march will involve governments as well as parliaments, international and local agents, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, and the scientific and academic community. Moreover, we all embrace a shared commitment to all children—to give each child a fair start in life—and to reach children who are at greatest risk of being left behind.



China takes pride in leading this journey, as it reflects the core vision of the Chinese Government's Belt and Road Initiative. This initiative promotes practical cooperation in all fields and aims to build a community of shared interests, destiny, and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration, and a people-to-people bond.

**Lu Mai**  
Secretary General

# 2015 Conference Team

## *Moderators and Session Hosts*

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Ghazala Rafique, Interim Director, Aga Khan University, Human Development Programme, Karachi, Pakistan; ARNEC Steering Committee member

Karma Gayleg, Senior Programme Manager, Ministry of Education, Thimpu, Bhutan; ARNEC Executive Committee member

Leotes Lugo Helin, Education Specialist, Equity/ECD, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia

Lu Mai, Secretary General, China Development Research Foundation

Mae Chu Chang, Member, Board of Directors, ARNEC

Mahmuda Akhter, Executive Director and CEO, Institute of Child and Human Development, Bangladesh; ARNEC Steering Committee member

Fang Jin, Deputy Secretary General, China Development Research Foundation

Fu Sihe, Vice Chair, China Volunteer Service Federation

Mary Young, Director, Center on China Development, China Development Research Foundation

Patrick Ip, Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, LKS Faculty of Medicine, University of Hong Kong

Zhang Li, Director, National Center for Education Development Research, Ministry of Education, China

Wei Yu, Former Minister of Education, People's Republic of China

Sven Coppens, Plan China, Country Representative

Pia Macrae, Save the Children, China representative

Marilyn Manuel, Independent ECCD Advisor, Philippines; ARNEC Steering Committee member

Melissa Kelly, Senior ECD Advisor, ChildFund International; ARNEC Core Team and Steering Committee member

Monisha Singh Diwan, Head, Early Childhood and Primary Programmes, Aga Khan Education Service, India

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Jessica Toale

### ***Session Rapporteurs***

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### **ARNEC Conference Working Group**

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Ufemia Bera Camaitoga, Consultant, Early Childhood Education, Fiji Early Childhood Teachers' Association, Fiji

Ghazala Rafique, Interim Director, Aga Khan University, Human Development Programme, Pakistan

### **ARNEC Conference Review Paper Committee**

Chiam Heng Keng, Immediate Past President, ECCE Council, Malaysia; Advisory of Association of Professional Early Childhood Educators Malaysia (MAPECE)

Debbie Fang, Programme Support Officer, ARNEC

Evelyn Santiago, Executive Director, ARNEC

Filip Lenaerts, ARNEC Country Coordinator for Vietnam; VVOB

Ghulam Nabi, ARNEC Country Coordinator for Pakistan;

Jigisha Shastri, ARNEC Country Coordinator for India (Western region)

Margaret Nicholls, ARNEC Country Coordinator, New Zealand

Mae Chu Chang, Member, Board of Directors, ARNEC

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Datin Dr Soo Boon Ng, Deputy Director, Curriculum Development Division, Ministry of Education, Malaysia

Silke Friesendorf, Communications Manager, ARNEC

Tina Hyder, Deputy Director, Early Childhood Programme, Open Society Foundation; ARNEC Core Team and Executive Committee member

### **Conference Local Organising Committee**

China Development Research Foundation (Lead)  
Plan International, China  
Save the Children, China  
UNICEF, China

### **Poster Presenters**

Buralai Aitikulova, *Technology in promoting early reading*

Chandrashekhar Pandey, *Community based sustainable solutions for addressing child's under nutrition and health: a transition from PD to PD plus approach*

Huang Yaqin, *Yunnan child survival project*

Jingle L. Sergote, *Kindergarten Summer Camp: a strategy to strengthen children's foundational skills*

Jerly Mae M. Villanada, *Inclusive education: children with disability's case study on realizing child's right to education and protection*

Jigisha Shastri and Kinnari Pandya, *Capacity building of trainers: transforming the early childhood environment of ICDS in India*

He Ra Kim, Hye-Jin Kwon, Hye-Shin Hwang, You-Jin Han, Yun Joo Chyung and Ki-Nam Kwon, *The Influence of aptitude for child care teachers and education knowledge for science on self-efficacy in teaching science*

Insook Kong, *The effect of the choir performances program on children's self-esteem in the Community Child Center*

Kirk Person, *Building a strong foundation for education through culturally and language relevant Early Childhood Care and Education in remote villages of Northern Thailand*

Dang Tuyet Anh and Filip Lenaerts, *Smoothing children's transition from kindergarten into primary: case studies on school leadership practices in disadvantaged districts in Vietnam*

Saba Isirat, *In service teacher-training is the key to implement high-quality early childhood education programs in KPK-Pakistan*

Luo Chen and Li, *No title*

Michael Hermann, *HPP's 'Preschools of the Future' (POF) as a solution for sustainable preschool service delivery in remote rural areas of China*

## Pre-Conference Workshops

Two simultaneous pre-conference workshops were organised for participants: **Learning through Play** and **Transformative Parenting Practices**.

### *Learning through play*

In the Learning through Play workshop, the importance of play for children from birth to six years was emphasised. The workshop demonstrated play through a balanced daily schedule and providing quality environment for play areas using developmentally appropriate materials. Tips were shared on the teacher's role as the facilitator of play. Participants engaged in actual play in various play areas, and analysed the types of learning that occur in each.



Staff from Mattel Play Projects also had an opportunity to share photos, video journals and lessons that came out of an initiative to document changes in environments, caregiver practices and joyful learning by young children.

The workshop stressed that play is a child's work and making play happen is essential for optimal and meaningful child development.

### *Transformative Parenting Practices*

This workshop presented how children living in difficult circumstances, if provided effective early years support, can achieve outcomes similar to more privileged peers. It emphasised that parents are a child's first and most influential teacher, and that parenting education is a critical component of any ECCE strategy. It develops parents' skills and commitment to provide responsive holistic care that enables children to be healthy and strong, happy and smart, and safe and protected.



The workshop further put forward how parent empowerment or transformational approaches are needed not only to promote changes in parents' beliefs and practices, but also to create a force for change in vulnerable communities, making ECD an important focus for community development. Parenting Transformation Methods include taking a systems approach; high levels of community and parent engagement and consultation; taking a holistic approach in

understanding a child's well-being, its status in the community and the levels of support that exist therein; monitoring parenting sessions and their outcomes of parental knowledge, engagement leadership and sustainability; providing facilitators to provide

feedback; and incorporating strategies to address gender issues and reach the most vulnerable.

Emphasis was placed on the principle *it takes a village to raise a child* for parenting education. With effective skills-building and developing group cohesion, parents can bring changes in home practices and child outcomes, and can be skilled and inspired to change their neighbourhoods. Transformative approaches to parenting education can help activate these forces for change in vulnerable communities.



# Day 1: Conference Opening Ceremony, Key Messages, and Plenary Sessions

The Opening Ceremony took place at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, with more than 600 delegates from various countries. Practitioners, experts, academics, civil society representatives, government officials and ministers from across the region came together to share their passion for child development.

## *Welcome Address*

The Welcome Address was delivered by Wang Mengkui, Chairman of the China Development Research Foundation. Mr. Wang talked about the significant improvements made globally to reduce poverty and also the continuing threat that poverty and inequality pose to sustainable development. In line with the conference theme, he said that investment in child development is a strategic way to stop the intergenerational transmission of poverty and that investment in children reaps long-term returns and long-lasting effects in physical and mental health, education and integration into society. He discussed China's significant achievement in lifting 600 million people out of poverty and the compulsory education and nutrition improvement programmes that are targeting rural areas in China, but he also acknowledged the challenges that remain to tackling rural poverty and enforcing existing policies. He encouraged the delegates to reinforce efforts by governments and civil society organisations to collaborate to increase child development, share experiences and link scientific research with policy making.

## *Highlights of Key Messages*

### **Liu Yan Dong, Vice Premier of the State Council, People's Republic of China**



The first guest speaker to address the Conference was China's Vice Premier Liu Yandong. Madame Liu is a passionate supporter of early childhood development and has become a global champion of ECD. She acknowledged the Conference as the first of its kind on child development and poverty reduction since the adoption of the SDGs in New York in September and welcomed the inclusion of Target 4.2.

Madame Liu acknowledged the transformative power of ECD and its role as a starting point for poverty reduction and equitable development. She said that child development is the most important human capital and that children are the most valuable resource for sustainable development. Early childhood is a golden period of human capacity development and she reminded delegates of the investment case which makes ECD one of the most effective and meaningful policy measures.

She discussed some of the support China is intending to give to other developing countries to support child development, including building schools and hospitals and providing training and scholarships for teachers. She acknowledged that some of the world's greatest challenges - the refugee crisis, conflict and health crises - affect children the most, but that they are also our greatest hope for the future. She signalled China's desire to learn from the positive experiences of other countries such as Australia, Brazil, the US and the UK, in developing and delivering services that benefit young children.

**Ban Ki-moon**  
UN Secretary General



Ban Ki-moon is the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations. At the Conference, his written address was delivered by Ms. Rana Flowers, UNICEF's Country Representative in China. The UN Secretary General called this event an "important conference." He stated that over the last decades great strides have been made globally in improving child survival, and child mortality has declined by 50 percent in every region since 1990. However, there is still much to achieve; at current levels, 94 million children under the age of five will die in the next fifteen years, and among those who will survive, millions will not be able to attain their full development potential. This fact, he said, has profound economic and societal ramifications.

Ban Ki-moon stressed that in order for children to survive and thrive, there is a need to scale up interventions from before conception, through pregnancy and childbirth and into early childhood. This imperative requires greater innovation, resources, and cross-sectoral collaboration, and is one of the best investments that the world can make. He said that health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, climate change and gender equality are all linked to child development and must therefore be addressed. He commended relevant efforts, such as the Every Woman Every Child movement, and the recent launching of the updated Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. He also pointed out the gains of China, as it has "achieved transformational results towards the Millennium Development Goals, having reduced poverty on an unprecedented scale, and improved education, health, gender equality and women's empowerment." He cited China's strong focus on improving the lives of women and children and elsewhere through South-South collaboration.

He stated that the shared conviction is clear, that children should be at the centre of all dimensions of sustainable development. He emphasised that early childhood development is fundamental to reaching the vision of ending all preventable maternal, child and adolescent health deaths by 2030 and ensuring the wellbeing of all children everywhere. He concluded his message, therefore, with a call to action, for participants to work together through Every Woman Every Child and the China Partnership Network to build innovative and sustainable partnerships that will help children survive, thrive and realise their greatest potential.

## Plenary Sessions

### Plenary 1

#### Sustainable Development Goals: What do we envision accomplishing by 2030?

##### Chair

Zhang Laming, Vice Minister, Development Research Center of the State Council, China

##### Speakers

- Lu Xin, Vice Minister, Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China
- Wang Guoqiang, Vice Minister of National Health and Family Planning Commission, China
- Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman, Minister of State for Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan
- Gentumur Luvsannyam, Minister for the Education, Culture of Science, Mongolia
- Meher Afroze, Minister of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh
- Asadullah Hanif Balkhi, Minister of Education, Afghanistan

This session discussed the commitments by governments across the region to prioritise ECD and the SDGs. ECD was identified by all speakers as an important change factor for sustainable development and creating equal opportunities for all. Many recognised the need to deliver on promises and to provide incentives for countries and communities to take action.

Lu Xin and Wang Guoqiang emphasised China's commitment in integrating child development within the country's wider poverty reduction goal and in particular, its focus on improving outcomes and reaching the poorest and most marginalised communities in rural areas. They acknowledged the challenges that many countries face in the region, such as lack of skills and resources, challenges in reaching the highly dispersed rural population, and the phenomenon *left behind children*. Wang stressed the need to establish policies that create a favourable environment for child development; ensure coordination across ministries responsible for delivering services to young children and their families; create centres that promote ECD; and scale up efforts in health and nutrition.

Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman presented Pakistan's National ECD Plan, which aims to scale up implementation and investment in ECD and make preschool compulsory. All provinces now have education sector plans, which include early childhood education and development. He also discussed some other programmes, such as the Benazir income support programme and health insurance initiatives, which are designed to support education and access to services for the poorest 20% of society. Finally, he expressed desire to expand South-South Cooperation and the need for overseas development assistance (ODA) to help countries experiencing severe fiscal constraints and other challenges to meet the SDGs.

The other speakers discussed in detail their efforts to reach their most marginalised populations and increase access and quality of ECD services. Gentumur Luvsannyam spoke of Mongolia's nomad kindergartens and the shift from a focus on school preparation to wider human and capability development, which focuses on the skills and capabilities of an individual. He also acknowledged the role of ECD services in helping parents find sustainable employment and improve their livelihoods, and shifting the culture of teaching towards a focus on learning.

Meher Afroze discussed Bangladesh's low cost investments in infant and maternal interventions, which are reaping big results and innovative approaches to delivering services through public-private partnerships.

Asadullah Hanif Balkhi meanwhile discussed his hopes of reaching the SDGs by 2030 despite the great challenges currently facing Afghanistan. In addition to the progress on security,

political participation, economic development and provision of basic social services, he also spoke of Afghanistan's inclusive education policy, which is increasing access to education for girls, expanding literary courses with a focus on women and introducing measures to improve gender parity in teaching. Early childhood care and education has been enshrined in education law and health policy. This includes basic social services, mother and child health, pre- and post-natal care and interventions to improve child nutrition. A preschool policy has been drafted and training and learning materials are being developed. The minister, like other speakers, expressed a desire to mobilise international and national resources for ECD and to learn from international best practice.

## Plenary 2

### Sustainable Development Goals: What do we envision accomplishing by 2030?

#### *Chair*

Li Xiaolin, President, Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

#### *Speakers*

- Jiao Yang, Vice President, All-China Women's Federation
- Nguyen Thi Nghia, Vice Minister of Education and Training, Vietnam
- Ahmed Shafeeu, Minister of State for Education, Maldives
- Sengdeuane Lachanthaboune, Vice Minister, Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR
- Gisuwat Siniwin, Vice Minister for Education, Papua New Guinea
- Sangay Zam, Vice Minister, Secretary of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan

The second session focused on how to achieve the goals and targets relating to ECD in the SDGs by 2030. Most speakers discussed their country's national policy frameworks and the need for strong government leadership, including the openness to learn from best practice.

Jiao Yang spoke about the programmes of the All-China Women's Federation to protect the rights and interests of women and children. These included a campaign in 2011 to deliver nutrition and care packages to 1 million infants between the ages of 6 months and 3 years in 10 provinces. This eventually received investment from the central government budget and mobilised resources to engage parents and caregivers.

Nguyen Thi Nghia acknowledged ECD as the first level of Vietnam's education system and its role in developing the personalities of children and providing the basis for lifelong learning. She also spoke of efforts to increase enrolment, access and inclusivity for disabled and ethnic minority students; improve teacher training; and introduce early learning standards.

In addition to these initiatives, Vietnam is developing an Early Childhood Education Policy for 2016-2025 to help fulfil universal access to education by 2030. This plan includes strengthening quality of preschools, increasing support for learning materials and school meals in ethnic minority areas, focusing on language skills, revising the EC curriculum to a competency-based approach, developing child-friendly learning spaces, providing additional support for young parents and migrant children, developing community-based EC centres, improving and standardising qualifications and training of preschool teachers, mobilising resources to scale up EC institutions and improving cooperation with international organisations and bilateral partners.

Ahmed Shafeeu talked about the demand that is driving the provision of education services in the Maldives and the resulting high net enrolment in preschool. Despite the challenges faced to provide services and scale up provision of services including the wide geographic distribution of population, the Maldives has developed a public-community partnership model in which Island Councils provide facilities and teachers and the central government subsidises teachers' salaries and administration costs. The minister acknowledged the need to do more to improve teacher training and introduce stronger monitoring mechanisms, but

the objective is to integrate pre-primary provision into the formal school system and include providing nutritional awareness for parents and pre-natal health services in the country's ECD approach.

Vice Minister Sengdeuane Lachanthaboune presented the goal of Laos to ensure 80% of all 5 year olds have 1 year of pre-primary and 55% of 3-5 year olds enrolled in kindergarten by 2020, with focus on the remotest areas. Currently, the focus is on reducing stunting and implementing a strategy for 2016-2020 to promote health and nutrition at ECD facilities, which will engage the community, improve cleanliness and WASH facilities at schools, and provide health support and school meals at ECE facilities. In addition, the overall goal of Laos is to ensure that by 2030 all children have access to ECE.

The final two speakers also spoke of their government's efforts to integrate ECD into national education plans to help improve access and quality of early education programmes. Gisuwat Siniwin talked about how ECCE has been included in Papua New Guinea's National Education Plan 2015-2019. He also discussed the aspiration to develop standards and indicators for 3-5-year-olds and quality standards for ECE centres; create a separate ECCE department within the Department of Education; integrate ECCE into all teacher training colleges; extend official provision at community level to all 3 and 4 year olds; and increase investments in ECCE.

Sangay Zam discussed Bhutan's Education Blueprint 2014-2024, which will guide their education system's development and improve education quality. He outlined the Royal Government of Bhutan's aspiration to enhance access to centre-based ECCD; increase the quality of ECCD programmes through quality assurance mechanisms and building professional capacity in the field; and foster cross-sectoral cooperation amongst the education, health, nutrition, human resources, and the women and child protection sectors. He acknowledged that these would require innovation and cost-effective approaches to reach rural areas and additional financial and technical capacity for Bhutan.

### **Dinner Keynote**



Jeffrey D. Sachs is the Director of The Earth Institute, Quetelet Professor of Sustainable Development, and Professor of Health Policy and Management at Columbia University. He is Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the Millennium Development Goals, having held the same position under former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He is Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

He is co-founder and Chief Strategist of Millennium Promise Alliance, and is director of the Millennium Villages Project. Sachs is also one of the Secretary-General's MDG Advocates, and a Commissioner of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Development. He has authored three New York Times bestsellers in the past seven years: *The End of Poverty* (2005), *Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet* (2008), and *The Price of Civilization* (2011). His most recent books are *To Move the World: JFK's Quest for Peace* (2013) and *The Age of Sustainable Development* (2015).

Jeffrey Sachs praised efforts of governments to agree to an inspiring set of global development goals. He stressed the importance of securing finance to ensure a breakthrough in achieving education goals and he set out a number of steps governments should take to ensure they can achieve the goals. These include:

1. Setting out where we need to be by 2030 and identifying the steps needed to take to achieve this goal, which he referred as *backcasting*;
2. Identifying targeted interventions that will help achieve goals;

3. Securing finance for ECD and education initiatives;<sup>1</sup>
4. Using technology to reach every child, train teachers, and connect classrooms and families;
5. Integrating strategies that help achieve a number of the SDGs at once;<sup>2</sup>
6. Collecting data to know where you are and compare to where you need to be;
7. Undertaking research to understand what new approaches can help achieve the goals more effectively; and
8. Cultivating peace as conflict is one of the biggest barriers to achieving the SDGs and people in conflict areas are least likely to reach their development potential.

Sachs was optimistic about the prospects for reaching the SDGs.

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<sup>1</sup> Sachs said that the Minister of Education has to become best friends with the Minister of Finance, and this should include changing the perception that education is a cost centre. Instead, he said it should be viewed as the leading profit centre for a country.

<sup>2</sup> Sachs stated that SDGs 1-4 and 13 are all mutually reinforcing and interdependent. They cannot be tackled in isolation.

## Day 2: Welcome Remarks and Plenary Sessions

### Welcome Remarks

Day 2 opened with welcome remarks from Lu Mai, Secretary General of the China Development Research Foundation; Rana Flowers, UNICEF's representative in China; and Sheldon Schaffer from ARNEC's Board of Directors.

Lu Mai cited the powerful role ECD can play in overcoming some of the greatest challenges facing societies around the world, including the slowing down of economies, degradation of environment, and inequality. He spoke about the long-term impacts of ECD and its potential to transform the lives of individuals and societies.

Flowers shared the power of ECD to build the great nation of the future. She stressed that ECD is one of the most cost-effective public policies promoting equity and social justice. ECD is key to addressing multidimensional and intergenerational poverty, curbing inequality and achieving the SDGs. Referring to the scientific evidence on the benefits of ECD interventions, Flowers said we have the imperative to act now and work in partnership to deliver ECD services. It should inspire us to invest today.

Science also tells us that the first 1000 days is a critical period for children, when neural connections develop and the brain is growing at an unprecedented rate. ECD is a set of mutually reinforcing interventions covering health, protection, nutrition and education. She praised China's political leadership, collective commitment and 'take it to scale' attitude and encouraged delegates from across the region to match political commitment with financial resources and a focus on quality.

Sheldon Shaeffer discussed the multi-sectoral nature of ECD and the need for comprehensive approaches. He cited the challenges specific to the Asia Pacific region, including the problem of left-behind children, which is prevalent in the region and the need to explore in greater depth what teachers need to succeed in the ECD sector. He advocated for national SDG action plans at the country level, which take into account and expand on the ECD targets, indicators and systems of measurement. Delegates were encouraged to find out how the plans are being formulated and get involved with them. He also reminded delegates that ECD goes far beyond Goal 4 and target 4.2. ECD is integrated across the SDG framework and this must also be reflected in these national action plans.

### Plenary Sessions

#### Plenary 3

#### Theory and Policy Innovation for ECD

##### *Chair*

Lu Mai, Secretary General, China Development Research Foundation

##### *Speakers*

- Julia Gillard, Former Prime Minister of Australia, Chair of the Board, Global Partnership for Education
- Osmar Terra, Congressman-Parliamentarian, Brazil
- Kim Sethany, Secretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Kingdom of Cambodia
- Ramesh Lekhak, Member of Parliament, Nepal



Julia Gillard, Chair of the Board of Directors, Global Partnership for Education. She served as Prime Minister of Australia between 2010 and 2013 and delivered nation-changing policies, including reforming Australia's education at every level from early childhood to tertiary education, improving the provision and sustainability of health care, aged care and dental care, commencing the nation's first ever national scheme to care for people with disabilities. Before becoming Prime Minister, Ms. Gillard was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Social Inclusion.

This session provided a platform to discuss what their governments and other international organisations are doing to support ECD. It was opened with an address from Julia Gillard, former Prime Minister of Australia and Chair of Board for the Global Partnership for Education. Ms. Gillard spoke of the importance of universal education and ECD in ushering in a new era and the initiatives that currently exist to promote this aim. These include the Norway High Level Committee of Financing Education, the World Education Forum's Incheon Declaration and commitments at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

Gillard encouraged delegates to engage in knowledge exchange and advocacy for education. She championed South-South Cooperation and the potential for developing countries to learn from each other. This includes the need to scale up funding for education. Investing in early education in particular can close the gap in educational attainment, reduce poverty and set the stage for future jobs, growth and prosperity. She discussed some of the countries in which the GFE and other international institutions were investing to help increase access to pre-primary education, such as mobile kindergartens in Mongolia, programmes to target the poorest and train educators in Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, and programmes to address gaps in literacy preparedness in Tonga and Guinea.

The world is hungry for answers on addressing equity and improving education to ensure that... children who are not in school get the... opportunity to learn... Business as usual will not be enough.

Julia Gillard

Congressman Osmar Terra presented some innovative legal and programme interventions that target early childhood in Brazil. In 2013, Brazil introduced an EC Law to promote child protection and early childhood rights. This included provisions to address participation, respect differences, and reduce inequality of access to services, among other priorities.

He also presented information on the Brasil Carinhoso programme, which was launched in 2012 as part of the Brazil without Extreme Poverty Plan. This programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger and aims to overcome extreme poverty in families by expanding access to ECE centres and health care. One pillar of success in Brazil in the delivery of ECD services has been the strong Executive and Parliamentary leadership, reinforced by local government delivery.

The Kingdom of Cambodia has demonstrated similar levels of political commitment to ECD. Kim Sethany, Secretary of State for Education, Youth and Sports, described how the country's National Policy on ECCD and its Action Plan is part of Cambodia's policies towards poverty reduction. It includes provisions for women's and children's health; education services; parental and community involvement; and social intervention for the vulnerable. Eleven ministries are working together to support integrated ECD. Cambodia's aspiration is to be an upper-middle income country by 2030 and ECD is part of this strategy. Despite challenges to implementation including limited financial and technical support, lack of awareness amongst stakeholders, and difficulty reaching rural populations, the government is committed to ensuring that ECCE is completely implemented and increasing attention is given to minority groups.



Ramesh Lekhak, a member of Parliament in Nepal, discussed Nepal's longstanding commitment to early childhood and the specific Parliamentary focus on providing these services to disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. He acknowledged that this year's devastating earthquake had disrupted the entire education system and made young children more vulnerable, requiring more resources for psychosocial support, temporary education centres and supply kits. He was firm on the need for high-level political commitment for ECD and praised the role Parliamentarians played in ensuring ECD was on the agenda and in the constitution and election manifestos. He ended by proposing the formation of an international forum of parliamentarians to promote ECD.

[Video Presentation: James Heckman \(Professor of University of Chicago, Director of Center for the Economics of Human Development\)](#)

In a video interview, Professor James Heckman valued skills and the implications of low capability, as a major determinant of inequality. ECD policy has a role to play in building skills and fostering social mobility in society. He said that Government policy must invest in the early years, and that in *'we shouldn't be penny-wise and pound-foolish'*.

He said that we should spend more money preventing problems than mediating them when it is too late. ECD is cost-effective for the benefits proffered to individuals, communities and societies. High quality ECD has high rates of return, promotes skills, creates a base of opportunity, expands social mobility, and increases productivity and incomes. ECD programmes can also be part of a wider economic strategy.

**Plenary 4**  
**SDGs: Early Childhood Development 2030**

*Chair*

Mae Chu Chang, Board of Directors, ARNEC

*Speakers*

- Pia Rebello Britto, Global ECD Advisor, UNICEF Headquarters
- David Skinner, Director, Education Global Initiative, Save the Children International
- Mark Pierce, Plan International Asia Regional Director
- Wolfgang Lutz, Founding Director, Programme Director of Wittgenstein Centre, International Institute for Applied System Analysis
- Agi Veres, UNDP Country Director
- Elena Glinskaya, Programme Leader, Education, Health, Social Protection & Labour, World Bank Group
- Khine Mye, Director General, Department of Myanmar Educational Research
- Wang Yanzhong, Director, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

This session focused on what needs to be done to meet the ECD targets and the SDGs. ARNEC Director Mae Chu Chang opened the session by asking what we need to prioritise to ensure we reach the SDGs.

UNICEF's Pia Rebello Britto acknowledged that for the first time in global development history we have ECD on the agenda. ECD is a key element in ensuring we see the transformation we hope to achieve in the next 15 years, but she said it is imperative that we have to see ECD as a set of interventions, which goes beyond education and includes other elements, such as health, nutrition, and protection. She highlighted the strong multiplier effects of ECD and the contribution it makes to the other SDGs:

- Goal 1: ECD is the most cost-effective strategy to alleviate poverty.

- Goal 2: Early stimulation with nutrition supplementation achieves better outcomes. It amplifies the effects and buffers children against toxic stress.
- Goal 3: ECD sets the trajectory for lifelong health.
- Goal 4: Learning begins at birth. Preschool enrolment leads to higher wages and greater productivity.
- Goal 5: ECD supports women's empowerment and economic advancement.
- Goal 8: Adequate childcare is part of decent work, and professionalisation of the ECD workforce will require productive environments and quality learning
- Goal 10: Inequality begins before birth. ECD is a powerful equaliser. Disadvantaged children who receive ECD earn 25 times more than those who do not.
- Goal 11: ECD requires safe spaces that are sustainable.
- Goal 12: ECD sets in place attitudes towards consumption and preservation, which are sustainable.
- Goal 16: Neurobiology shows that ECD fosters resilience and values and behaviours, which promote peace and reduce violence.
- Goal 17: ECD requires measurement at regional, global and national levels, which can revitalise partnerships.



She also asked delegates to use science as a base for advocacy and in support of the moral argument for ECD. She also advocated for measuring ECD through appropriate metrics. She cited UNICEF's MICS as a measure of what a child should be able to do and at what age. Britto believes that ECD can lead a data revolution for the SDGs.

David Skinner from Save the Children International posed three questions:

- What policies and programmes do we need to meet the SDGs in ECD?
- How do we advocate for this?
- How are we going to allocate funds?

Skinner emphasised measurement and the need to support governments and teachers to understand what progress can be made in children's cognitive, physical, language and socio-emotional development. He also stressed the need for integrated programming and supporting communities, where governments fail to reach them, particularly in areas where there is no tradition of formal education. He asked delegates to think carefully about the transitions between stages of learning and schooling from a child's perspective. On ECD advocacy, he stressed the need to get the language right, particularly stressing that ECD is value-for-money or a good investment for the economy and society. He also talked about the need for evidence-based ECD. Finally, he suggested prioritising ECD funds for the more deprived.

Mark Pierce, Plan International's Asia Regional Director, discussed Plan's engagement with ECD in the region. First, replicable models are developed for parents and communities so that they are empowered to advance the rights of young children. Second, priority is given to excluded groups. Third, he reinforced the critical role that civil society partners play in filling in gaps of ECCD provision. He ended by reasserting the transformative power of early interventions to overcome conditions of disadvantage and inequality. Wolfgang Lutz said that human capability is the single most determinant of sustainable development. Based on research from the Wittgenstein Centre, he made the link between slower demographic growth, a result of women's education. He also reminded delegates of the long-term effects of ECD.

While most speakers spoke of the importance of ECD as the foundation to achieving the SDGs, Agi Veres from the UNDP made the case that you cannot achieve your ECD goals without achieving the other SDGs. She urged delegates to look at the SDGs in an integrated manner. She stressed the ability of ECD to help address inequality, exclusion and multidimensional poverty and its contribution to sustainable development. She also reminded delegates that children are the most vulnerable to the effects of extreme poverty.

Elena Glinskaya spoke about the work of World Bank to provide funding to the education sector, particularly ECD in Laos and China's Yunnan province. The World Bank also provides strong global advocacy for ECD and rigorous impact evaluation of ECD programmes at country level, including through their SABER-ECD analytics approach. The World Bank will continue to play a prominent role in developing ECD policies and programmes.

Khine Mye of the Department of Myanmar Educational Research presented government policies and reforms to support ECD. The Myanmar Government is working with development partners to undertake a comprehensive review of the education sector, including legal and institutional reform. The new National Education Plan includes ECCD programmes and provisions to strengthen governance of preschool services, the expansion of access for children in rural and ethnic areas, improvements to preschool quality to better prepare children for primary school, and a commitment to increase ECD budgets.

Finally Wang Yanzhong from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences reaffirmed the importance of South-South Cooperation and China's strong commitment to supporting international peace and development.

## **Plenary 5**

### **Roles of Government on ECD—ensuring learning for all**

#### *Chair*

Lu Mai, Secretary General, China Development Research Foundation

#### *Speakers*

- Michael Lu, Associate Administrator, Maternal and Child Health, Health Resources and Services Administration U.S., Department of Health and Human Services
- Lava Awasthi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education, Nepal
- Harris Iskandar, Director General of Early Childhood and Community Education, Indonesia
- Jiang Jin, Deputy Inspector, Department II of Elementary Education, Ministry of Education
- Teresita Inciong, Executive Director, ECCD Council, Philippines
- Xia Qingfeng, Secretary of Tongren Municipal Committee, Guizhou Province
- Li Jing, Secretary of Meishan Municipal Committee, Sichuan Province

This session focused on the role Governments have in the support and delivery of education and ECD services. Lu Mai of the CDRF reaffirmed the power of political commitment in delivering positive outcomes for societies through the provision of ECD services. There was consensus about the roles of government from setting policies and providing guidelines to implementing and delivering ECD programmes.

Michael Lu from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services cited government's role in advancing science and innovation, working with universities and promoting international cooperation in the area. Governments also have a responsibility in ensuring access to basic health and developmental services, raising quality and safety based on science and data, and improving the condition of all children and families. Lu also

advocated for collaboration across countries and at local levels to break down silos to achieve the SDGs and ECD commitments.

Lava Awasthi from Nepal considered what alternative approaches in delivering ECD services. He discussed community groups, how to use the non-formal sector and civil society organisations and the need to engage children. He advocated for a strong legal basis to make headway in addressing the needs of children who do not have access to ECD and spoke of the need to address country specific issues like the detrimental impact using English in Nepal rather than children's mother tongues has on children's development. He also expounded the importance of integrating nutrition interventions, ensuring these are targeted and also the need to change the perception that ECD is an expenditure. Rather, it should be seen as an investment.

Harris Iskandar, Director General of Early Childhood and Community Education in Indonesia, set out where he felt governments have the largest role in supporting ECD - by empowering education actors, increasing access and managing governance and public engagement. This includes setting regulations, guidelines and devising manuals for organisations that want to establish EC units. Governments should also provide competitive funding for EC units at sub-district level. He advocated a strong role for communities within ECD provision to ensure that services are relevant and to use local languages. Ownerships, partnership and participant involvement at all stages is crucial so that demand and services are community driven.

Three speakers from China discussed the central government and regional government commitment and provision of ECD and preschool services. Jiang Jin, a Deputy Inspector from the Ministry of Education, outlined the government's role in top-level design, the definition of responsibilities and goals, and scaling up of fiscal inputs. Xia Qingfeng and Li Jing from Guizhou Province and Sichuan Province, respectively, talked about mobilising funds and dealing with mixed delivery forms at local level to meet national government goals whilst also addressing area-specific challenges.

Finally, Teresita Inciong from the ECCD Council of the Philippines discussed the government's Early Years Act, which encourages interagency and multi-sectoral collaborations. National Child Development Centres which were established as a result of this Act aim to expand access and quality of programmes and ECD centres, train teachers and address the needs of remote areas. The government's aspiration by 2020 is to address the gaps in service provision and adherence to quality standards. Dr. Inciong also highlighted the need to strengthen coordination between local and national government.

## **Plenary 6**

### **Integrating nutrition and ECD**

#### *Chair*

Zhang Shikun, Standing Vice Chairman, Maternal and Child Health Association of China

#### *Speakers*

- Qin Gen, Director General, Department of Maternal and Child Health, National Health and Family Planning Commission
- Leo Wenke, Inspector, Ministry of Education, and Deputy Director of the National Nutrition Office
- Liang Xiaofeng, Deputy Director, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Paula Peng, Sec Gen, Amway Charitable Foundation
- Peter Oylo, Save the Children's Chief of Party for the USAID-funded Suaahara or Good Nutrition Programme, Nepal

The symbiotic and mutually reinforcing relationship between nutrition and other ECD interventions has been a major theme throughout the conference. In opening this session

the Chair Zhang Shikum reminded delegates about the crucial role that early nutrition has for lifelong growth and health.

In many countries across the region, malnutrition and stunting are a major issue. In fact, Qin Gen, Director General of China's Department of Maternal and Child Health, National Health and Family Planning Commission noted that one of their biggest challenges was the disparity between malnutrition in rural areas and over-nutrition in urban areas. Targeted policies are needed to address this disparity. Leo Wenke supported this view and discussed some programmes to provide nutrition education in schools and a high impact campaign to improve the nutritional health of school children. Liang Xiaofeng of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention discussed his work on child health issues in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education.

Paula Peng from Amway Charitable Foundation discussed the role of charities in China in improving nutritional outcomes. She shared her understanding of some of the underlying causes of malnutrition, including the home and school environments of left-behind children, the lack of understanding about what it means to eat well, lack of nutrients in local environments and lack of care, awareness and social engagement, particularly in preschool environments. She shared some initiatives to improve nutrition and raise awareness like the Spring Shoots project, the Power of 5s project and the white Rice Movement.

Peter Oyloe from Save the Children presented the USAID-funded Good Nutrition Programme in Nepal. The programme focuses on education and communication through interpersonal channels and mass media. He expressed his concern that often, when programmes are taken to scale, they lose their focus on reaching those who are really in need. Oyloe emphasised that programmes take time to show results and that organisations should be looking to take advantage of existing platforms that reach out into communities to increase the diffusion of ECD programmes. Greater advocacy is needed for nutrition programmes to include holistic child development outcomes rather than simply focusing on stunting.

## Plenary 7 Innovative/noteworthy ECD practices

### *Chair*

Zhang Li, Director, National Center for Education Development Research, Ministry of Education, China

### *Speakers*

- Zhai Ligong, Secretary General, March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation of China
- Fang Jin, Deputy Director General, China Development Research Foundation
- Bernardo Aguillar Montiel, Director of Quality and innovation, CENDI, Mexico
- Robert Sherpbier and Margo O'Sullivan, UNICEF China
- Evelyn D. Santiago, ARNE Executive Director
- Karma Gayleg, Senior Programme Manager, Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan
- Dian Fikriani, Independent Researcher
- Sachita Suwal, ECD Programme Manager, Nepal Youth Foundation

Most of the presentations at the conference focused on noteworthy and innovative approaches to providing ECD services, and this final session Day 2 brought together some of the most innovative examples.

Zhai Ligong discussed the works of China's March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation incorporating people with birth defects into society and the need for policy guidance from government, training for nurses and health professionals and fundraising support from society.



The China Development Research Foundation has a strong track record in influencing government policy in China and translating pilot programmes into policy. Fang Jin, CDRF's Deputy Director General, outlined processes, which included launching a pilot program at the local level and submitting the results to central government with recommendations. If these recommendations are adopted, a programme is launched in the area and following another evaluation of the target group, government policy is continuously improved.

Bernardo Aguillar Montiel talked about Mexico's CENDI programme. CENDI was established 25 years ago in Nueva Leon, Mexico and specifically targeted areas experiencing extreme poverty, unemployment, drugs, inter-gang and domestic violence. The programme is based on principles of social justice, equity and quality. Its focus goes beyond access to services to ensure that children, families and communities receive quality ECD to close the poverty gap. It also provides high quality services in five key areas, namely, nutrition, healthcare, education, family and community social work and social emotional development.

Robert Sherpbier and Margo O'Sullivan from UNICEF China presented a number of integrated, multi-sectoral services and other approaches to ECD supported by UNICEF. These include capacity development of social workers, parents and teachers; integrating parents and grandparent in operations of the ECD Centre; providing tools for service providers including posters, books, parenting booklets and online resources and toys, which are showing positive impacts. They stressed that ECD has to combine health, nutrition, education, social work and child protection—the key role that parents play and the need to collaborate with different sectors.

Evelyn Santiago, ARNEC's Executive Director, provided an overview of ARNEC's Documentation of Noteworthy Practices. She shared that for this year, ARNEC in partnership with the University of Brunei and with funding support from UNICEF ROSA, OSF and Plan International documented eight noteworthy ECD programmes in the Asia Pacific. They are useful and practical, respond to need with innovation, involve and positively influence stakeholders, are cost efficient, and empower disadvantaged and excluded groups of children.

Karma Gayleg presented community-based ECCD projects in Bhutan, which are holistic and integrated into a larger community development programme. His presentation focused on engaging parents and communities in nutrition promotion and multi-sectoral delivery. Outcomes of the programme include improved childcare, livelihoods, health and hygiene, school readiness, performance and retention, and better interaction and communication with outsiders. Dian Fikriani presented the work of SoS Children Villages work in Indonesia, which provides a caring and loving environment to children without parental care. This programme has shown that family-based care by community members reduces child poverty and increases access to education.

Finally, Sachita Suwal spoke about the Setogurans National Child Development Service in Nepal. This programme uses an innovative and sustainable government-community collaboration to fund the development of local community ECD centre and relies on cooperative savings groups to fund salaries and support centres. Family involvement and education has been a key aspect of this project and some of the positive outcomes include improved nutrition, greater engagement with local governments, women's empowerment and greater community awareness of the importance of ECD.

## Day 3: Plenary and Parallel Sessions, and ARNEC Paper Presentations

### *Video Presentations: Social Equality and Child Development*

The day started with videos from [Joseph Stiglitz](#) and [Amarty Sen](#).

Joseph Stiglitz stressed that countries with less inequality do better, grow faster, and are more stable. He posed a question to the audience about what type of society we want to live in and affirmed that people do not want to live in divided societies where some have riches and others have nothing.

He discussed the challenge facing China, where despite falling levels of poverty, inequality has risen to levels as that of the US in a very short period of time. The key to tackling inequality is to understand what is happening with children and ensure equality of opportunities to reach life potentials.

If children do not reach their full potential, countries are wasting their most important resource. Globally, this is an issue and not enough has been done for young children. The consequences of this will be felt for years to come.

He concluded that there is no single intervention to tackle inequality. It is multi-faceted and requires a multitude of responses to address gaps in income, wealth, access to education, housing, environment and exposure to health hazards. Governments need a multifaceted and comprehensive agenda to tackling poverty and inequality.

Amartya Sen welcomed the conference focus on the ‘exciting and important subject’ of ECD. He shared that the world has already progressed in viewing development, from merely measuring GDPs to assessing the quality of human life. However, the early years of the human life are still neglected, and many overlook data on the pre-school.

Mental development and nutritional features during this age are important, and challenges in the early years leave a mark on the child’s cognitive development. These and other facts on the importance of early childhood are surfacing in recent studies, including the works of James Heckman that deal with the development of early childhood capability and how that influences the possibilities of capability enhancement and consolidation in future years.

The only real prosperity is where it is shared and where there is social justice. An agenda of social justice has to begin with children, where every child has access to adequate nutrition, healthcare and education

Joseph Stiglitz

## Plenary Sessions

### Plenary 8

**Building Better Brains: How do we translate neuroscience evidence to benefit children's development?**

#### *Chair*

Chemba Raghavan, Education Specialist, Gender and ECD, UNICEF- EAPRO

#### *Moderator*

Chip Walter, former CNN journalist, author and filmmaker

#### *Speakers*

- Stephen Lye, Executive Director, Fraser Mustard Institute for Human Development, University of Toronto
- Judy Cameron, Professor of Psychiatry, Neuroscience, University of Pittsburgh
- Pratibha Singhi, Chief of Pediatric Neurology and Neurodevelopment Post Graduate Institute, Chandigarh, India
- Shu Hua, Professor, Beijing Normal University
- He Yong, Professor at the School of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, National Key Laboratory of Cognitive Neuroscience and Learning, Beijing Normal University
- Frank Oberklaid, Honorary Professor of Pediatrics, The University of Melbourne, Australia

Six leading neuroscientists from all over the world, including two from China and one from India, presented key emerging findings and the policy and programming applications of their research on Building Better Brains. This session explored the advances in science which are supporting a case for early intervention. Session chair Chemba Raghavan from UNICEF-EAPRO stated that information on advances in neuroscience must be disseminated in a way that makes sense to ministers and stakeholders. New available evidence should also be used to advocate for ECD, and people need to be brought together for collaborative efforts toward this end.



Stephen Lye from the University of Toronto spoke about the importance of early environments. He described the phenomenon of epigenetics and revealed that a child's genetic blueprint is moulded and modified by the environment around the child. The environment affects the expression of certain genes and sets the trajectory of health, learning and social capabilities. Crucially, the expression of the genetic blueprint can be passed on to future generations and can account for transgenerational impacts of poverty and adversity. A child needs a nurturing, stimulating and protected environment for the full development of the brain. This means a balance of diet, play, nurture and care and protection from violence, conflict and abuse. All these affect the growth of the brain and the formation of neural connection for cognitive and social development. He also discussed the importance of the microbiome, the bacteria in our bodies affecting our immune system and brain function, and the impact the pre-pregnancy health of mothers and fathers can have on child development.



Judy Cameron from the University of Pittsburgh spoke about her work on the effects of toxic stress on the brains for young primates. She described how neural connections need to be used continually, otherwise they are lost, to the detriment of a child's personal interactions and ability to read body language and emotions. She added that during the learning and development process, children will do things they enjoy, thus learning needs to be fun. It is also much easier to get things right the first time rather than repair them later. Interventions need to happen in the period of maximum brain plasticity to strengthen pathways and repair damage.

The idea of 'critical windows' when the brain needs to be stimulated was echoed by Pratibha Singhi. She shared the imperative of making the most of early years, considering the speed at which neurons form in young children's brains and the physiological and intelligence impacts of not stimulating the brain during this period. Professor Shu Hua from Beijing Normal University added her experience working to understand the causes of spatial disorders and dyslexia in children. She discussed how her research had identified underactivity and weaker connections between two regions of the brain as a cause of these disorders.

He Yong supported the importance of these connections. He described his work in mapping the brain structure and function and the concept of 'connectomics', a cutting edge technique to describe the geography and the connections of the brain.

Frank Oberklaid from The University of Melbourne talked about the importance of data and some of the studies undertaken in Australia to identify the causes in differences in children's school attainment, and the impact understanding this can have on resource allocation and service delivery. Professor Oberklaid outlined lessons in creating policy change:

1. Research needs to be available and translated so that it can inform policy. This means creating policy briefs and making them available online, sitting on government and parliamentary committees, nurturing relationships with advisors, developing programmes and models, reaching out to parents and professionals via training opportunities and engaging the media.
2. Language is important. Research needs to be translated in a way various professional groups can understand.
3. Efforts to translate, disseminate and apply research is an ongoing struggle. Every time a minister changes or a new stakeholder group emerges, you will have to start again.

A number of themes emerged in the question and answer part of the session including the need to improve parents' education levels and finding ways to train and engage parents on the importance of early brain development. Many of the speakers spoke about the crucial role parents play in boosting epigenetics and the need to use technology to engage them. Judy Cameron spoke about her Brain Architecture Game, which aims to introduce brain science to the public.

The panel also discussed the multiple ways in which poverty and adversity affect children. Stephen Lye said people need to embrace and understand complexity, if interventions are to be efficient and cost effective, and that smart interventions must be generated to come up with integrated packages that address nutrition, stimulation, care and the wider environment surrounding a child at appropriate times linked to windows of brain development. Looking beyond academic and government silos is essential as children develop in a holistic way. Interventions should be integrated and long-term as adolescents are the next parents, and targeted as not all children respond in the same way. Tools are available to measure and assess children's progress, such as the EAP Early Childhood Development Scales (EAP-ECDS) in the Asia Pacific region, the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) in MICS, and a World Bank tool for better education system results, all of which can help guide the development and revision of policies and programmes.

Pia Britto closed the session with a call to inspire and engage the public with science via mass communication tools in order to create a demand-driven social movement. She asked delegates to elevate the importance of the early years, and to develop campaigns to engage different global and local sectors toward ensuring equal opportunities for all children and ensuring political and financial commitments to ECD. Finally, she encouraged delegates to create evidence-based multi-faceted packages that can be delivered through existing platforms. Doing so will allow stunting and underdevelopment to be addressed and eliminated, and will strengthen families and societies.<sup>3</sup>

## Plenary 9 Child development and anti-poverty

### *Chair*

Wei Yu, Former Minister of Education, People's Republic of China

### *Speakers*

- Hong Tianyun, Party Member and Vice Director, The State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development
- Cai Fang, Vice President, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
- Thomas Pataaku, Minister of Education, Autonomous Bougainville Government, PNG
- Cheng Mingming, Vice Governor, Guizhou Province
- Chen Feng, Director, School Planning and Construction Development Center, Ministry of Education, China
- Manzoor Ahmed, Chair of Bangladesh ECD Network, Professor Emeritus at BRAC University

The link between child development and poverty reduction was firmly established throughout the Conference. This session explored some of the targeted interventions implemented by governments across the region to integrate child development into anti-poverty strategies.

In China, the 10-Year National Child Development Plan is an integral part of the country's Poverty Reduction Plan 2010-2020. This plan coordinates nine implementing ministries and has been updated for the period 2014-2020. A series of child development measures have been synchronised and prioritised, including a focus on 592 poor counties, tuition exemption and nutrition programmes in 680 counties.



Cheng Mingming, Vice Governor of Guizhou Province, spoke about the provincial government's efforts to introduce targeted interventions, which would halt the transfer of poverty from generation to generation. These measures include more education spending, particularly in rural areas and to benefit poor families, and a nutrition and school infrastructure improvement programme. Chen Feng revealed that one of the greatest lessons in addressing poverty is that government attention is required at all levels from the national to the local.

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<sup>3</sup> The plenary session was "clear and easy to understand" (average of 4.41 out of 5 highest score). Participants raised questions to distil complex neuroscience concepts into core messages, how these are explained to others, and how to apply these in practice. Copies of the evaluation report may be requested from the ARNEC Secretariat at [secretariat@arnec.net](mailto:secretariat@arnec.net).

PNG's Thomas Pataaku discussed the government's efforts to include ECCE in education plans at local and national levels. He acknowledged the need to gain political commitment, to secure funds specifically for rural areas and to strengthen collaboration between Ministries. He also called for the need to scale up quality teacher training, ECCE centres in rural areas, good parenting programmes, and the need to strengthen partnerships with communities and the private sector.

Manzoor Ahmed, Chair of Bangladesh ECD Network, echoed the need for political commitment to child and human development; persistence in policy; pragmatic adjustments; and resource mobilisation. Ahmed also stressed the following:

- 1) Protecting the child today from gross multidimensional poverty, which includes income, health nutrition, psycho-social and cognitive growth and nurturing inputs will stop the transfer of intergenerational of poverty.
- 2) We need to look at all 17 SDGs holistically. They all link to human capacity enhancement and empowerment.
- 3) More has to be done to enhance integration within the education sector itself. Transition between stages is a continuum and must take into account social emotional development, parenting and care giving support, lifelong learning and ICT for adults.
- 4) Coping with climate change should be included in child development. Children are especially vulnerable to climate change, which can enhance poverty. Protecting children from exposure to climate risks needs greater priority and support should be provided from the climate change funds.
- 5) Commitments to implement policy must be met. Obstacles to implementation include lack of resources and capacity, the inability to dispense with old habits in government and management, corruption and waste. To overcome this we need to bring together technology, research, resources, participation, synergy and commitment within and across countries.

He ended by reminding delegates that child development is the best investment and we should be increasing our efforts now.

## **Plenary 10**

### **Gender equality and empowering girls**

#### *Chair*

Zhu Zonghan, Vice Chair, Chinese Maternal and Child Health Association

#### *Speakers*

- Cong Zhongxiao, Secretary of the Party Committee and Professor, China National Children's Centre
- Ge Subiao, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, News Media Centre, Xinhua New Agency
- Divya Lata, Plan Asia Regional Office, Early Learning and Education Advisor
- Melissa Kelly, Senior Early Childhood Development Advisor, ChildFund International

The final plenary session focused on gender equality and understanding the dynamics of gender in ECD programming.

Cong Zhongxiao from the China National Children's Centre spoke about the Old Cow Child Exploration Centres which encouraged children to learn through play. These Centres encourage children to develop their characters and require teachers to play a facilitative rather than leading role. The CNCC's work focuses on identifying universal values for children and mobilising research to develop replicable and scalable models to benefit children. They have developed some educational resource packs, which particularly encourage girls to learn and they also focus on the role of the mother and provide parenting support in communities.

Ge Subiao spoke about Xinhua News Agency's campaign to raise awareness about the left behind children, 28 million of whom are girls. She explained that their focus on girls was based on a recognition that girls are some of the most disadvantaged in rural families and that neglecting them has a negative impact on the next generation. Their campaign enabled some of the girls to tell their stories but also provided physical and mental development support to girls in rural villages.

Divya Lata from Plan International presented results of researches on gender disparities in ECCD. She posed that on the surface, ECCD programmes appear good for gender equality. They promote girls' education, women's economic participation and equal development support from the start. Research from UNICEF also showed that gender disparities in the number of children receiving vaccinations, nutrition and protection support and enrolled in preschool programmes were surprisingly small. However, because ECD programmes are gender blind they often serve to reinforce existing inequalities and injustices in the communities in which they are offered. This therefore means the need for context-specific interventions.

Finally, Melissa Kelly spoke about ChildFund International's approach in empowering and preparing the next generation of parents. She presented a programme rolled out in the Philippines called ERPAT or *Empowering and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities*, which is also slang for an approachable father in the local dialect. This programme provided a short workshop which focused on helping fathers understand themselves as a person, their role as a father, husband and caregiver. This helped fathers value their multiple roles and increase their opportunities to speak with other men about their role in the home. Local Government also saw this programme as an effective way to help reduce violence against women and children.

All speakers recognised the vulnerability of girls in different societies and looked at ways to increase their opportunities through direct interventions or interventions focused on teachers, mothers and fathers.

## Parallel Sessions

### Venue 1: Promoting Parenting

#### Chair

Sven Coppens (Plan China, Country Representative)

#### Speakers

- Cai Jianhua, Director, Officials Training Centre, National Health and Family Planning Commission
- Deborah Llewellyn, Independent Consultant for Early Childhood
- Namhee Woo, Korean Institute of Childcare & Education, Korea
- Joseph Sparling, University of North Carolina, USA
- Jane Kato-Wallace, Promundo
- Susan Change Lopez, Lecturer, the University of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica

This session made evident the wide recognition of the importance of the parent's deep involvement in the development of the child. Parents create the enabling environment and provide critical stimulus and nurture for optimal brain development. There is also evidence of intergenerational impacts of health inputs and stress in children. If a parent is exposed to stress, violence, conflict or is undernourished, this can impact on the expression of a child's genetic blueprint.

Many programmes and policies presented at the Conference recognised the need to empower parents and raise their awareness about what they can do to support their child's development and their responsibility to work with and teach their children at home. This included programmes to improve parent's knowledge of ECE and parenting skills through training and initiatives to integrate parental involvement in ECD Centres.

Raising parents' awareness also has an effect on raising appreciation of ECCD and on time school enrolment, demonstrates a shift from punitive to positive discipline, increases respect for children and their achievement and increases income generation in families who prioritises work, rather than care for children.

## **Venue 2: Child Protection in Early Years**

### *Chair*

Pia MacRae, Country Director, Save the Children, China

### *Speakers*

- Wang Jinhua, Ministry of Civil Affairs, China
- Wang Zhenyao, Dean, China Philanthropic Research Institute, Beijing Normal University
- Martin Needham, Manchester Metropolitan University
- Anila Gopal, Lifebuoy Global Brand Director for Social Mission

Children are often the most vulnerable people in society and they feel the effects of conflict, violence, natural disaster, poverty and adversity more than most. This session discussed initiatives designed to increase child protection. These initiatives take a number of forms. At a very basic level, this means improving the laws and policies that institutionalise child protection systems in any country. This includes legal protection for children's rights at local and national level and the provision of social services to vulnerable and marginalised children, including orphans, left-behind children, street children and child offenders.

In the specific case of human trafficking, this includes the sensitisation of social workers and educators to the issues, as well as raising awareness of trafficking prevention, rehabilitation and protection services for victims. Save the Children in China is working to strengthen the training curriculum for child welfare social workers and professional standards for case management and intervention.

More broadly, developing a culture of child protection means encouraging the use of positive discipline in conflict resolution and providing teachers and parents with the tools to develop children through non-violent approaches. This has positive impacts on developing healthy relationships and healthy child development. In all of these areas, civil society organisations can work closely with government departments and administrative bodies to scale up and replicate successful programmes.

## **Venue 3: Corporate Social Responsibility and ECD**

### *Speakers*

- Sara Watson, Director, Ready Nation, US
- Lin Ruihua, Secretary General, Heren Philanthropic Foundation
- Zhang Zhizhou, General Manager, DH Fund Management Company
- Daniel Kirchert, Managing Director of Infiniti China

Speakers for this session dealt with how companies are playing an increasingly large role in ECD from direct delivery of services and providing funding to support initiatives and

programmes to advocating at government level for greater investment in services in support of young children and their families. Businesses are increasingly realising the importance of supporting children in their earliest years to become fully active and productive members of society. Many proven programmes pay big dividends to business by strengthening communities, getting children into school, and preparing them for work with the knowledge, skills and abilities businesses need.

Organisations like Ready Nation bring together leading business people to educate policymakers and the public about “effective investments that help businesses compete in today’s global marketplace, build a foundation for lasting economic security, and help children get on the right track to succeed in school and in life.” They recognise that better policies for children and youth are ultimately better for business.

### **ARNEC paper presentations I**

The Conference also featured a number of papers from ECD practitioners within the Asia-Pacific Region and beyond. There were three subthemes:

**Subtheme 1: The child** represents the centrality of the child encompassing neurodevelopment, characteristic and process of child development, stages and ages, child’s nutrition and health, child overall wellbeing, child protection, toxic stress on child development, child’s learning and development overall or specific aspects such as mindfulness, literacy, numeracy, etc.

**Subtheme 2: Immediate environment the child lives in** covering factors in child’s microsystems or how the different parts of a child’s microsystem work together and impact on a young child’s development, such as parenting, family, other caregivers, neighbourhoods, communities, social services, early learning environments, parental employment, cross sectoral partnerships and relationships, pedagogical practices, early childhood professional / teacher development, multi-lingual education, inclusive programmes, capacity development.

**Subtheme 3: Society** addressing the broader societal, cultural and political factors that impact on families, services and children, including policy analysis, development and analysis of performance indicators and monitoring data, models of service delivery, financial management; models for ECD service development.

Abstracts of the papers presented are included in Annex B of this report.

#### **Venue 1: Use of play, storytelling and other interactive activities to support children’s learning and wellbeing**

##### *Presenters*

Lusi Margiyani, Save the Children, Indonesia  
*Playing methodology to optimise and stimulate child development of early young children at city industry area*

Leonor E. Diaz, University of the Philippines, College of Education  
*Joining forces to manage crisis situations in children through interactive storytelling and play*

Sukhdeep Gill, Pennsylvania State University, USA  
*Promotion of social-emotional wellbeing of children exposed to conflict*

Naw Htee Wah Paw, Karen Baptist Convention, Myanmar  
*Monitoring the impacts of Karen Baptist Convention Centre-Based ECD Program on children in Myanmar experiencing toxic stress*

## Venue 2: Building capacity of parents and teachers for quality ECD

Sreenivasa Rao Molabanti, Azim Premji Foundation, Hyderabad, India  
*Teachers' perception on ECD in Medak, India*

Madhu Rajbhandari Munankami, Setogurans National Child Development Services, Nepal  
*Group mentoring for sustainable capacity building of facilitators: context and practices in ECD in Nepal*

## Venue 3: Policy-level support on ECD

Mugyeong Moon, Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, Republic of Korea

Baela Raza Jamil, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)  
*Towards 2013: what works for ECD Global Agenda?*

Ramesh Lekhak, Member of Parliament, Nepal  
*Political leaders as advocates for ECD*

## Venue 4: Expanding ECD to scale

Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive, Early Years  
Pauline Walmsley, Director of Knowledge Exchange, Early Years  
*Implementation and respecting difference programme and going to scale in Northern Ireland and Conflict Regions around the world*

Karma Pedey, Institute for Management Studies, Bhutan  
*How does the National ECCD Policy Guidelines stand in relation to Gross National Happiness?*

Dayalatha Lekamge, Education for All Unit, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka  
*A mechanism to identify readiness of children entering formal school*

## ARNEC Paper Presentations II

### Venue 1: Effective parental engagement in ECD

Erin Chen, Included  
*Training mothers in migrant community—an attempt to promote migrant children's ECD education*

Gereltuya Tsegmid, Save the Children Japan, Mongolia Programme  
*Improving child development in home environment*

Roxana Khanom, Save the Children, Bangladesh  
*Inclusion of fathers in ECD: a rural Bangladesh experience*

## Venue 2: Resources to build capacity

Encyclopaedia of Early Childhood Development

Sara Dang, Save the Children, Senior Specialist for ECCD in Asia  
*Save the Children Quality Pre-School Package*

Plan International Australia ECD Resource Pack

Science of Early Childhood Development

## Venue 3: Community-based ECD: some programme practices

Neelofar Ali, Rupani Foundation  
*Programme UMEED (Hope)*

Michael Bismar, ChildFund, Timor-Leste  
Jose Felix, ChildFund, Timor-Leste  
*Home-based play groups as alternative pre-school education: inclusive ECD for children in Timor-Leste*

R. P. M. Sandamali, ChildFund Sri Lanka  
*Nurture healthy children in a healthy environment: the positive deviance approach to reduce child malnutrition*

## Venue 4: ECD and social cohesion (side session)

### *Speakers*

Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive, Early Years  
Sukhdeep Gill, Pennsylvania State University, USA  
Kishor Shrestha, Lead of ECD and Social Cohesion Working Group

This was a special side session organised by ARNEC's ECD and Peacebuilding Regional Working Group. The Working Group brings together experts and advocates to explore and promote the added value from ECD on peacebuilding and social cohesion activities, and the added value of peacebuilding and social cohesion on ECD programmes. The Group focuses on the Asia Pacific Region and links to global initiatives and networks, including UNICEF's Early Childhood Peace Consortium and the Early Years' International Network on Peace Building with Young Children. The group aims to develop participatory research to build capacity for implementation, policy and advocacy on ECD and Peacebuilding in Asia and the Pacific.

The ECD and Peacebuilding side session was organised to provide a platform for sharing perspectives, experiences and evidences around ECD and peacebuilding. It aims to promote the collaboration of different stakeholders, parents, care-takers, teachers and community members to get involved in the future of the children and to develop a shared vision and understanding on children and social cohesion.

The session consisted primarily of three presentations:

- Early Years Curriculum;
- development of Asia-Pacific Regional Social Emotional Learning for Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion Curriculum Guidelines; and
- findings from the Peacebuilding Perspectives Survey conducted in six countries.



Siobhan Fitzpatrick, an active ECD and Peacebuilding Working Group member and CEO of the Early Years Network in Belfast, Northern Ireland provided an overview on the linkages between ECD and Peacebuilding, and highlighted some of the exciting and cutting-edge researches coming out from the Early Years Network.

Kishor Shrestha provided an overview of the ECD and PB Working Group and highlighted major findings from the Peacebuilding perspective survey conducted by members of working group in six countries in Asia. Representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Malaysia, and Pakistan also shared their experiences and insights regarding the conduct of Peacebuilding Perspectives Survey in their countries.

Sukhdeep Gill from Pennsylvania State University presented the *Development of a Regional Curriculum Framework on Social Emotional Learning in the Early Years, to enhance Early Childhood Development and Social Cohesion in East Asia and Pacific, and South Asia*. Dr. Gill share a preliminary draft of the Regional SEL Curriculum Framework and sought feedback from Working Group members on this draft framework.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Participants in this side session rated 4.25 out of 5 highest in terms of learning objectives met and rated 4.37 that “my country would benefit from adapting national pre-k curricula to reflect Social Emotional Learning Curriculum Guidelines. Copies of the evaluation report may be requested from the ARNEC Secretariat at [secretariat@arnec.net](mailto:secretariat@arnec.net).

# Day 4: ARNEC Presentations, and Parallel and Concluding Sessions

## Parallel Sessions II

### Venue 1: Mobilising business and financing innovations for ECD

#### Chair

Mary Young, Director, Center for Child Development, China Development Research Foundation

#### Speakers

- Gu Yanfen, Vice Chairman, China Red Ribbon Foundation
- Yuan Ruijun, Professor, School of Government, Peking University
- Emily Gustafsson-Wright, Fellow, Brookings Institute

The speakers presented various initiatives to engage businesses more fully in supporting ECD and the innovative financial mechanisms, which are being developed to support ECD services and facilities. One such business initiative is the China Red Ribbon Foundation, which was initiated by Shimao Corporation and more than 20 private entrepreneurs. Their ECD work is focused on supporting orphans of HIV in several provinces.

There was also a presentation on the power of impact investment and impact bonds and their ability to harness the power of entrepreneurship, innovation and capital for public good. Impact bonds provide a promising avenue to bring together public and private money for social services. In ECD they are showing promise in addressing the lack of financing for services and facilities, low capacity and quality by shifting to an outcomes focus in programmes, gaps in knowledge and data and insufficient political support.

### Venue 2: Measuring Outcomes for ECD

#### Chair

Patrick Ip, Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, LKS Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong

#### Speakers

- Sally Brinkman, Adjunct Associate Professor, University of Adelaide
- Zhou Nianli, Professor, Department of Preschool Education and Special Education, East China Normal University
- Nirmala Rao, Serena HC Yang Professor of ECD and Education and Dean of Graduate School, the University of Hong Kong
- Wang Li, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Peking University

A number of tools exist to measure outcomes of ECD. Measurement is becoming an increasingly important subject with regards to the SDGs, making the investment case for ECD and in supporting the emphasis on the data revolution. This session focused on a number of tool and approaches that have been developed and are employed in the region.

The University of Adelaide developed the Early Human Capability Index, which measures 70 items and takes less than 10 minutes to complete to capture how well a child is doing. It can be completed by parents or teachers individually or in a group. The tool was recently

used to map all of Tonga using a red, yellow, green light system by how well children were doing. The findings were presented back to the community. There is interest from the World Bank in Timor-Leste and New Zealand to conduct similar mapping using the tool. Another tool is the East Asia Pacific Early Child Development Scales (EAD-EAS), which was developed by the University of Hong Kong together with members of UNICEF and ARNEC. They are now developing a short form which will be released in the coming months.

Studies have also been undertaken in China to determine key indicators of child development. A study from Peking University found that parent education, parent-child interaction and whether the household owned a TV or had internet were key indicators of child success. Another pilot run to provide parenting home visits conducted by the local family planning commission found statistical increases on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). The next steps of this programme include exploring how to work with grandmothers, why girls performed better than boys and how to better integrate nutrition and stimulation.

### **Parallel Sessions III**

#### **Venue 1: Teacher Professional Development**

##### *Chair*

Nirmala Rao, Serena HC Yang Professor of ECD and Education and Dean of Graduate School, the University of Hong Kong

##### *Speakers*

- Mugyeong Moon, Director of Trend Analysis and International Cooperation Team with the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education
- Yidan Wang, Education, World Bank
- Maggie Koong, President of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, OMEP
- Yu Longping, China National Society for Early Childhood Education Teacher training in rural areas in China
- Liu Zhanlan, Director of Basic Education Research Center, National Institute of Education Sciences

#### **Venue 2: Technology and Interactive Media in ECD**

##### *Chair*

Cui Xin, Deputy Secretary General, China Development Research Foundation

##### *Speakers*

- Heikki Lyytinen, GraphoneGame, Finland
- Li Hong, Beijing Normal University, GraphoneGame in China
- Microsoft

This session dealt with how technology is providing opportunities in a number of service delivery areas and is revolutionising the way people and communities learn, interact and live. ECD provides new means to connect families and communities, to teach and interact with children, and to provide teacher training, particularly in remote areas. Professor Tang talked about video and internet utilisation to scale up and change teaching methods, while Heikke Lyytinen from the University of Jyväskylä in Finland also presented an innovative way to help children with reading difficulties called the Graphogame. Companies like Microsoft and IBM, meanwhile, expressed commitment to continue to scale up their involvement to support holistic child development.

### Venue 3: Urban Poverty and Child Development

#### Chair

Li Shi, Executive Dean, China Institute for Income Distribution, Beijing Normal University

#### Speakers

- Yu Jianliang, Director, Department of Social Welfare and Charity Promotion, Ministry of Civil Affairs
- Wu Ni, Director and Research Fellow, National Institute of Education Sciences
- Wang Sangui, Director, Anti-Poverty Research Center, Remin University of China
- Du Zhixin, Vice Director, Center on Child Development, China Development Research Foundation

Urban poverty exhibits a number of characteristics distinct from rural poverty and have specific impacts on child development. This session focused predominantly on addressing urban poverty and specifically the phenomenon of migrant children in urban areas.

Currently, children of rural migrants do not have access to basic social and education services in urban areas as a result of the *hukou* system. The Chinese Government and other civil society organisations have tried to redress this balance by providing boarding school and programmes which address the specific needs to children of rural migrant workers. They have also announced their intention to relax the *hukou* system and expand social welfare services in poor urban areas.

### ARNEC Paper presentations III

#### Venue 1: Monitoring and measuring the impact of ECD

Filip Lenaerts, Nguyen Thi Lan Huong and Dinh Thi Thu Trang, VVOB: Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance, Vietnam  
*Supporting all children's development by addressing wellbeing and involvement in ECD towards a process-oriented monitoring system in Vietnam*

Monisha Singh Diwan and Karen Kelly, Aga Khan Education Services  
*From measurement to action: using programmatic assessments to promote 'quality ECD': model exemplars from Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and UAE*

Maya P. Nayo, Mariel Joy S. Sampang and Maricel B. Ceido, Save the Children, Philippines  
*Making a case for ECCD: impact evaluation of Save the Children Philippines ECCD Program*

#### Venue 2: Innovations in ECD

Sonja Giese, Ilifa Labantwana and the Innovation Edge  
*Creating a platform for innovation in early learning: experiences from South Africa*

Sanobar Nadeem, Human Development Programme of Aga Khan University  
*Formative action research on use of media to increase awareness about ECD in three districts of Balochistan*

#### Venue 3: Building capacity of ECD workforce for quality and inclusive ECD

Minyi Li, Beijing Normal University  
Jingle Sergote, Philippine Department of Education  
Salvador Galoran Sergote, Philippine School for the Deaf

## Concluding Session

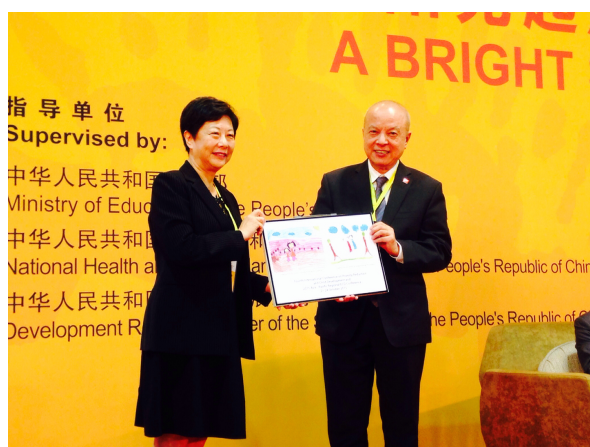
### Chair

Fang Jin, Deputy Secretary General, China Development Research Foundation

### Speakers

- Lu Mai, Secretary General, China Development Research Foundation
- Angela Mary Kearney, Representative, UNICEF Pakistan
- Evelyn D. Santiago, ARNEC Executive Director

Over the four days of the Conference, a total of 177 speakers shared their experiences of promoting ECD and the range of transformative impacts of ECD in different countries.



Lu Mai spoke of China's great achievements in reducing poverty and scaling up resources needed for child development.

He talked about the challenges that remain in ensuring that 'left-behind' and other disadvantaged children have the ability to reach their full potentials, and of the cost-effective programmes underway to improve nutrition and access to preschool in villages in some of the poorest regions of China. He shared his intention to develop an ECD network of entrepreneurs, academics, practitioners and officials across China.

Angela Mary Kearney from UNICEF Pakistan reminded us that at the forefront of the SDGs must be investment in children - a key theme of the conference. All areas are crucial to child development, and ECD is crucial to reducing poverty and reaching the SDGs. She also recommended that ECD become a part of a strategy for skills development and that we need capacity building, innovation and financing in the sector to achieve our aims.

Finally, Evelyn D. Santiago, ARNEC's Executive Director thanked all the participants, co-hosts and sponsors of the conference. ARNEC then presented a token of appreciation to CDRF as conference host. Lu Mai accepted the token on behalf of CDRF.

The conference was a resounding success where many lessons were learned and experiences were shared. All the participants are looking forward to next year's ARNEC Regional ECD Conference.

# Annexes

## A. Conference Concept Note

Mary Young, Director, Center for Child Development, CDRF

Today in developing countries, 92 percent of children live beyond their first five years, while one in 20 children does not survive (Wang et al, 2014). By 2030, this proportion is expected to improve to one in 40 children (Gates, 2015). While a larger number of children will survive beyond five years of age, they will not be able to have the opportunity to realise their full potential, owing to deprivations in early childhood.

Currently, approximately 200 million children under age five are estimated to be at risk of poor development largely due to poverty and under-nutrition. The actual number of children at risk may even be higher. Poverty and other deprivations, such as violence and abuse, insufficient nurturing and care, and limited social interaction and stimulation, have devastating and lifelong effects on young children. Early neglect is particularly potent and is often manifested as a lack of attachment between child and parent or caregiver.

In our ever changing and increasingly mobile world, families are being torn apart by conflict, natural disasters, migration, and emigration—all of which take a toll on children's health and development not only in the short term but also for life. An example is China, which, over the past 30 years, has experienced the largest rural-to-urban migration in human history, resulting in 61 million children left behind in rural areas to be cared for by people other than their parents. The United Nations' launch of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 accelerated the world's focus on children. Four (MDGs 2, 4, 5, and 6) were aimed at reducing child and maternal mortality and infectious diseases and promoting education. The knowledge base underpinning the emphasis on child survival rested on public health measures such as nutrition, sanitation, immunisation, oral rehydration, micronutrient use, bed-nets, and HIV prevention.

Now we must widen our attention from children's survival to their full development, employing comprehensive, integrated approaches that engage all sectors—education, family and social protection, health, and nutrition.

The world has embraced the importance of investing in ECD as a priority to improve children's outcomes and to advance human development in societies. The calls for action come from different venues. The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank are highlighting ECD programs in their lending portfolios. UNICEF is focusing on health, nutrition, education, and child protection, and water and sanitation as basic rights of children. In its Education for All initiative, UNESCO is working on countries to advocate ECD, develop learning outcome measures, and monitor programs. WHO has established guidelines for delivering health services at each developmental phase of childhood beginning pregnancy. Additionally, UNDP's 2014 Human Development Report focuses on life cycle vulnerabilities beginning infancy and the need to promote human capabilities and protect the most vulnerable. In countries and regionally, governments and NGOs are partnering to scale up successful ECD interventions. Examples from other regions include Chile's Cresce Contigo, Brazil's Better Early Child Development Program and Mexico's CENDI. In addition, South Africa's Brain Booster program to improve young children's pre-literacy and numeracy continues to make a difference. Here in the Asia Pacific region, among the numerous examples include China's recently issued National Child Development Plan (for 2014–2020) for poverty-stricken areas, which targets 40 million children in 680 counties; India's Integrated Child Development programme; and Pakistan's Lady Health Visitors. Early experiences (the daily interactions within families, schools and communities) set lifetime trajectory on health, learning and behaviour. Evidence of this importance continues to unfold with theoretical advances supported by empirical data from many disciplines (e.g., neuroscience, social and behavioural science, economics).

Nobel laureate Jim Heckman made a compelling case about the importance of children's early years as being critical to formation of skills and capabilities, and being important causal determinants of life-cycle outcomes, arguing that the accumulation of human capital is a dynamic life-cycle process and that skill begets skills (Heckman, 1999). His work further underscored the powerful role of family life and children's early years in shaping adult capabilities. Family factors in the early years play a crucial role in creating differences in cognitive and non-cognitive abilities. Heckman (2013) concluded that capabilities are not fixed at birth or solely genetically determined, but are causally affected by parents' investment in their children and that a "proper measurement of disadvantage is the quality of parenting, attachment, consistency, and supervision, and not income per se." Early human development is, therefore, a powerful equaliser, as investments in early childhood yield significant long-term benefits that narrow the gap between high and low income families. Investing in disadvantaged young children "promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large." Moreover, it also empowers women, reduces violence, promotes environmental sensitivity, and breaks the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Yet, social policies too often are remedial and fragmented, focusing on only one problem at a time (Heckman, 2013). Heckman (2007) remarked, "too often, government officials design programs for children as if they lived their lives in silos, as if each stage of a child's life were independent of the other, unconnected to what came before or what lies ahead. It's time for policymakers now to look beyond silos, to begin recognising that consistent, cost-effective investment in children and youths can pay for itself." Clearly, it is more equitable and cost-effective to invest in ECD programs, which can enhance children's potential, than it is to pay far more later to try to remediate what could have been prevented. So, we must start with a more comprehensive approach to the early years in life—that is, "equity from the start" (WHO, 2008).

We recognise the importance of working with children in a holistic and equitable way for ECD to achieve its transformative aspiration. Efforts in early child development must converge on the four tasks of unfinished agenda—redirection of social policies to focus on young children, incorporation of ECD into public health and education models, that is, integrate healthy child development into prenatal, early health, and parent education services, and ensure children's access to services before they enter school, beginning with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, measurement of outcomes and linkage of them to programs and policies, and communication of the importance of healthy brain development at ages 0-6. The conference themes reflect this—encompassing the child, the environment and the society.

**Subtheme 1: The child** - This subtheme represents the centrality of the child in all our work. Presentations in this area may consider issues such as neurodevelopment, characteristic and process of child development, stages and ages, child's nutrition and health, child's overall well-being, child protection, toxic stress on child development, child's learning and development overall or specific aspects such as mindfulness, literacy, numeracy, etc.

**Subtheme 2: Immediate environment the child lives in** - This subtheme should cover factors in child's microsystems or how the different parts of a child's microsystem work together and impact on young child's development—for example, parenting, family, other caregivers, neighbourhoods, communities, social services, early learning environments, parental employment, cross-sectoral partnerships and relationships, pedagogical practices, early childhood professional/teacher development, multilingual education, inclusive programmes and capacity development.

**Subtheme 3: Society** - This theme addresses the broader societal, cultural and political factors that impact on families, services and children. Papers in this area might include policy analysis, development and analysis of performance indicators and monitoring data, models of service delivery, and financial models for ECD service development.

## B. Paper Abstracts and Profiles of Authors

### ARNEC paper presentations I

Venue 1: Use of play, storytelling and other interactive activities to support children's learning and wellbeing

Lusi Margiyani, Save the Children, Indonesia



Lusi Margiyani has been working on education (particularly on ECCD), children and gender issues since she was a student. She is also one of the founders and chair of foundation of Local NGOs in Yogyakarta, such as LSPPA (The Institute for Women and Children Studies and Development), ECCD Resource Center and Warna Warni (an ECCD center). She's also one of the steering committee members of the National Coalition for Integrative and Holistic ECCD-the first and leading national network of civil organisations focusing on ECCD in Indonesia.

*Playing methodology to optimise and stimulate child development of early young children at city industry area*

#### Abstract

Playing activities are the most effective way for early young children to learn in their childhood stages. Through a quality playing activities, children evolve their optimal development by enjoyable way and appropriate with their child development stages. Children in early childhood stage need an adequate playing learning environment, a chance to play and an adult that is capable to facilitate them. This learning environment should be accessible to children in city industry area despite their limitation.

Indonesian preschool classrooms are usually controlled by the teacher with heavy emphasis on structured learning through reading, sitting at tables and listening. Most teachers lack the knowledge and expertise to set up time and space for play as a means for learning. Through BERMAIN project in industrial area in Cilincing, Jakarta, Mattel Foundation and Save the Children Indonesia are working together to change how teachers and parents understand and implement the concept of "play," in settings where children do not have adequate time, space or materials for play in ECCD centre. Change is being documented through a baseline and endline tool called, Playful Learning Observation Tool (PLOT). This presentation will showcase results through photo and video journals, qualitative data and beneficiary interviews. The BERMAIN program goal is to increase teachers' and parents' capability to create a learning environment for children by incorporating the concept of play (Play Based Curriculum) in the ECCD centre as a learning methodology appropriate with their children's development stages.



Leonor E. Diaz, University of the Philippines, College of Education

For almost three decades, the University of the Philippines has been a rich training ground and sharing venue for Dr. Leonor Diaz. She worked with kindergarten and elementary children for almost two decades. Further graduate studies were done in the field of Child Development and Reading Education. She is currently a graduate level faculty in the Reading and Teaching in the Early Grades Areas at the University of the Philippines. Her consultancy revolves around curriculum development and assessment in early childhood and primary school settings in both the private and public sector. Her recent involvements include the evaluation and revision of the Department of Education's elementary



assessment tools; curriculum finalisation of the mother tongue curriculum; and a DepEd PRIME-funded research on the Muslim Education Initiatives in the public school setting.

### *Joining forces to manage crisis situations in children through interactive storytelling and play*

#### **Abstract**

Ways to link theory to practice is an endless challenge to teacher educators. Classroom experiences should center on real experiences that allow construction of knowledge that should address social scenarios. Dewey highlighted that education is “a process of living and not a preparation for true living” (Dewey in Krogh, 2009). Daily life situations are the avenues to make sense of the world. While Dewey was referring to the kind of education that young learners should have, it is similarly the essence of mentoring pre-service and in-service teachers as well. This presentation will showcase how these principles were made evident in the delivery of graduate and undergraduate courses in early childhood education at the University of the Philippines, College of Education. With the unexpected consequences brought by a series of natural disasters (e.g. super typhoons and heavy floods) in the Philippines for the past five years, the tertiary level students were challenged to address each situation. Essential understanding of the course units on external factors affecting the child, developmentally appropriate practice, and children with special needs were transformed to real-life applications. Likewise, everyone felt a social responsibility to take part in addressing the pressing crisis during these times. The processes undertaken included further studies on crisis management, creation of developmentally appropriate activities for young children that focused on interactive story sharing and play, and actual implementation of these learning opportunities to children-at-risk. The venues were public school settings in three different parts of the country and the participants were five and six-year old children. Strengths and challenges of this endeavour will capture how different microsystems surrounding the child joined forces for the development of the child. It is recommended that reflective thinking and social responsibility be important elements in early childhood teacher education.

**Sukhdeep Gill, Pennsylvania State University, USA**



Dr. Sukhdeep Gill is an Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at the Pennsylvania State University and has held the positions of Associate Director of Early Childhood Programs at the Bennett-Pierce Prevention Research Center (PRC) and Discipline Coordinator of Health and Human Development, at Penn State. She is a lifespan developmental psychologist interested in early development-in-context, interpersonal relations, social-emotional learning, mindfulness practices, program evaluation, and community-based action research. Her current areas of research include training, support, and functioning of staff working with parents and young children in diverse settings and preventive interventions for families with young children from poverty backgrounds to promote health, social-emotional development, and school readiness. She is a member of ARNEC and the ECD and Peacebuilding Work Group. She is also a UNICEF consultant on social emotional learning.

### *Promotion of social-emotional wellbeing of children exposed to conflict*

#### **Abstract**

This paper has two main goals. The first is to review the existing literature on early child development and peacebuilding with a focus on the effect of exposure to political violence on young children’s well-being. The second goal is to share information about evidence-based interventions to help children who are exposed to such violence. Specifically, we focus on social-emotional learning as a theoretical model to teach conflict resolution skills to children during early childhood years (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). A central thesis of this paper is that social and emotional learning plays an important role in peacebuilding efforts

that are seen as the cornerstone in promoting children's wellbeing and development in conflict-ridden areas (UNICEF, n.d.). The presence of conflict is inevitable and when managed appropriately, results in healthy social and emotional development of children (Akgun & Araz, 2013; Daniel, Doudin, & Pons, 2006; Turnuklu et al., 2010). However, exposure to proximal or distal violent/armed conflict negatively affects the overall development of children (Cummings, Goeke-Morey, Merrilees, Taylor, & Shirlow, 2014; Evans, 2008; Maxwell, Enslin, & Maxwell, 2004; Turnuklu et al., 2010; UNICEF, n.d.). When children are exposed to violence, they develop an understanding of war before developing an understanding about peace (Deng, 2012). Currently, there are over 200 million children experiencing proximal exposure to violent/armed conflict and several others who are experiencing distal exposure to conflict through media and stories (Myers-Bowman, Walker, & Myers-Walls, 2005; UNICEF, n.d.). Further, children experience the negative impact of political conflict in the same manner as they experience other stressors such as disease, health crises, or natural disasters, all of which compromise their physical and psychological well-being.

### New Htee Wah Paw, Karen Baptist Convention, Myanmar



Naw Htee Wah Paw is the project manager for early childhood care and development program of the Karen Baptist Convention in Myanmar, serving in this capacity for three years. She holds a credential in Liberal Arts from Karen Baptist Theological Seminary and has attended training, workshops and conferences on ECCD.

#### *Monitoring the impacts of Karen Baptist Convention Centre-Based ECD Program on children in Myanmar experiencing toxic stress*

##### *Abstract*

This presentation highlights the pivotal role of participation in centre-based ECCD can have in the lives of children who experience toxic stress due to chaotic and violent conditions in the community. The potential for transformative effects of participation in centre-based ECCD is illustrated with reference to a centre-based ECCD program operated by the Karen Baptist Convention in Myanmar. The program serves children who experience toxic stress as a result of exposure to armed conflict, hard-core poverty, and the death of primary caregivers. A typical program day will be described, highlighting activities intended to foster children's sense of physical safety, trust, socio-emotional development, and amelioration of psychological trauma, anxiety, stress and grieving. The presentation will describe the caregiver training, management committee training, parent education training, and toy making training to develop community members' capacity to participate in operating the centre. The use of a Child Record to track children's progress will be described, and outcomes for children in terms of their cognitive, social, emotional and language development will be summarised. To illustrate these impacts, short vignettes are offered describing children who entered the program with symptoms of psychological trauma, including muteness, social withdrawal, and delayed language developments, and who exited the program having regained their connections to life and to others through the patient and positive interventions of trained caregivers and immersion in a supportive peer environment.

**Sreenivasa Rao Molabanti, Azim Premji Foundation, Hyderabad, India**



M. Sreenivasa Rao (MSR) is Leader, Field Institute at Azim Premji Foundation. He has been working with the foundation since 2004 at various capacities. He has led the large scale and longitudinal randomised evaluation studies in Andhra Pradesh earlier. He is providing leadership to Medak ECE Initiative and also leading field measurement exercise (both learner and teacher assessment across foundation working states and districts). His areas of interests are large scale assessment and evaluations, design and execution of new initiatives in education to improve the quality of education including Early Childhood Education.

*Teachers' perception on ECD in Medak, India*

**Abstract**

The ICDS programme (Integrated Child Development scheme), the world's largest programme aimed at providing health, nutrition, and psycho-social stimulation to young children, was started in 1975 October 2, in response to the provisions of Indian Constitution, national legislations and international declarations to safeguard child rights. The Anganwadi Centers are the primary implementation arm of the ICDS programs in India. More than 70% of children in rural India are enrolled in this programme across almost 14 million Anganwadi centers (AWCs). The Anganwadi Worker and Helper are the key players in running the Anganwadi Center in all aspects (health, nutrition and ECE) to achieve the mammoth goal. Azim Premji Foundation had undertaken a research study to understand the role of Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) space particularly the effectiveness of the AWC personnel. This study was to explore the role and responsibilities and their effectiveness to make these centers more vibrant. The information was collected through interviews, observations and regular informal interactions in a district with AWC personnel. The study is carried out in 157 Anganwadi Centers and collected information from all AWWs and AWHs in these AWCs. The qualitative info and tracking data covered in sample 40 Anganwadis to understand the why part.

**Madhu Rajbhandari Munankami, Setogurans National Child Development Services, Nepal**



Madhu Rajbhandari Munankami works at Setogurans National Child Development services, a non-government organisation working in the field of Early Child Development in Nepal. She is engaged in ECD policy advocacy, training of trainers/facilitators/parents and community people. She has a Post-graduate Diploma in ECD from Tribhuvan University and Master of Philosophy in Education from Kathmandu University.

*Group mentoring for sustainable capacity building of facilitators: context and practices in ECD in Nepal*

**Abstract**

Group mentoring empowers the ECD facilitators with the knowledge, attitude, skills to improve on the end result of ECD program. Most often ECD professionals face challenges with capacity building, instruction and learning, materials, monitoring tools, quality scaling and equitable access. Community-based ECD centres operate even in remote geography and brutal climates with scarce resources for the growth of children and community. This paper presents the contribution of group mentoring of ECD facilitator and trainer in their capacity building. This study intends to enquire capacity of trainers and facilitator's pedagogical and managerial skills and use of local resources for quality improvement, equitable opportunity

and sustainable ECD practices. Qualitative research methods (interview, Focus Group Discussion, observation) were used to generate data and information for this study.

Group of facilitators consisting of 7-10 members based on geographical proximity and common aspiration, built relation and involved in the group mentoring process. Mainly, the facilitators' trainers (mentors and mentee) enhanced pedagogical and managerial expertise after engaging in sharing, doing, reflecting at their pace. They improved their pedagogical strength by sharing, reviewing and observing the pedagogic performances individually and in group.

### Venue 3: Policy-level support on ECD

#### Mugyeong Moon, Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, Republic of Korea



Dr. Mugyeong Moon is presently the Director of Trend Analysis and International Cooperation Team with the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education in the Republic of Korea (ROK). Dr. Moon is also the Vice-Chair and National Coordinator for ROK with the OECD Early Childhood Education and Care Network Project, Vice-Chair of the Korean Chapter of Pacific Early Childhood Education Research Association (PECERA), and committee member of several academic associations in her country. Dr. Moon's previous work in her country includes serving on numerous Task Force teams for government projects, on the Review Committees for the Revision of National Kindergarten Curriculum, the Review Committee of Childcare Accreditation, as well as being Head of the Early Childhood Education Division, Graduate School of Education, Ajou University.

Dr. Moon's expertise and research interests include early childhood policy, multicultural education, curriculum development and teacher education. She holds a B.A. in Education from Seoul National University, and an Ed.M. and Ph.D. (1998) in Early Childhood Education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.

#### Baela Raza Jamil, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)



Baela Raza Jamil is a public policy specialist and an education activist at national, regional and global levels. Leading the citizen led learning accountability initiative, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Pakistan, she is the founder of the Children's and Teachers' Literature Festival. Inspired by her grandmother, an ECED pioneer in Pakistan, Baela has strategically drafted policies, sector reforms, action plans and innovations on ECCE since 2000 as a technical advisor to the Federal and Provincial Education Ministries. As a civil society leader, she established Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) and created a powerful eco system in education including the first non-elite IB Primary Years Program (IBPYP) authorised school in Pakistan-Sanjan Nagar. As a thought leader, she has contributed to cutting-edge work on public-private partnerships, innovations and education financing.

Recently appointed as Commissioner to the newly formed "International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity" for SDGs, she serves as Vice Chair of the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR); an Advisor to the Assessment Board UIS and Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC-Ed) and as a Director to several boards in Pakistan and UK including the Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE). As an ARNEC Friend she has lobbied intensively for ECD/ECCE within SDGs since 2012 at global and regional forums.

## *Towards 2013: what works for ECD Global Agenda?*

### **Abstract**

The landmark Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015 adoption in September this year has globally endorsed SDG 4 and Target 4.2 (UNGA, 2015), whilst the Framework for Action and indicators will be finalised in November 2015 and March 2016 respectively. This has reassured the global community that “Quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education” has secured a place for comprehensive actions along with all its targets and other relevant SDGs. Target 4.2 is framed by the overarching SDG 4: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* “. It is pertinent to mention that the final articulation of target 4.2 has been crafted through a series of bold negotiations until its most recent narration, giving space to a holistic continuum embedded in the conceptualisation of the 0-8 age group. This has been achieved through multiple national, regional and global forums on Early Childhood Development and Care (ECDC)/Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED).

### **Ramesh Lekhak, Member of Parliament, Nepal**

#### *Political leaders as advocates for ECD*

### **Abstract**

Despite the critical contribution of Early Childhood Development (ECD) in creating an equitable and skilled society, ECD has been underprioritised and under-resourced in Nepal, and the country’s political leaders were unaware of how ECD transforms societies. To ensure the constitutional rights of young children and the formulation of a policy for the integrated and holistic development of children from birth to five years, Save the Children and Setogurans has worked strategically with parliamentarians and political leaders over the last decade to create ECD champions. The major achievement was formulation of an ECD caucus in 2009, composed of Constituent Assembly members and members of Legislative-Parliament (as per Interim Constitution of Nepal 2063). Since then, the caucus has been engaged in an array of ECD advocacy and capacity building events. Today, the ECD Caucus has become a pioneer to bring the discourses on ECD in policy and political arena. Its purpose is to endorse rights of ECD aged children in the new constitution of Nepal, and advocate for the formulation of a holistic and integrated policy, program and investment in ECD. The Caucus also aims to increase the national investment in ECD, ensure coordination among ministries/sectors, sensitise the government on ECD issues, and collaborates with the government, non-government organisation and the community for suitable quality ECD program. This paper presents a successful case on the harnessing long-term commitment among political leaders on ECD in Nepal.

## Venue 4: Expanding ECD to scale



### **Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive, Early Years**

Siobhan has responsibility for policy and strategic development, relationships with the Inter-departmental Group on Early Years, Childcare Partnerships, and Pre-school Education Advisory Groups. She also manages Cross Border relationships and International partnerships. Siobhan is the former European representative on the World Forum Foundation for early years care and education.



**Pauline Walmsley, Director of Knowledge Exchange, Early Years**

Pauline is a Director of an Innovative Knowledge Management function within Early Years and has overseen the development of communications, web advocacy and public affairs. Pauline has developed and implemented an integrated communications strategy that has aligned communications with key stakeholders with objectives for policy change in Northern Ireland and focused on grass roots mobilisation techniques. Pauline is strongly committed to the rights of all children to access quality early childhood development opportunities.

*Implementation and respecting difference programme and going to scale in Northern Ireland and Conflict Regions around the world*

**Abstract**

Trials were used to show effectiveness: how a focus on cultural change was developed to support organisational and systems change. The paper describes how Implementation Teams were supported inside the organisation and going to scale. The importance of a well-defined advocacy strategy is articulated. Results from initial pilot evaluations coupled with the details of a large random control evaluation were used to show how this supported a cultural change inside and outside the organisation and was used to gather support for local policy change and an international focus on the issue of the importance of programme implementation with young children in conflict affected regions. Implementation initiatives are not just technical but must pay attention to culture both inside and outside the organisation. Attention to culture and context are very important in going to scale activities. Recognition of the additive stages in implementation will be shared. Convincing others to support and finance implementation will be shared. The importance of winning support from external stakeholders will be discussed. Leadership issues, fidelity and adaptation, cultural and contextual issues going to scale, the importance of implementation teams, time commitment, long term stick ability, capacity building, data collection, the development of a participative evaluation as a mechanism for sustainability will all be described as part of a robust approach to developing a culture of implementation.

**Karma Pedey, Institute for Management Studies, Bhutan**



Karma Pedey was born in Thimphu on March 3, 1970. She graduated from Sherubtse College, Kanglung, Bhutan in 1992 with BA English and Geography. She has a Post-graduate certificate in Education and completed her studies in 1994 at the National Institute of Education, Samtse, Bhutan. She has a Masters Degree in English from Madras University, Chennai. Karma taught in many colleges in Bhutan for more than 15 years, after which, in 2011 to 2013, she again went to pursue her Masters in Early Childhood at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. Currently, Karma Pedey works in the Institute of Management Studies, Thimphu as a lecturer and a researcher in Early Childhood and Communication.

Besides teaching, Karma has participated and presented papers in conferences and also has a book and several articles in her name. As a researcher, Karma carried out several studies in Early Childhood which are (1) Assessment of benefits of Early Childhood Care on School Readiness of Children; (2) Infusion on Gross National Happiness in the Early Childhood Curriculum in Bhutan; and (3) Developed certificate level curriculum for Early Childhood in the Bhutanese Context (first of its kind in Bhutan).

## *How does the National ECCD Policy Guidelines stand in relation to Gross National Happiness?*

### **Abstract**

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services is seen as integral to nurturing Bhutanese children as well as a way of realizing the philosophy of Gross National Happiness which underscores the need to “maximise the happiness of all Bhutanese and to enable them to achieve their full and innate potential” (PCoB, 1999, p. 12). This hope is further highlighted in the draft National ECCD Policy which articulates the importance of “providing the best start in life for all children from birth to age eight by enhancing access to quality early childhood care and education to ensure that they are healthy, happy and ready to learn” (MoE, 2011b, p. 7). However, the National ECCD Policy is still in its draft stage, although the first ECCD center was established in 2005. This overarching policy document determines the future of ECCD programmes and services and charts the pathways for Bhutan to harness the transformative power of ECCD for equitable development. Thus, this review, analysis and evaluation of this draft policy contribute towards making it more comprehensive. Therefore, the key question of this policy analysis is: “How does the National ECCD Policy of Bhutan chart pathway to harness the transformative power of ECCD for equitable development?”

### **Dayalatha Lekamge, Education for All Unit, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka**



Prof. G. Dayalatha Lekamge is a Professor of Secondary and Tertiary Education, Department of Secondary and Tertiary Education, Open University of Sri Lanka Consultant to the Education for All Unit, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka. She holds a B. Ed (CMB) (First Class), M.Phil in Education (CMB), Ph.D (OUUK). Professor Lekamge is the Head of Department of Education, Former Dean/ Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka. Her research interest includes Child Psychology, Early Childhood Education, Research Methods in Education, Teacher Education, Distance Education.

### *A mechanism to identify readiness of children entering formal school*

### **Abstract**

School entry is a significant milestone in a child’s life. Entering to school is the second major transition children experience during their early childhood years. Therefore, it is important to examine whether the children entering to grade one are ready for the school education and how to guide teachers to extend their continuous support for those who experience problems. This paper analyses the systematic process followed to build up and pilot a mechanism to identify readiness of children entering grade one and to develop guidelines for teachers for its implementation. The critical issues in implementing the existing programme and the need for revising it had been identified through a survey carried out with grade one teachers, pre-school teachers parents and children. As a solution, the present study has been designed to incorporate three interlinked domains of school readiness namely ready children, ready schools and ready families (School Readiness and Transition, UNICEF Report, 2012: 3). The activities and the recording system to identify readiness of children were based on seven major domains identified through the literature review. The development and pre-piloting of 16 activities and the recording system were done by a group of grade one teachers and primary In-service Advisors. Two pilot studies were carried out with a view to assess the validity, reliability, fairness and usability of those activities, assessment system and the other instruments and to identify logistical problems that might occur when using them. The pilot study I included a sample of 694 preschoolers and 125 non-preschoolers and the pilot study II, a random sample of 2500 grade one children drawn from all provinces considering their gender, medium of study and urban rural nature. The procedures are underway to introduce this new mechanism to all grade one class in the school system through NIE using the Cascade model of training.

## ARNEC Paper Presentations II

### Venue 1: Effective parental engagement in ECD

#### Erin Chen, Included



Erin Chen works for INCLUDED as the China Program Manager. She is responsible for program development, quality control and center management. Graduated from the Northeast Normal University in 1999, Erin came to Beijing and became a Chinese language teacher in 2001. Since then, she has been involved in teaching Chinese language and culture to foreign students for over nine years. Her teaching experience includes working as the head teacher at the Associated Colleges in China (ACC) and Dulwich College Shanghai, and also the director of Chinese Language and Culture Department at China Culture Center (CCC).

*Training mothers in migrant community—an attempt to promote migrant children’s ECD education*

#### Abstract

In China at present, there are an estimated 35.8 million migrant children. Among them, the preschool migrant children (aged 0-5) reach up to 9.8 million. In large megacities like Beijing and Guangzhou, about 3 in 10 children are migrant children. Compared with their peers, preschool migrant children suffer from poverty, frequent migration and low self-esteem. More importantly, about 40% of them have no access to preschool and kindergarten. The 0-6 age bracket is essential for the development of five essential capabilities including physical, language, cognitive, social and art. Once the critical period of a child’s development is missed, the loss is hard to make up for and the children end up stuck in a cycle of poverty. Recognising the great need for Early Childhood Development services for migrant children in the migrant communities we were working in, INCLUDED designed and began delivering a program focusing on both the migrant children as well as their parents. Our program is designed according to the developmental needs of young children, and provides a complete set of courses and evaluation system in order to help the children achieve developmental, physical, logical, social, cognitive, and linguistic capabilities. We involved the migrant parents in the program to encourage and foster their participation in their children’s learning and development.

#### Gereltuya Tsegmid, Save the Children Japan, Mongolia Programme



Gereltuya Tsegmid is an Education Program Manager at the Save the Children Japan, Mongolia Program and also a Project Manager of the “Improving primary education outcomes for the most vulnerable children in rural Mongolia” project. She was a specialist teacher of hearing-impaired children and educational manager at the special school for the deaf and blind children for 20 years after graduating the Pedagogical University in Hungary in 1982. She received her Master Degree in Special Education in 2000. Gereltuya first joined Save the Children UK as a Project Officer of Inclusive Education of Children with disabilities in March 2002 and has been promoted to work as a Project Manager for the European Commission-funded project, “Quality Basic Education Project” in 2006. The project addressed the main gaps in pre and primary education and delivered many positive results under her management, including the adoption of the Preschool Education Law for the first time in Mongolia, improving the learning and teaching materials and establishing 5 new kindergartens in two districts of Ulaanbaatar and three provinces of Mongolia.

*Improving child development in home environment*

Fourth International Conference on Poverty Reduction and Child Development and  
2015 Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Early Childhood Development



### *Abstract*

Education is a fundamental right of every child. Through education and appropriate and timely support services, children have the opportunities to cultivate their talents and critical thinking, gain life skills, develop self-esteem and social relations and grow with dignity as individuals. Children learn better in a safe, protective and nurturing environment especially in home environment. Save the Children Japan, Mongolia Program is implementing a World Bank-funded project on “Improving primary education outcomes for the most vulnerable children in rural Mongolia” since 2012. One of the project components focused on introducing school preparation programs, as part of early childhood development, for those hard-to-reach nomadic children who are required to enter into schools, but have been left out from the formal early childhood education. Workbooks for both parents and children with additional digital tools and listening resources have been developed in order to improve and sustain the learning and development needs of children who are living in the most remote rural areas with limited or no access to early childhood education. The main purpose of the programs is to improve the children’s readiness for school and dormitory life, thereby lowering their chances of emotional distress, falling behind in school learning and potentially dropping out of the primary grades. As part of the home-based school preparation program, mobile toy and book library named “My book palace” has been established in all school library. There are 30 set of kits in My book palace library. Parents have the opportunity to take the toy and book package to their home to support and prepare their children for school. Within the short period the program has reached to over 2,500 children successfully and 705 children have enrolled into primary school in September 2014.

### **Roxana Khanom, Save the Children, Bangladesh**



Roxana Khanom had her 2<sup>nd</sup> Masters in Early Childhood Development from BRAC University. She has been serving as a Manager-Early Years Development under the Sponsorship funded program, Save the Children in Bangladesh. Before that, she had her honours and masters from University of Dhaka under the faculty of social science and later on got Early Child development exposure through different international development organisations like Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University, and Plan Bangladesh etc. for 16 years long which makes her specialist in ECD.

### *Inclusion of fathers in ECD: a rural Bangladesh experience*

### *Abstract*

Fathers matter to children’s development. Father-child relationships, be they positive, negative or lacking, have profound and wide ranging impacts on children that last a lifetime, particularly for the disadvantaged children (*Website: [www.fathersdirect.com/index.php?id=3&cID=59](http://www.fathersdirect.com/index.php?id=3&cID=59)*). Many researchers in Western context have proven the importance of positive father-child interactions in the early years on cognitive (Coley, Lewin-Bizan, & Carrano, 2011), social (Brown, Neff, Mangelsdorf, 2012), and academic (Morgan, Nutbrown, & Hannon, 2009) outcomes of children. In Bangladesh, only 10% fathers are supporting the learning and development of the youngest children (36-59 months) (MICS, 2012-2013). This figure easily demonstrates that fathers are not engaged in the care and development of children in the early years and supporting and empowering them to take a more active role is critical. The proposed paper will add to the literature on father engagement by providing evidence about the importance of parent education and support programs focused on fathers and male caregivers and the many lessons learned from attesting three different models to engage fathers in rural Bangladesh. Based on a thorough community needs assessment at program sites in rural Bangladesh, Save the Children designed and implemented an education and engagement curriculum for fathers of children between 0-3 years of age consecutively in 2012 & 2014.

## Encyclopedia of Early Childhood Development

### Plan International Australia ECD Resource Pack

The ECD resource package developed by Plan International Australian is called the Community Led Action for Children (CLAC) ECCD toolkit which can support project teams, field workers, project managers and donors to understand and implement the CLAC approach. The toolkit consists of the following key guides:

- 1) Strengthening Families for Better Early Childhood Outcomes: A Parenting Education Curriculum Guide
- 2) Community Managed Early Learning Programs Curriculum Guide
- 3) Effective Supports for Transition to Primary School Curriculum Guide
- 4) Learning Toy Production Guide for Early Learning Centres and Home Play

## Science of Early Childhood Development

### Sara Dang, Save the Children, Senior Specialist for ECCD in Asia



Sara Dang serves as Save the Children's senior specialist for ECCD in Asia. In this role, she has provided technical support to ensure the delivery of quality ECCD programs in Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu and Vietnam. Her expertise lies in designing and implementing integrated preschool programs, creating strong parenting programs and improving country capacity in ECCD programming. She has a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Toronto and a master's in Mind, Brain and Education from Harvard University.

### Save the Children Quality Pre-School Package

#### Abstract

Preschool programs are at the core of Save the Children's ECCD portfolio. The central aim of Save the Children's ECCD programs for children of three to six years is to ensure that these children have access to one or preferably two years of high quality early learning environments, prior to formal school entry. Early learning environments encompass both individual stimulation at home, where the primary interaction is between the child and his/her caregivers, and group stimulation, where children gather in a shared environment and interact with one another under the guidance of a trained facilitator. ECCD programs should aim to improve the access and quality of early learning environments and ensure that these environments protect and promote children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. The Quality Preschool Package is a guide to preschool programming. It offers tools to design, implement, and continue to improve quality preschool programs for children of 3-6 years and their families, as well as to support the transition into primary classes. Save the Children developed this guide by collecting and classifying the vast number of resources that Save the Children's Country Offices developed for preschool programming. The Preschool Package therefore draws on the rich resources and experiences of country teams to pull together simple and adaptable tools that can be used to support quality early education in multiple contexts and through different delivery mechanisms. This presentation will provide an overview of the Quality Preschool Package, how it was developed, and its uses across various developing country settings. We will also discuss its contribution to quality programming.

**Ms. Neelofar Ali, Rupani Foundation**



Neelofar Ali, a professional in Early Childhood Development (ECD) with vast experience in ECD curriculum planning, development and management, earned diplomas in ECD, Inclusive Education from Aga Khan University and from Association of Montessori International in Pakistan. She is also trained in child protection from Kidpower California, USA. Ms. Ali supervised and implemented ECD programs in diverse socio-cultural settings in Pakistan. She has hands-on experience in planning academic activities for teachers and students, designing academic courses for teachers, content development, working with all stakeholders, setting High Scope and Montessori classroom environment, planning and organising events.

*Programme Umeed (Hope)*

*Abstract*

Programme Umeed (Hope), an Early Childhood Development initiative, ran and managed by the local community, was launched in a remote village of Sindh province of Pakistan in 2007. The village Khyber is characterised with widespread poverty, low literacy rate, lack of basic public service facilities, and mostly people working as peasants on the lands of landlords as daily wagers. All these factors responsible for a hostile environment that deprives a child to nurture, grow, learn and access to basic services as his birthright just because he/she born in a poor family. Project Umeed (PU) is an endeavour to create “Hope” for the underprivileged with an objective to establish a catalyst that empower grassroots community to overcome the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation through pre-primary education. Umeed (Hope) a grassroots Montessori-based ECD programme for the three to six years age group that aims to provide age appropriate facilities, sustainable recourses and encourage active parental involvement in classroom settings. In order to establish such age-appropriate, resourceful and stimulating space, the classrooms are made/renovated in accordance with the needs of the curricula: a custom-designed curriculum that is based on the principles of locally exercised cultural and religious values. The soft part of learning resource such as theme-specific stories, songs and poems and topics for discussions were kept open for enrichment so as to make the learning process increasingly indigenous to the learners. The impact of this initiative can be seen ranging from child’s holistic development and change in behaviour of families and parents in their eating habits, health and personal hygiene, improved hygienic conditions of their houses, streets and environment. Encouraged by the learning of their kids now, parents started thinking beyond the horizons of their limited confines and see a future with their educated children free from the clutches of poverty.

**Michael Bismar, ChildFund, Timor-Leste**



Michael Bismar is currently working with ChildFund Timor-Leste as Program Effectiveness Advisor. As advisor, he provides technical guidance to local Timorese staff to build their capacity on various child-focused programs which includes Early Childhood Development. Prior to his work in Timor-Leste, he had worked in several international organisations in the Philippines such as in Plan International as ECD technical officer, ChildFund Philippines as area manager and in Children International Philippines as program manager. His passion has always been working in ECD program—designing and managing appropriate ECD program and intervention, training and mentoring service providers such as day care workers, preschool teachers and parent

volunteers in efficiently managing their programs; building the capacity of ECD committees in the village and municipality on effective leadership and management of ECD program.

#### Jose Felix (ChildFund, Timor-Leste)



Jose Felix is a simple and common Timorese national who is a father to 2 children and a loving husband to his wife. Jose Felix finished a Bachelor in Teaching degree as a scholar of a Catholic school. After college, he worked as a teacher assistant in an international school in Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste. During his teaching days in a private school, he appreciated and loved so much working with young children. On his weekends, at his village, he organises and facilitates a neighbourhood play for children on the streets and also trains youth to co-facilitate with him the activities in playgroup session. He is currently working for ChildFund Timor-Leste as a Technical Officer for Early Childhood Development and received training and mentoring around project management on ECD. He has seen how Timor-Leste society has evolved and continuously evolving on ECD institutionalisation.

#### *Home-based play groups as alternative pre-school education: inclusive ECD for children in Timor-Leste*

##### *Abstract*

Though early childhood development is considered new in Timor-Leste, government and ECD practitioners have made progress to strengthen ECD in the country. The Ministry of Education's preschool policy framework incorporates education, health and hygiene, nutrition, and child protection for younger children. NGOs contribute to alliance-building and demonstrate structural and process quality programming. But one significant challenge persists: only 14% of children aged 3-5 years in Timor-Leste are enrolled in preschool (*Situation Analysis of Children in Timor-Leste*, UNICEF, 2014). Despite the lack of data, UNICEF Timor-Leste suggests that it is unlikely for the government to meet its target of 50% enrolment rate of children aged 3-5 years by 2030. To increase young children's access to quality ECD, ChildFund Timor-Leste has established home-based play groups in remote villages. Parent-volunteers trained by ChildFund deliver learning sessions in the neighbourhood using toys made from local materials, and follow a daily plan they developed with ChildFund based on the government's learning standards for preschool children. Home-based play groups supported by ChildFund integrate psychosocial stimulation with nutrition and food security components. Initially, parents and government considered home-based play groups as simply play, rather than as inclusive and alternative preschool education.

#### R. P. M. Sandamali (ChildFund Sri Lanka)



Rajapaksha Pathirage Manjula Sandamali is currently working as the Technical Specialist on Nutrition at ChildFund Sri Lanka. She build capacity of relevant staff and ChildFund Sri Lanka's local partners on Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (ECD) through mentoring, training, knowledge/information exchange and experience sharing. Sandamali also supports ChildFund's local partners in their planning and program designing to ensure comprehensive designing of programs for the children aged 0 to 5 years old ensuring holistic intervention that are necessary for this age group especially in the fields of health, nutrition, and early stimulation to support the development of critical milestones for this age group . She also serves as link between ChildFund Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Health for better collaboration and complementation of health and nutrition of children. Sandamali completed her BSc in Nutrition at Wayamba University of Sri Lanka in

2005 and MSc in Organisational Management at University of Peradeniya in 2011

*Nurture healthy children in a healthy environment: the positive deviance approach to reduce child malnutrition*

**Abstract**

ChildFund Sri Lanka recognises the need for infants to have healthy beginnings to prepare them for a better future. “Nurture Healthy Children in a Healthy Environment” project is being implemented in Trincomalee district in Sri Lanka from 2014 to 2015. This project’s aim was to establish a conducive home environment for child care and development through adequate access to quality health and nutritional care. Trincomalee district is one of the poorest districts in Sri Lanka and has been affected by disasters such as war and tsunami. Hence, there had been a lot of damage to infrastructure, assets and human and natural resources. The prevalence of malnutrition is significantly high in Trincomalee district compared with other districts of the country. Existing statistics show the prevalence of underweight children under 5 years in Trincomalee is 32.8%, while the overall underweight prevalence among the same age group in Sri Lanka is 23.5% (National Nutrition and Micronutrient Survey, 2012). Thiriyal is a village situated 50km away from Trincomalee town. Further this area lacks resources for people to maintain a basic standard of living. The prevalence of underweight among children under 05 years is relatively high in this area (43%) and prevalence of severe underweight was 8.3% (MOH Office (Kutchaveli data). A special nutrition rehabilitation program called Positive Deviance was designed for 20 malnourished children.

Venue 4: ECD and social cohesion (side session)

**Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive, Early Years**



Siobhan has responsibility for policy and strategic development, relationships with the Inter-departmental Group on Early Years, Childcare Partnerships, and Pre-school Education Advisory Groups. She also manages Cross Border relationships and International partnerships. Siobhan is the former European representative on the World Forum Foundation for early years care and education.

**Sukhdeep Gill, Pennsylvania State University, USA**



Dr. Sukhdeep Gill is an Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at the Pennsylvania State University and has held the positions of Associate Director of Early Childhood Programs at the Bennett-Pierce Prevention Research Center (PRC) and Discipline Coordinator of Health and Human Development, at Penn State. She is a lifespan developmental psychologist interested in early development-in-context, interpersonal relations, social-emotional learning, mindfulness practices, program evaluation, and community-based action research. Her current areas of research include training, support, and functioning of staff working with parents and young children in diverse settings and preventive interventions for families with young children from poverty backgrounds to promote health, social-emotional development, and school readiness. She is a member of ARNEC and the ECD and Peacebuilding Work Group. She is also a UNICEF consultant on social emotional learning.

## Kishor Shrestha, Lead of ECD and Social Cohesion Working Group



Kishor Shrestha, Ph.D. in early childhood education, is a professor at the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. For more than 30 years he has been involved in conducting research, training and innovative activities in the field of early childhood care and education in Nepal. Dr. Shrestha is a member of the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children. He was a Steering Committee member of ARNEC from 2008 to 2011.

*Excerpt from the Side Session Concept Note*

The side session on early childhood development (ECD) and Social Cohesion provides a platform for sharing of perspectives, experiences and evidences around ECD and peace building. It aims to promote the collaboration of different stakeholders, parents, care-takers, teachers and community members to get involved in the future of the children and to develop a shared vision and understanding on children and social cohesion. ECD focuses on a child's development from the prenatal period through eight years of age. ECD encompasses education; physical, social and emotional care; intellectual stimulation; health and nutrition of the developing child (ARNEC, 2011). ECD promotes holistic development of young children and lays the foundations of lifelong health and well-being, which is at the heart of a stable and prosperous society. Through inclusion of the different actors, offering of training and skills to caretakers, and collaboration between parents, teachers and community members, quality learning environments are created enabling young children to be better prepared for school. Studies show that children as young as two years old are impacted by and can show stigma; during these years violence and discriminatory attitudes<sup>5</sup> can begin to develop. These early years form a critical window of development to help form positive attitudes and behaviours. Bringing quality early childhood environments to children and providing increased access to resources for marginalised groups leads to great equality, which in turn builds peace through enhanced social cohesion. As inequality is a primary driver for conflict, ECD programs can decrease this conflict through promoting equality, social cohesion and a shared vision for the children.

### ARNEC paper presentations III

#### Venue 1: Monitoring and measuring the impact of ECD

## Filip Lenaerts, VVOB: Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance, Vietnam



Equipped with a Masters degree in Educational Sciences and Bachelor degrees in Social Work and Education, Filip moved to Vietnam in 2006 to work for the Belgian bilateral cooperation as a junior education officer for. In the coming three years, Filip's main interest in contributing to quality education for all became reality in a project promoting active teaching and learning in primary and lower secondary education in the Northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam. In 2010, Filip joined UNESCO in Vietnam as education specialist. He also was responsible for education sector coordination, including Vietnam's proposal to the Global Partnership on Education and in new coordination initiatives such as the Early Childhood Care and Development roundtable in Vietnam. In 2013,

<sup>5</sup> "Peacebuilding through Early Childhood Development: Guidance Note," UNICEF, 2014.

Available at: [http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/ECD\\_Peacebuilding\\_GNote\\_.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/ECD_Peacebuilding_GNote_.pdf)

Filip became an education advisor for VVOB in Vietnam as Early Childhood Education became a major programme focus.



**Nguyen Thi Lan Huong, VVOB: Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance, Vietnam**

Huong has over 10 years work experience in the field of education in Vietnam. Starting her career with an NGO in some of most remote ethnic minority districts in Vietnam, Huong worked on developing child-friendly schools and communities with participation of teachers, parents and children. Equipped with her experience on rights-based approach and quality education for all, Huong moved from the grassroots to national level for the Belgium-Vietnam bilateral education project under the Ministry of Education and Training where she supported teacher training in the fourteen Northern mountainous provinces on active teaching and learning.

**Dinh Thi Thu Trang, VVOB: Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance, Vietnam**



Trang graduated from foreign languages teacher training institute and then obtained a master's degree in educational studies in Belgium. She has been working in the education sector in Vietnam for more than 10 years. Trang joined VVOB five years ago and since 2014, she has been working in early childhood education focusing on specific topics including transition from kindergarten to primary, child monitoring system, active learning and action research. With VVOB, Trang works together with the Ministry of Education and Training, the Vietnam Women's Union as well as teacher training institutes, kindergartens and primary schools in four provinces of Vietnam. With VVOB, she aims to bring innovations to the educational system in Vietnam.

*Supporting all children's development by addressing wellbeing and involvement in ECD towards a process-oriented monitoring system in Vietnam*

**Abstract**

The Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training is promoting Active Teaching and Learning as a key strategy to enhance children's development and learning in preschool education. However, in practice, kindergarten teachers face difficulties in moving from a teacher-centred teaching style towards a child-oriented environment that puts the initiative of learning within children's own hands. To support young children's development to its full potential, teachers need to be better equipped with pedagogical skills to create optimal conditions for deep level learning, learning where knowledge is constructed rather than received. In this paper, the authors present an approach of observing the process of learning that can be used by pre-school teachers to facilitate deep level learning. As process indicators of deep level learning, teachers can observe children's level of involvement and of well-being. Within a process-oriented monitoring system, as opposed to results-oriented monitoring system, teachers do not depend on what children have or have not learned. They focus on how children experience the conditions offered in the classroom and identify those children that are at risk of learning to take actions that can increase well-being and involvement. A process-oriented monitoring system was introduced in the Vietnamese education sector. This monitoring system includes ten action points as a source for interventions to adjust the learning environment to the needs of every single child. Following the introduction, the Ministry of Education and Training has set-up an action research to implement and contextualise the approach. The evidence generated through this action research will inform the 2019 curriculum review in what has been appreciated as potentially a major shift towards quality early childhood education in Vietnam.

### Monisha Singh Diwan, Aga Khan Education Services



Monisha Singh Diwan is a child development professional and has contributed to the field of Early Childhood Development for the last twenty years. Her quest to better childhoods and her rich repertoire of experience in Teacher Education, Training and Development; Programmatic Quality assessments; Innovative Programme Design & Development and Advocacy for best practices in Early Childhood Development and child rights spans varied settings and geographies. She is currently contributing at the Aga Khan Education Service, India (AKES,I), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network and a part of the global AKES network with over 250 schools across Asia and Africa . She provides

strategic ECD leadership in the areas of programmatic quality assessments, integrated programming, setting up model ECD centres in the urban, peri-urban and rural spaces, and ensuring a robust continuing professional development framework for Early Childhood Teachers, in the geographies and communities the organisation serves. She also contributes as an Executive Core Committee Member at Association of Early Childhood Education and Development (AECED), an Indian ECD advocacy and networking body.

### Karen Kelly, Aga Khan Education Services



Since 2012 Dr. Karen Kelly has worked as a Senior Manager for Early Childhood and Primary Programs with the Aga Khan Development Network Foundation ([www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org)) and she is currently based in Dubai. Presently, her role also includes Director of the Aga Khan Early Learning Centre (AKELC) which provides oversight for a nursery and preschool programme, as well as a professional development and demonstration teaching unit for early childhood educators. Previously, she served as an Early Years Specialist for the Education Institute, Supreme Education Council in Doha, Qatar and from 2004 -2014, she was an Early Childhood doctoral faculty member in the College of Education at Walden University. Relevant leadership and program development roles have included State Education Consultant at the Colorado Department of Education from 2002-2007 and 1999-2000 Fulbright Scholar to Cyprus. Ongoing

research interests have focused on early literacy, ECD quality assurance systems and distance education models for early childhood educators.

*From measurement to action: using programmatic assessments to promote 'quality ECD': model exemplars from Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and UAE*

#### *Abstract*

The importance of improving the quality of early years programmes has been internationally recognised. The *Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments* representing 164 countries contains six goals: the first of which is, “expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has been supporting Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiatives for many years, and recognises this critical long-term impact of quality ECD. Aga Khan Education Services (AKES), an agency of the AKDN, supports 160 ECD programmes in Middle East, Asia and East Africa that serve approximately 22,000 children. Responding to the need for improving the quality of these early years programmes, AKES is institutionalising a more systematic, evidence-informed improvement strategy through a Quality Assurance and Programme Evaluation system, including Self-Assessment of educators and caregivers using the *ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment Tool (GGA)*, 2011. The GGA was developed by the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI 1999) by more than 80 professionals representing



27 countries” (Hardin et al, 2013, p2) for implementation throughout the world for early care and education programmes, especially in the developing countries.

#### Maya P. Nayo, Save the Children, Philippines



Maya is the ECCD Advisor of Save the Children Philippines Country Office. As ECCD Advisor, she is responsible for technical oversight in the design and refinement of Save the Children’s early childhood development programs in the country, including ensuring cross-sectoral integration and in pursuing education-related resource mobilisation, program learning, and policy advocacy. Maya earned her MA Sociology in Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada. She took up master’s units in Early Childhood Education at the University of the Philippines in Diliman. Her undergraduate degree is also from UP Diliman.

#### Mariel Joy S. Sampang, Save the Children, Philippines



Joy joined Save the Children as Program Officer for ECCD in April 2014. Covering three urban cities under Sponsorship program, her work is towards improving child development outcomes and caregiving behaviour and practices. Prior to her current development work, Joy was a preschool teacher, then moved as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Family Life and Child Development of the University of the Philippines, Diliman and served as a Faculty-in-Charge of its laboratory school, U.P. Child Development Center. She has published articles and presented paper in an international conference. She completed her master’s degree in Family Life and Child Development and bachelor’s degree in Communication Research from the same university. She also worked for an international market research agency before returning to the field of early childhood education.

#### Maricel B. Ceido (Save the Children, Philippines)



Maricel is the Program Officer for ECCD in Save the Children South Central Mindanao Program Office (SCMPO). As program officer, she is responsible in leading the implementation of early childhood education program interventions in South Central Mindanao program and project sites. Maricel finished her Bachelor in Education at Notre Dame of Dadiangas University, General Santos City.

*Making a case for ECCD: impact evaluation of Save the Children Philippines ECCD Program*

#### Abstract

Save the Children Philippines has been collecting data on child development outcomes, parenting knowledge and quality learning environment the past years. The aim is to establish evidence on the impact of early childhood education programs to children from urban and rural communities, as well as generate good practices to inform future programming and advocacy. For this study, we used quantitative methods and collected data and analysed them to investigate on (a) levels of competency in all domains among children who participated in the different early education programs, (b) levels of knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) attained by parents who took part in the Parent Education Sessions (PES), and (c) Quality Learning Environment (QLE) levels of the ECE centers. The study also looked at differences between sexes (male versus female), if any, and between contexts (urban versus rural).

The key findings of the study are:

1. Children improved significantly in most developmental domains (in all six data sets) after attending the SC-initiated (KapitBahay-Aralan) or SC-supported (Daycare and Kindergarten) programs. Gender comparisons indicated that there were slightly more girls who performed better than boys (all 3 data sets with sex disaggregation). On the other hand, there are more boys who were classified as having slight or significant delay compared to girls.
2. Parents' knowledge, attitude and practices of good parenting have generally increased immediately after they have attended PES. Results indicated that parents in rural areas gained significantly more from the modules than parents in urban areas. Although attendance dwindled in some modules in both sites, the percentage of attendance was greater for rural.
3. On QLE, both Luzon and Mindanao ECCD centers have improved QLE ratings from baseline to endline. Weak areas that persisted are still on child protection components and community engagement. Further analysis revealed that variables such as provision of teaching/learning materials, length of SC support, teacher training and length of stay of SC facilitator are significant predictors of whether or not a school will pass or fail the QLE assessment.

## Venue 2: Innovations in ECD



### Sonja Giese (Ilifa Labantwana and the Innovation Edge)

Sonja Giese leads Ilifa Labantwana, a national ECD donor collaborative that supports the scale-up of quality early childhood development in South Africa. She is also director of the Innovation Edge, a multi-donor initiative aimed at promoting innovation in early learning in South Africa. The Edge offers a platform for testing the feasibility and effectiveness of Bold Ideas that can fundamentally change early life experiences for children. Over the past 20 years, Sonja has been involved in a number of start-up ventures in the development space, including the establishment of an HIV/AIDS research and policy programme at the Children's Institute (University of Cape Town), a Child Services programme for an international donor agency, Absolute Return for Kids (ARK) and several community-based rural development projects through a local NGO, the Bulungula Incubator. Sonja has a Bachelor of Science and Honours degree from the University of Cape Town and currently lives in Cape Town, South Africa.

### *Creating a platform for innovation in early learning: experiences from South Africa*

#### *Abstract*

South Africa is brimming with bold, creative innovators and entrepreneurs. As a country, we can lay claim to many innovations across a wide range of sectors. The Innovation Edge is a multi-donor partnership established in July 2014 to bring this spirit of innovation to the early learning space in South Africa. Young children are vulnerable by virtue of their age. In SA, they are additionally so because of their disproportionate exposure to conditions of severe poverty and the multiple associated deprivations. Inequality in access to learning opportunities in South Africa exists across ages and income levels, marginalising the youngest and poorest children. While 80% of 3-4 year olds in Quintile 5 (the richest households) have access to ECD centres, only 40% of their peers in Quintiles 1 and 2 enjoy this same right. Service quality also varies dramatically across quintiles, and most ECD centres in poor communities do not meet Government stipulated minimum norms and standards. To profoundly change the early learning landscape in South Africa, we need new products, services and delivery models for early learning, we need to increase the range of stakeholders engaged in promoting early learning, we need to radically transform mindsets

and paradigms in support of early learning and to strengthen the pipeline of human and financial resources.

### Sanober Nadeem, Human Development Programme, Aga Khan University



Sanober Nadeem a lead researcher, educationist and practitioner of Early Child Development. She is currently affiliated with Human Development Programme of Aga Khan University. Ms. Nadeem has done post-master degree in Clinical Psychology, Master in Bioethics, Advanced Diploma in ECD and Science of Early Child Development from Red River College, Canada. She is also Course Director in Course I & II at Advanced diploma in HDP. She is involved in teaching and training activities at AKU, both national and international level. Her main research and teaching interest is maternal and child mental health and issues related to child development and screening. Ms. Nadeem's research experience includes setting up home and center based ECD parenting models with the support of community based ECD workers, development and validation of developmental screening tool. Ms. Nadeem is the member of Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC).

*Formative action research on use of media to increase awareness about ECD in three districts of Balochistan*

#### *Abstract*

The use of electronic media is becoming a very important means for creating mass awareness. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of media campaign in promoting good practices for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the three districts of Balochistan. Formative action research (FAR) design was adopted, using the Social Learning Theory framework. The FAR completed four phases in each field site with action reflection cycle as main component in each phase. In the first "inception" phase available and preferable media resources for the community were examined and community resource groups were formed. During the second phase of "Planning and Development", ECD messages were framed, 10 Radio promos and 2 Videos were developed. Third phase comprised "Action and Implementation", during this, radio promos and videos were broadcasted. Last phase was "Evaluation" where the impact of media campaign was measured.

Venue 3: Building capacity of ECD workforce for quality and inclusive ECD

### Minyi Li, Beijing Normal University



Minyi Li is an associate professor of Institute of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Beijing Normal University. Dr. Li's research interests include early childhood curriculum development and professional development, early language and literacy, and comparative research in early childhood education. She has also involved in some national programs for antipoverty and children development.

### Jingle Sergote, Philippine Department of Education

Jingle Lim Sergote works for the Department of Education, National Capital Region as Regional Supervisor for Kindergarten, ICT, and Special Education. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication at the Far Eastern University. She attained her Master of

Education in Special Education and the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Management at the Philippine Normal University. At present, she is a Part-time Professor for Special Education at the Philippine Normal University, College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research. She has been resource speaker in various seminars, trainings and conferences.

#### **Salvador Galoran Sergote, Philippine School for the Deaf**

Salvador Galoran Sergote is working for the Philippine School for the Deaf as High School Year Leader, as well as Special Education Teacher III. He teaches Mathematics and Social Studies. He obtained his Bachelor of Science in Mathematics at the Far Eastern University. He finished his Master of Education in Special Education with specialisation in Hearing Impairment at the Philippine Normal University. At present, he has completed the academic requirements for Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Management at the Philippine Normal University. He has been K to 12 trainer, and special education resource speaker in various seminars, trainings and conferences.