ARNEC

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

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: FROM POLICY IDEA TO IMPLEMENTATION TO RESULTS

Experiences Shared at the Regional Early Childhood
Development Policy Review Seminar: Sustainable Policies
for Early Childhood Development

1-2 December 2009

Early Childhood Development: From Policy Idea to Implementation to Results
Singapore, Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood, 2010

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Dr. Rajesh Mehta, World Health Organization - India, and Prof. Nirmala Rao, University of Hong Kong and ARNEC Steering Committee member, greets each other during the opening of the seminar

Participants of the seminar stands up to welcome Mrs. Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sport, who was the seminar's guest-of-honor

Acknowledgements

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Participants from countries starting with letters A-M

Participants from countries starting with letters N-Z

Local participants from Singapore

Opening ceremony

Participants from Lao PDR at the seminar

Participants from Sri Lanka at the seminar

Dr. Festo Kavishe, Deputy Regional Director of UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, giving one of the opening speeches at the seminar

ARNEC Steering Committee members at the seminar (left to right) Ms. Marilyn F. Manuel, Ms. Karen Haive, Ms. Jenny James, Ms. Mahmuda Akhter, Prof. Xin Zhou and Prof. Nirmala Rao

Mrs. Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sport, greeted by ARNEC Steering Committee member, Ms. Maki Hayashikawa of UNESCO Bangkok

The seminar's guest-of-honour, Mrs. Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, with her opening remarks for the seminar

A RNEC secretariat launch

Dr. Cliff Meyers, Regional Education Advisor of UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, signs the Memorandum of Understanding

Ms. Elizabeth Pearce, Asia Education Advisor of Save the Children, signs the Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Chan Tee Seng, Director of SEED Institute, presents a token of appreciation to Ms. Divya Lata, Senior Program Manager of Open Society Foundation

Ms. Anne-Marie Davies, Regional Learning Advisor of Plan International Regional Office for Asia, signs the Memorandum of Understanding

ARNEC Core Team members with Mrs. Yu-Foo Yee Shoon as witness to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding
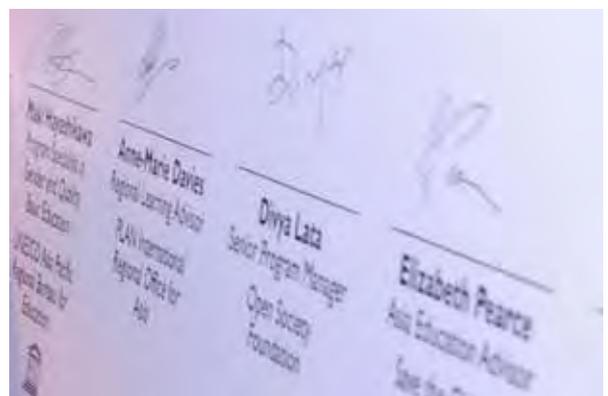
Signatures of Core Team members on the Memorandum of Understanding

ntroduction

Local, provincial, and national governments around the world continue to search for ways to improve the social, health, and economic opportunities and outcomes of their citizens. Early childhood development (ECD) continues to gain traction as a policy strategy to achieve these human capital goals. Moving policies from idea to adopted policy to effective implementation challenges developing and developed countries, alike. Relying on good intentions, alone, is not enough to realize the outcomes desired through ECD policies.

Public service programs have been typically the responsibility of a single government ministry such as health, education, labor and workforce, etc. However, research suggests a coordinated and integrated multi-service delivery approach to realize the benefits of ECD. Pia Britto and colleagues identified a range of policy goals that might be considered and addressed through an ECD framework (see Figure 1).

This cross-sectoral and multi-service delivery policy compounds the already complex job of moving policy to effective implementation. Therefore, policymakers, service providers, and communities must ensure access to human resources, organizational resources, and financial resources to sufficiently address the policy development process and the gap between policy adoption and implementation (Dr. Festo Kavishe, Deputy Regional Director for the East Asia-Pacific Region of UNICEF).

Figure 1: Coordinated and Integrated ECD
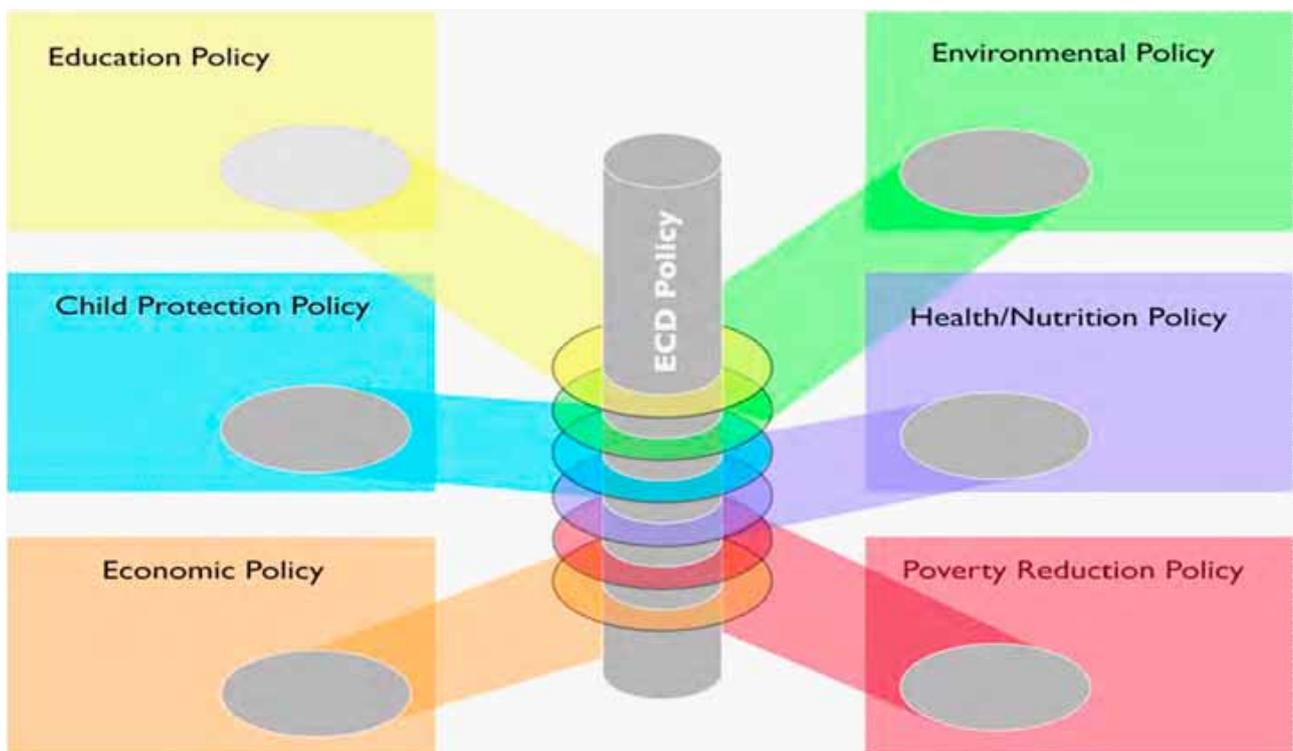
Source: Britto, P. R., Cerezo, A., & Ogbunugafor, B. (2008)[2]

2 Britto, P.R., Cerezo, A., & Ogbunugafor, B. (2008). National ECD policy development: Case study from the People's Democratic Republic of Lao. International Journal of Early Childhood, 40, 101-118.

This paper is divided into three parts to assist national, regional, and local stakeholders developing or enhancing ECD policy: 1) provide a high-level policy development framework for stakeholders to consider as they are developing ECD policies; 2) a summary of ECD policy development experiences shared at a recent regional policy review seminar in Singapore, experiences to be used as a resource for others as they develop their ECD policies; and 3) concluding observations and recommended next steps for ECD policy research and development in the Asia-Pacific region.

ECD Policy Framework

An Idea-to-Results Framework for ECD Policy
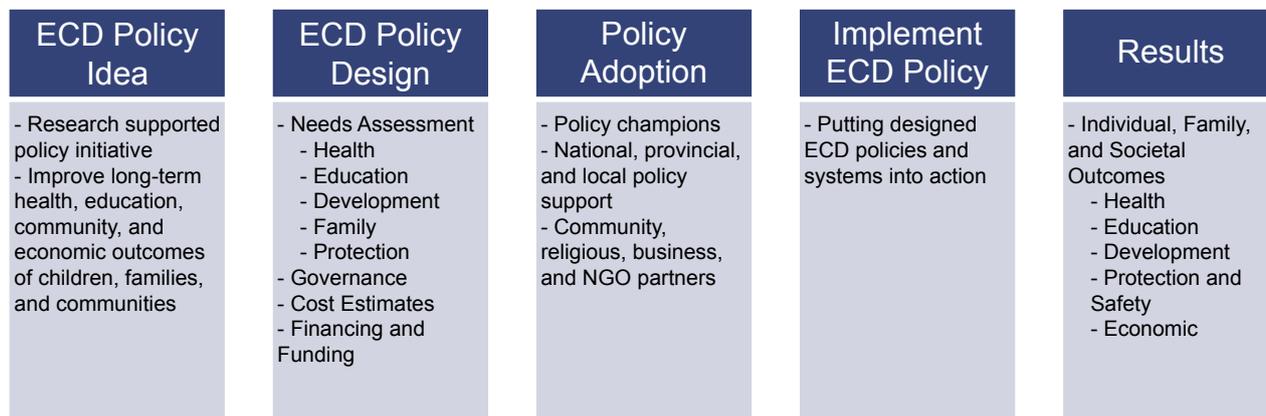
To improve the sustainability of ECD policies, stakeholders must consider all aspects of the policy process. According to Eggers and O'Leary (2009), the journey to results includes the same basic elements: a good idea, strong policy design, political (including public) support in adopting the policy, and strong implementation. And, as Eggers and O'Leary point out, these basic elements are like links in a chain where every step in the process must work and where failure can occur at any point in the journey. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the idea-to-results framework in an ECD context.

Figure 2: ECD Policy Idea-to-Results Basic Elements

ECD Policy Idea	ECD Policy Design	Policy Adoption	Implement ECD Policy	Results

- Research supported policy initiative
 - Improve long-term health, education, community, and economic outcomes of children, families, and communities
	- Needs Assessment
	   - Health
	   - Education
	   - Development
	   - Family
	   - Protection
	 - Governance
	 - Cost Estimates
	 - Financing and Funding
		- Policy champions
		 - National, provincial, and local policy support
		 - Community, religious, business, and NGO partners
			- Putting designed ECD policies and systems into action	- Individual, Family, and Societal Outcomes
				   - Health
				   - Education
				   - Development
				   - Protection and Safety
				   - Economic

Source: Adapted from Figure I-1, Eggers and O'Leary (2009), p.11[3]

Figure 2 shows the basic elements along the idea-to-results path. This high-level description of the policy process comes out of the systems theory literature that emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the quality of the system in order to achieve the desired results.

ECD continues to demonstrate both short-term and long-term positive outcomes (health, education, community, and economic), particularly for impoverished children and their families. As such, ECD has come to be a strong policy idea to achieve improved outcomes

3 Eggers, William D. and O'Leary, John, "If We Can Put A Man On The Moon…Getting Big Things Done In Government." Harvard Business Press, Boston, Massachusetts (2009).

for children, their families, and society as a whole in developing and developed countries, alike. Many, if not most, of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region have recognized the importance of this policy idea and are moving from the idea stage into the policy design, adoption, implementation stages, towards achieving results.

ECD Policy Development and Implementation Experiences from the Asia-Pacific Region

Government leaders and policy experts from across the Asia-Pacific region shared their ECD policy development and implementation experiences with others in the region at a UNICEF-ARNEC (Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood) policy review convening in Singapore on December 1st and 2nd, 2009. Countries in attendance were at various stages of the ECD policy development and implementation process.[4] Their experiences provided depth and support to the basic elements outlined in Figure 2, demonstrating how the weakness in any one area increases the chances of policy failure. Their experiences in the ECD policy development and implementation process are presented in this paper.

- Section 1: *Identifying measurable goals and outcomes and conducting an initial needs assessment* to support the policy and planning process and to identify what is to be accomplished through the chosen implementation and delivery strategies.

- Section 2: *Defining clear governance* to answer the questions of who are the partners to be involved (government and/or private partners) and where does responsibility lay amongst those partners for service provision.

- Section 3: *Generating estimated costs* to understand the potential financial commitments needed alongside the potential short-term and long-term benefits of those investments.

- Section 4: *Providing consistent (and innovative) financing and funding* to provide stakeholders an understanding that there is a financial commitment to the policy as well as provide the appropriate incentives to align program delivery to the desired outcomes.

- Section 5: *Creating valid and reliable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms* to provide stakeholders an understanding of progress made towards the desired outcomes.

Though countries shared their experiences with monitoring and evaluation, most of these experiences concentrated on the initial needs assessment (Section 1) or on ECD program outcomes (Section 5). Junko Miyahara from ARNEC and Pia Britto from Yale articulated the need for a broader and more robust set of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that span the entire idea-to-results process (shown in Figure 2).

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4 Countries attending the December 2009 policy review seminar in Singapore were Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States, Vanuatu, Vietnam.

When considered as part of the entire policy process, monitoring and evaluation helps inform stakeholders about the:

- Achievement of ECD policy implementation through the adopted policies and the practices and processes put into place; and
- Progress towards the desired short-term and long-term individual, family, community, and societal outcomes.

Together, these two monitoring and evaluation goals provide critical information to stakeholders about the appropriateness and effectiveness of various policy ideas and designs to achieve the desired outcomes.

In addition, a strong system of policy monitoring and evaluation can assist with creating transparency critical to maintaining stakeholder engagement from those developing the policies to those responsible for implementing the programs to those receiving ECD services. Throughout the two days of the policy review seminar, several countries shared their experiences with stakeholder engagement and how transparency has aided their ECD design and implementation efforts.

The processes associated with moving from idea to design to implementation towards achieving the desired outcomes present challenges for even the most well-intentioned policy idea and its advocates. What became clear through the experiences of those countries presenting at the Singapore ECD policy review seminar is the inter-relatedness of these system elements; that the policy development and implementation process is, itself, a holistic and integrated process where the whole system must be considered and developed to ensure success. Considering these elements in isolation with little regard to how they fit within the system as a whole leaves good intentions with few demonstrable results.

The paper concludes with suggestions for further investigation and development in the ECD idea-to-results continuum. One recommendation is to develop a set of regional benchmarking tools both for policy formulation and development and for ECD outcomes. ARNEC is a growing network of countries in the Asia-Pacific region sharing their ECD policy and practice experiences with countries throughout the region. ARNEC provides a unique opportunity for stakeholders to learn from successes and leading practices of others while sharing their own experiences so that others may avoid policy design and implementation pitfalls. As a regional network, ARNEC would be well-positioned to monitor and evaluate these regional benchmarks as well as serving as a clearinghouse for those seeking and for those can provide expertise and technical assistance.

Section 1: Identifying Measurable Outcomes and Conducting Initial Needs Assessment

Britto and Van Ravens identify two factors when developing the scale and scope of ECD policies to be implemented.[5] First, the scale and scope of ECD services depends on the desired goals and outcomes to be achieved with the policy. The second factor impacting the scale and scope of ECD services to be provided is a prioritization of services to be delivered

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5 Britto, Pia Rebello & Jan van Ravens (2009). "National Sustainable ECD Policies: Concept Note." Concept paper submitted to UNICEF Asia-Pacific Region, December 2009.

based on an understanding of the needs of the target populations being considered. Simply stating high-level goals such as the desire to provide accessible, affordable, and high-quality ECD programs/services is not enough to strengthen policy sustainability. A great deal of work must be done to develop instruments to understand the nature of the problems so as to effectively inform the policy development process (needs assessment). Similarly, work must be done to develop outcomes that can be measured through monitoring and evaluation in order to understand what has been achieved since having the policy adopted and the work that remains to be done.

Identifying Goals and Outcomes

ECD goals and outcomes can be stated at different levels of stakeholders—national, provincial, and local. To date, though, traditional measures of goals and outcomes have been often limited to program inputs such as pupil-teacher ratios and infrastructure or ECD expenditure levels as a percentage of total primary and secondary education expenditures. Junko Miyahara, Coordinator for ARNEC, explained that if ECD policies and service provision are to be holistic in nature, outcome measures will need to be developed that include more than education outcomes—moving beyond early childhood education (ECE) towards ECD Developing ECD outcomes could include the multiple domains often recognized by the child development community; such as (but not limited to)

- Physical health and motor development
- Social and emotional development
- Moral and spiritual development
- Cognition and general knowledge
- Language development
- Arts and creativity
- Approaches towards learning

Further, Ms. Miyahara stated that recognizing outcome measures that span the service spectrum will help to provide programmatic clarity, shared stakeholder responsibility, human resource requirements (what kind of people and training do we need to meet these needs), and identify areas for external assistance.

For instance, Save the Children (Vietnam) identified children and family needs and explored various service delivery strategies. In considering how best to meet the needs of children and family, the organization and its local partners trained teachers for them to be able to provide health screenings and administer supplements (micronutrients), diagnose learning and developmental needs, and provided complementary parent education. By clearly defining goals and outcomes, stakeholders were able to better identify the full spectrum of children and family needs, service delivery opportunities, and the human resource needs in local communities to provide those services.

Similarly, Cambodia identified a variety of desired health outcomes and strategies for pregnant women as well as health and developmental outcomes and strategies for children ages 0 to 3 and ages 3 to 6. The development and revision process of these desired outcomes at the national level helped with coordination of consistent messages to be communicated from the national government to local service providers and with coordination of services across ministries in that country.

Conducting Needs Assessments

Defining policy and program outcomes through a set of indicators also serves to provide evidence to support the policy planning and development process. These indicators provide stakeholders the opportunity to perform needs assessments (also known as gap or strength analyses), to identify existing policies matched to the identified needs. To the extent that current policies do not accomplish the desired outcomes, new policies or strategies could be considered.

Officials across the region have been able to identify some disparities in needs and program provision/participation. In Australia, policymakers used the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) to measure across developmental domains of children—physical, social, emotional, language, and communication—to understand developmental needs of its young children. The AEDI was adapted from a tool developed in Canada by changing some questions to make them more relevant to the Australian context, consideration of Australia's indigenous populations, and modified for non-native speakers. By administering the AEDI in 2008-09, the Australian national government had developmental information on 98 percent of its five-year olds for the first time. When utilized through geographic information systems (GIS), Australian authorities identified disparities across and within its provinces. The disparities in developmental needs, ultimately, strengthened the arguments for universal ECD service provision.

Similarly, China has identified a variety of indicators to potentially guide ECD policy enahancements. Chinese officials gathered data indicating disparities in access, program quality, facilities/learning space, and program inputs across urban, rural, and outer provincial areas. For instance, Chinese officials recognized child-teacher ratios of 60-to-1 in rural areas compared to 25-to-1 in urban areas. Similarly, Indonesian officials realized provincial disparities in child development needs and are working to develop policies to address identified inequities in access to health and developmental services.

By conducting initial needs assessments and revisiting these indicators through consistent monitoring and evaluation, ECD stakeholders can better understand policy successes and areas in need of improvement.

Section 2: Defining Clear Governance

National governments across the Asia-Pacific region have adopted policies (or are in the process of doing so) articulating a vision and goals related to the health, care, development, and protection of children and their families. Through formal inclusion into national constitutions or through statutory authority, these nations continue to move the needs of children and transforming those needs from idea to practice. Very often, a highly visible person helped to champion ECD from idea to policy. The next stage in the idea-to-results chain, and often least understood and developed, is the need to make and respond to critical decisions about how ECD policies and programs are governed.

Strong implementation depends on being able to answer who is responsible to accomplish what outcomes at all implementation points in the system. There is no one-best-way or single-solution answer to the questions of governance and program delivery. These decisions are highly dependent on ideological, historical, political, geographic, and cultural factors,

factors that are unique to each country and region. Why governance and program delivery decisions are so critical in the idea-to-results chain is that governance overlays decisions about ECD finance, funding, and monitoring and evaluation.

Good Governance Characteristics

Common characteristics of good governance are that the policies and programs:

•   Are participatory and inclusive.
•   Utilize (and sometimes establish) coherent rule of law.
•   Provide transparency to stakeholders throughout the system. And,
•   Are responsive to stakeholders.

However, finding the right balance across these characteristics is challenging because they are not necessarily compatible with one another or with other system goals when implemented. UNESCO's "Strong Foundations" report in 2007 identified the conflict that can arise between governance interests of transparency and system responsiveness (flexibility) competing with policy or program interests of equity and standardization.

Brunei and Malaysia are working through the tensions that arise between national goals and standardization and the ability of the ECD system to effectively respond to local needs and desires (flexibility). These two countries explained their work developing systems where local stakeholders have a say in the process (participatory and transparent) while balancing expertise that may be centrally located in the national government. Officials in the Philippines continue to work through the challenges of decentralization without diluting the vision and resources provided at the national level. The Solomon Islands engaged in a stakeholder engagement process that included discussions of governance in an effort to balance a more decentralized model of service delivery (in recognition of its geography) with centralized program standards and financing. This stakeholder engagement process took place over a period of two years that culminated in the nation's ECD policy draft.

The Coordination Challenge

Government programs are typically designed and implemented in distinct operational silos. That is, governments are structured in ways that prevent collaboration and coordination, where most policies and programs are developed with narrow goals and objectives, and delivered through program providers responsible to a single ministry. ECD policies provide an acute governance challenge because most stakeholders understand the multiple and inter-related needs of children and their families and the coordination needed to effectively and efficiently attend to those needs. Attending to those needs, to date, have been the responsibility of multiple ministries and stakeholders with services being provided with little to no coordination resulting in service gaps or overlapping programs and services. An additional layer of complexity arises when considering the roles and responsibilities of non-government organizations (NGOs), the corporate sector, and private sector providers.

In several Asia-Pacific region countries, policies and legal frameworks have been developed, but still need to work through the implementation of the interface between ministries at critical junctures. Indonesia is in the process of developing national guidelines of implementation to serve as a sort of common dictionary and resource so that everyone across the multiple ministries involved with ECD are speaking the same language. Cambodia anticipates its ECD policy document—led by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports and involving

nine ministries spelling out coordinated goals, objectives, and governance —to be signed in early 2010.

Other countries have taken the step to establish formal entities responsible for overseeing the coordination and implementation of their ECD policies. Thailand created a National Centre on Early Childhood Development, which provides policy oversight and coordination across the five ministries involved with ECD programs and services. Papua New Guinea established a national committee to coordinate ECD planning between the national, provincial, and district levels, involving other major players beyond government in the process such as private-sector providers and churches as well. In Sri Lanka, the national constitution recognizes the equal rights of all children and, as a means to ensure equity for all children, the constitution articulates the need for decentralization. As a result, coordination mechanisms were set up at national and sub-national (provincial, district, and village) levels to govern Sri Lankan ECD policy and program provision.

Perhaps through these local coordinating committees, stakeholders might be able to better address critical transition points among service providers. For instance, more work can be done to improve the level of coordination during the service transition from health providers in the early years (ages 0 to 3) to early childhood education providers (ages 4 and 5) to primary education providers (ages 6 and up).

Leveraging Existing Strengths

The countries in the Asia-Pacific region are working hard to develop coordinated and aligned governance throughout the ECD system. Progress can be seen in the establishment of coordinating bodies to help in this process, primarily at the national level with some examples at lower levels of government. The time and effort invested to educate and develop stakeholder buy-in at the national levels must also be done to ensure formal governance changes are ultimately embraced and implemented by local stakeholders. At the same time, governments working to develop their formal policies and governance structures would do well to build on strengths within existing ECD service structures.

Enhancements to ECD policies and governance routinely build on or incorporate effective service delivery mechanisms already in place. Though many ECD policies have historically been education centered, thus having the Ministry of Education often taking the lead in developing and coordinating ECD policies, several countries in the Asia-Pacific region voiced that their health policies have demonstrated stronger linkages or have proven advantageous particularly in serving very young children and their families.

For instance, in enhancing their ECD policy (for ages 0 to 3), Sri Lanka leveraged its existing health infrastructure through the Ministry of Health which acted as the lead ministry It is because health service providers were very often the first point of contact with children and their families for pre- and post-natal nutrition and child vaccinations (Maternal & Child Health Program). Similarly, the Ministries of Health in Thailand and Indonesia also served as the lead in catering services for young children in the very first years because of their access to families as first-care service providers. Thailand's Book Start Program—a program to address literacy and development needs of very young children—is coordinated between the Ministry of Health (as first-care service providers) and the Ministry of Education (as supporting ministry).

ECD policy and program development may be time consuming given the coordination needed

across multiple ministries and the multiple levels of stakeholders. However, there is no need to begin this policy process completely from scratch. Stakeholders' embracing of enhanced (integrated and coordinated) ECD policies takes on a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up feel by recognizing existing strengths within the system (particularly those strengths and assets of local service providers). In addition, leveraging existing infrastructure and human capital assets and strengths contributes to the long-term sustainability of the ECD programs.

Balancing Universal Goals With a Diversity of Stakeholders & Decentralization

As stakeholders consider the many options available to them as they design and implement ECD policies and programs, they need to pay attention to the governance of these policies and programs and to the unique geographic, cultural, ethnic, and language diversity that exists in each country. Far from being homogenous in needs, countries in the Asia-Pacific region are extremely diverse in their cultures, religions, ethnicities, and languages while often spanning across wide geographic areas, either in continuous land mass (e.g., Australia, China, and Mongolia) or across the sea (e.g., Indonesia, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, Philippines, and Papua New Guinea). This diversity affects the policy idea, design, and implementation decisions about outcomes to be pursued and the implementation strategies used to achieve those outcomes, including decisions of system governance.

While a national ECD policy has been the norm for countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the challenge for several countries has been the balance between centralized norms, standards, and guidelines with decentralized systems of governance in recognition of the wide diversity population and geographic and ECD service needs. Officials from the Philippines and Thailand communicated their efforts to balance the setting of national goals with a decentralized governance structure. Concerns from these countries are that there is potential for the national vision and resources to be diluted through the lower levels of policy implementation. Because of these concerns, Thai officials indicated a greater emphasis on standardization of child-care centers across the country. Malaysia is also working through this governance balance with the result being a slightly more centralized ECD policy system where all kindergartens/pre-school must be registered with the Ministry of Education (with some exceptions) where the national pre-school curriculum must be used. However, respecting the needs and wants of local provinces and communities, local kindergartens are allowed to "top up" with other curriculum with approval from the Ministry of Education.

Reflecting the wide range of diversity within each country in the choice of ECD desired outcomes and governance structures impacts the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and methods that must be developed to span the idea-to-results process. The diversity and choice of governance across countries also impacts monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and methods that might be developed across the region.

Governance Remains Dynamic

For all nations, governance structures remain works in progress. Even well-established ECD policies continue to be revisited to recognize the dynamic nature of the ECD policy environment and the holistic approach to serving children and their families (Figure 1). Where policies may have been first created to attend to the needs of four- and five-year old children, research suggests the critical time for health, cognitive, and social development begins at birth. Goals and objectives may change or become better refined, results of assessments and evaluations may identify implementation strengths and weaknesses, and expertise certainly grows in national ministries and local service providers.

Within this dynamic environment, the governance structures must respond so as to articulate formal roles and responsibilities throughout the system and to match those roles and responsibilities to the goals and objectives. Malaysian officials are contemplating revisions to their National Education Act in order to formally reflect the education needs of children ages 0 to 4 and the responsibilities for attending to those education needs, which resides with the Ministry of Education. In response to a 2006-07 review of its ECD policy, Laos identified its challenges were lack of coordination, limited budget, poor understanding of ECD by stakeholders throughout the system. This led to a two-year effort (2007-09) to draft a national ECD policy document with Ministries of Education, Health, Justice, Labor, Finance, and Planning and Investment. This policy document more clearly identifies roles and responsibilities leading to clearer accountability of stakeholders throughout the ECD implementation stream from the National Commission on Mothers and Children (NCMC) and other national ministries down to the village level.

Section 3: Developing Cost Estimates

A small handful of countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region have moved along the idea-to-results system to begin estimating the costs of ECD programs. Estimating program costs ("costing study") attempts to answer the question: how much will it cost to achieve the desired outcomes? Though a relatively straightforward question, the need to develop clear, measurable desired outcomes and to understanding how infrastructure and human capital (people, expertise, and time) resources can be used to achieve those outcomes is extremely complex. Without these outcomes and objectives, a costing study is incomplete. Without some understanding of how resources help to achieve those outcomes leaves a costing study equally incomplete.

Costing studies can be done at multiple levels of policy implementation. Most costing studies are often limited to estimating the costs at the point of service. More expansive costing studies consider the costs at the point of service, all of the relevant governance levels associated with the policy, and through monitoring and evaluation. Including the costs of monitoring and evaluation, too, are often ignored despite the fact that information from this part of the idea-to-results process is critical for continuous improvement.
Whether it is a limited point-of-service costing study or a more expansive costing study, the three main ingredients to be included are:

• Desired outcomes;
• The resources (e.g., infrastructure and human capital) needed to achieve the desired outcomes; and
• The financial costs of those resources.

In some instances, it is necessary to estimate costs of intermediate-stage goals such as developing the experience, knowledge, and skills (human capital) of the people tasked with delivering the services. Including the costs of developing the human capital of different providers throughout the system, for instance, is too often ignored leaving policymakers and system stakeholders with less than the desired ECD outcomes because the expected outcomes are beyond the capacity of the providers. But, if the full range of costs is considered, an understanding of program costs becomes another critical piece of information to help policymakers and stakeholders make decisions about program strategy such as whether a program should begin with universal coverage or if the program should be phased in over a

period of time.

Estimating the costs of various program delivery methods and their anticipated benefits helps to inform policymakers of their options, the investments that could be made, and the anticipated outcomes associated with those investments. At the same time, estimating costs is informed by decisions concerning the scale and scope of service delivery to address clearly identified needs and policy goals and objectives. In other words, estimated costs can change as a policy matures, as progress is made towards the stated policy outcomes, and as desired policy outcomes or governance structures change. Estimating costs in a multi-service environment like ECD presents unique challenges because of the multitude of service providers, but these challenges can be overcome through careful analysis and planning.

Dr. SM Moazzem Hossain, Chief of Health & Nutrition for UNICEF Sri Lanka, shared the Marginal Budgeting for Bottlenecks (MBB) tools for results-based planning, costing, and budgeting. Through MBB, stakeholders can estimate the marginal (incremental) costs and benefits of overcoming system bottlenecks. The types of questions to be answered through MBB exercises are:

- What new actions are being considered or what opportunities were missed; what are the desired outcomes?
- For whom (what target population) are the services to be delivered?
- How are these services going to be delivered, including the question, by whom?
- How many additional system resources (infrastructure and human capital, supplies, equipment, training) are needed?
- How much do these additional system resources cost?
- Who pays? How financed?
- How sustainable (program provision and financing/funding)?

When these cost study questions are answered, attention can then turn to decisions about financing (questions of who pays) and funding (how are programs financially resourced).

Section 4: Developing Finance and Funding Policies

Estimated costs and governance decisions, together, provide information to stakeholders to make decisions about financing and funding mechanisms. System financing centers on the fundamental question: where are the financial (and other) resources going to come from to pay for this policy? In other words, who is going to pay for these programs and how? Program funding, on the other hand, asks how individual program providers are to be provided the financial (and other) resources to achieve the desired outcomes. That is, what is the best way to allocate resources within the system so as to achieve the desired outcomes? Both finance and funding decisions are influenced by the same multitude of factors that influence governance decisions.

Finance Policy Within the Idea-to-Results Process

How best to pay and who best to pay for ECD services are questions left with no "right" answers. As with governance, these questions are highly dependent on unique conditions that exist in each country developing its ECD policies. And as with governance, financing

can take many forms. In whatever form they take, successful financing strategies share common characteristics: financial resources are stable and consistent; and they are capable to change (flexibility) as the policies and programs change and mature. These financing characteristics can contribute to achieving long-term program sustainability.

ECD financing in the Solomon Islands is an example of public-public financing partnership given the financial support that comes from the government of New Zealand to support ECD. Financing of ECD is split between the Solomon Islands government (88 percent) and New Zealand (approximately10 percent) through NZAID. The NZAID funding is dedicated to the pre-service training of teachers in the Solomon Islands. The remaining balance of financing comes from NGO partners such as UNICEF and from local provinces, parental fees, and contributions in kind. Officials from the Solomon Islands indicated that the government's financial commitments to ECD have served as an indicator to its financing partners of its policy commitments and have helped to secure larger and longer-term commitments from those partners in a form of matching strategy.

In Indonesia, ECD financing has been the main responsibility of the district level stakeholders with the national and provincial governments playing a subsidizing role to ensure equity (a stated goal). Indonesia's ECD finance policy, to date, has been structured with the belief that governance and finance policies should be in alignment for clearer governance and accountability. That is, because ECD program and service delivery is primarily community based, the financing of those programs and services should be leading to a more connected and participatory set of local stakeholders. For some countries in the region, creating the formal mechanisms necessary to collect financial resources—formal tax collections, for instance—also need to be developed as economies and institutions remain highly informal.

How specifically the financial resources are collected for ECD in the Solomon Islands and Indonesia was not discussed. ECD financing mechanisms, as a whole, remains relatively unknown outside of the individual countries. The sources of financial resources (who is paying and how) are important considerations for policymakers and stakeholders and more work could be done to understand the various ECD financing mechanisms in the region so as to learn from leading practices. Just as the service-delivery aspects of policies and programs can mature and strengthen over time, so, too, can the financing mechanisms in these countries to provide greater opportunities for sustainability.

Funding ECD Programs for Results

Another link in the idea-to-results chain is deciding how ECD programs will be funded. More specifically, the task for stakeholders is to determine funding mechanisms that best help achieve the desired outcomes. And much like governance, funding mechanisms may reflect historical, cultural, political, geographic, and other factors unique to each country. Policymakers and stakeholders should understand that the choice of funding mechanisms could provide a wide range of incentives (intended and unintended) to service providers and service recipients, alike, that could move us closer to the desired outcomes or create obstacles and barriers making the desired outcomes more difficult to achieve.

In the Solomon Islands, for instance, ECD programs are funded and delivered in a highly decentralized system with the Ministry of Education disbursing grants directly to ECD centers and not to the provincial or church educational governments as is done for primary and secondary education. The management of the grant is done by the teacher(s) in the early childhood centers with monitoring done by the Ministry of Education and the early childhood center committee. The choice of direct funding to the early childhood centers

was made to reflect the multi-service nature of ECD and to ensure that all of the funding for ECD would be used for ECD. Increasing the financial management knowledge and skills of early childhood teachers has presented challenges, as many of these teachers have never managed an organizational budget. The choice to decentralize funding in what appears to be a highly centralized financing system is a unique balance, particularly when overall policy governance is also considered.

But, like financing strategies, not well documented are the funding strategies of ECD programs in countries across the region and the effectiveness of different funding strategies to support the achievement of the desired outcomes. That is, it is not clear if early childhood centers are funded on a per-student basis, on fixed-cost basis, or through some other formula. Officials from Mongolia shared their funding strategies where ECD programs are funded on a per-student basis, but are not adjusted for urban or rural location even though officials were able to demonstrate differing programmatic needs in urban, rural, and traditional nomadic settings. In a clear demonstration of the inter-relatedness of all parts of the system, cost estimates, finance and funding strategies should probably be revisited in the design and implementation phases to reflect this better understanding. Though there is understanding of how ECD is funded in Mongolia, the relationship between ECD funding strategies and the achievement of ECD outcomes remains unknown. More work to understand the types of ECD funding mechanisms and their effectiveness could be explored within the countries in the region.

Cost considerations, governance, and financing and funding decisions can all be considered as a set of options early in the policy design and development process and again as the policy is implemented. Monitoring and evaluation of the entire system provides valuable information back to stakeholders regarding how costs might be adjusted, how governance can be strengthened, and how financing and funding can be improved to provide greater sustainability to the system and improve the chances of success in achieving the desired outcomes.

Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

A critical component to creating a continuous learning system is the role of monitoring and evaluation. Figure 1 demonstrates the need to create monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that span the idea-to-results system. Too often, monitoring and evaluation is considered after the design, development, and implementation of the policy has already taken place. A well-designed system would consider monitoring and evaluation at the time of policy design, program development, and implementation. When part of the entire policy process, monitoring and evaluation helps inform stakeholders about the:

- Achievement of ECD policy implementation through the adopted policies and the practices and processes put into place; and
- Progress towards the desired short-term and long-term individual, family, community, and societal outcomes.

Together, these two monitoring and evaluation goals help inform stakeholders about the appropriateness and effectiveness of various policy ideas and designs to achieve the desired outcomes.

Dr. Nirmala Rao (Hong Kong) spoke of her research findings and the emphasis on evidence-based policymaking (a policy idea and design goal) and the need for continuous evaluation to guide ECD policymaking. What she found was that officials are working to conduct evaluations in three broad categories not too different than those identified above: impact evaluations; implementation evaluations; and economic efficiency (i.e., cost-effectiveness) evaluations.

Progress Towards Outcomes: Impact Evaluations

Impact evaluations typically measure progress towards the desired short-term and long-term outcomes envisioned in the policy idea and design (e.g., health, education, protection and security, and economic). Indonesian ECD policymakers utilize a variety of outcome indicators, sometimes in the form of proxy indicators when direct outcomes are difficult to measure. Included are child absences as a proxy indicator for malnutrition, elementary school repetition and school dropout as proxy indicators for school readiness, and breast feeding as a proxy indicator of parent & family capacities.

These formative and summative evaluations and monitoring mechanisms must be aligned to the goals and outcomes set out at the beginning of the policy process, and then to be further aligned to the policy designs and implementation strategies to get meaningful information that can guide continuous improvement.

Economic efficiency evaluations are a natural extension of impact evaluations. Economic efficiency evaluations, in fact, are another demonstration of the inter-relatedness of the ECD system and its components. These types of evaluations bridge monitoring and evaluation with cost estimations and the financing and funding of ECD programs to seek out and then implement those programs that achieve the greatest outcomes for the least cost, often a significant interest of policy stakeholders. Though easy in concept, these two types of monitoring and evaluation require significant planning and careful execution given the complexities associated with linking inputs and processes to outcomes and the need to develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools (see below).

Monitoring and Evaluating ECD Implementation

Several countries at the ECD policy review seminar talked about evaluating and monitoring ECD implementation. Monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation can take two forms: 1) program inputs-oriented evaluations; and 2) policy process-oriented evaluations. Program inputs-oriented evaluations are relatively straightforward in that they typically involve measuring the presence of commonly understood ECD resources (e.g., child-health practitioner ratios, textbooks, classrooms, etc.). In addition, these types of evaluations and monitoring efforts measure standardized program inputs such as the delivery of the national curriculum or the number of ECD caregivers who have received nationally approved training. Less developed and more complex are evaluations investigating the processes associated with implementing ECD policies.

In addition, determining the appropriate measures, particularly in the case of process-oriented evaluations, is often country and ECD system specific. For instance, trying to answer the questions about how participatory governance systems are depends on both design and implementation and the values and interests that went into the policy development process. Development of appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods to measure the extent to which the policy implementation and the ECD system's governance follow the legal

frameworks (formal and informal governance) and the extent to which fidelity to the adopted policy has impact on the desired outcomes remains a difficult challenge.

Careful planning and considering the types of information needed to make continuing decisions about the design and implementation of ECD policy will help to determine the types of monitoring and evaluation strategies to pursue, including the measurement tools to be developed and the resources needed to effectively carry out monitoring and evaluation activities. Too often, monitoring and evaluation is considered an after-thought in the idea-to-results process resulting in incomplete and insufficient information to guide the policy process because of haphazard evaluations and/or insufficient resources, a result that leaves the system short of being able to pursue continuous improvement.

Developing Appropriate Monitoring and Evaluation Tools

Section 2 highlighted some of the interactions between stakeholders' interests associated with the cultural, ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity that exist within countries in the Asia-Pacific region, identified ECD needs through initial needs assessments, and the design and implementation decisions including decisions about system governance. All of these decisions have a direct effect on the types of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and methods overlaying the entire ECD system. Malaysian officials articulated the tight relationship between governance and monitoring, that the types of monitoring mechanisms should be appropriate to the governance and overall policy structure in place.

Countries in the region talked about the process associated with creating and adopting national early childhood learning program frameworks, standards, and guidelines (including curriculum) in the presence of diverse service recipients and stakeholder interests. Some of those interests included the desire for a decentralized service delivery model. Some of these standards and guidelines might be universal across regions within countries and across countries in the region while some will be unique to specific countries, provinces, and populations.

The specific methods and tools used to measure progress against those standards and guidelines will need to be developed to ensure validity and reliability just as Australian Early Developmental Index was modified from a tool initially developed in Canada so that the measures were appropriate for Australia, a modification that took several years to accomplish. As a way of measuring early childhood learning and development outcomes, Chinese stakeholders have been engaged in development of outcome measures (called Early Learning and Development Guidelines) associated with national curriculum guidelines that have been in place since 2005. The guidelines and measurement tools associated with those guidelines continue through a content and age validation process begun in 2007 and running through 2009 to be followed by predictive validation process.

As the Australian and Chinese experiences demonstrate, the set of desired ECD outcomes may be similar across countries where similar measurement tools can be considered. However, time and energy must be invested to ensure valid and reliable measurement specific to each country and the varying characteristics that exist within each country. In a highly decentralized ECD system where the vision and outcomes are left to provincial or local communities, stakeholders must recognize the need to develop appropriate measurement tools and methodologies to accompany those locally developed systems.

Complexities: Disentangling Effects

ECD policy experts from across the region shared their experiences with the complexities associated with monitoring and evaluation across the system. Each evaluation purpose requires the development of specific evaluation strategies and methods, such as whether the evaluation should be quantitative or qualitative in nature. Put another way, there must be alignment of evaluation methods to the goals of the evaluation and how the information from the evaluation is to be used by stakeholders.

Whether the ECD evaluations attempt to measure achievement towards the desired outcomes (impact evaluations) or attempt to monitor implementation, the very nature of high-quality early childhood development creates complexities in monitoring and evaluating across the system. In a simple system, a single service provider provides a single service to achieve a single outcome. High-quality ECD, however, typically has multiple service providers providing many different types of service with the goal of achieving several short-term and long-term outcomes. Trying to disentangle the effectiveness of various program parts or the quality of implementation becomes extremely difficult when monitoring and evaluation is considered after the policy has already been implemented—as is often the case—as opposed to being a part of the policy design stage. This creates difficulty in trying to understand the link between policy design and implementation to the observed outcomes.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Stakeholders interested in achieving the desired short-term and long-term outcomes envisioned at the outset of the policy process pursue the creation of a system of continuous improvement. These stakeholders improve the chances of success by paying attention to every aspect of the system whereby too many policies are assumed to be self-guiding and self-executing once the policy is moved quickly from idea to adoption. Too often, details are overlooked in designing effective policy processes leading to ineffective implementation. And, unfortunately, monitoring and evaluation strategies are after-thoughts in the policy process. Successful policies understand that each link in the idea-to-results process is critical and by overlooking any part of the system greatly increases the chances of policy failure. ECD policies are no different.

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region shared their experiences with the idea-to-results process in ECD at the regional policy review seminar in Singapore. While some countries in the Asia-Pacific region are in the ECD policy idea, design, and adoption phases, other countries are in the implementation phases. Their experiences with developing measurable outcomes and conducting needs assessments early in the policy process have helped guide the next phase of policy direction and design. Included in the policy design phase are decisions concerning the services to be provided, how that system is to be governed, the estimated costs associated with achieving those outcomes, and establishing consistent and reliable financing of that system while creating innovative yet stable funding mechanisms.

Whether ECD policy is in its pre-implementation phases or has been adopted and is in some stage of implementation, several countries in the region have developed reliable monitoring

and evaluation of the entire system including the structures, policies, practices, and processes put in place to develop and deliver ECD services. Monitoring and evaluation is critical to creating a "learning system" with feedback mechanisms to stakeholders to understand progress being made and information necessary to make necessary adjustments.

In pursuit of continuous improvement, policymakers see governance, cost estimation, finance and funding, and monitoring/evaluation as inter-related system components in the idea-to-results process. Each component is dependent on the design and implementation of other policy components while simultaneously providing important information to the design and implementation of the other components. As ECD policy develops and matures in each country, these policy components must be revisited alongside the goals and objectives on a continuous basis so as to maintain policy direction and coherence leading to effective implementation.

Possible Next Steps

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region should be commended for their continuing efforts to develop high-quality ECD policies. Their experiences with the different phases of the idea-to-results framework are a tremendous resource to other countries in the region and beyond. The Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), as a growing network of countries in the region, provides a unique opportunity for ECD stakeholders to learn from and build on the policy successes of others while also learning from those experiences to avoid policy pitfalls. ARNEC can serve as a clearinghouse for information and technical expertise while also providing technical assistance throughout the idea-to-results process. For instance, ARNEC might provide technical assistance in:

• Assisting stakeholders in identifying measurable outcomes, goals, and objectives of the ECD system;
• Identifying ECD policy strategies associated with those outcomes;
• Coordinating cross-country technical exchanges;
• Developing or sharing early learning development monitoring and evaluation tools, process documents, and reporting mechanisms; and
• Assisting with policy design and implementation development in areas such as governance, cost estimation, and financing and funding strategies.

Of particular need in the region is to engage ECD stakeholders to more-fully develop process-oriented evaluations, an area not well understood, but critical to creating learning systems. ARNEC might also provide monitoring and evaluation services for the region measuring commonly accepted ECD indicators and outcomes acknowledged from the research literature to understand the developmental, health, education, and protection needs across the region while providing individual country stakeholders an understanding of their needs in relation to those in other countries in the region. In addition to providing regional and country snapshot information, consistent monitoring would also demonstrate the progress and successes across the region and identify those countries making significant progress from which others might learn.

Regional monitoring might also include appropriate input-oriented and process-oriented measures again consistent with the research literature. Examples of this type of monitoring would be the existence of ECD teacher or ECD program standards in a country and how they measure up to what is suggested in the research literature (input-oriented monitoring) while also monitoring the coherence of developing and training quality ECD service providers

(process-oriented monitoring) across ministries.

The various monitoring activities ARNEC can provide across the region are particularly helpful in understanding the multi-needs, multi-service nature of early childhood development policies. While much has been accomplished in the Asia-Pacific region on the early childhood development front, a great deal more work needs to be done to deliver the types of ECD policies and programs that go beyond education.

As countries in the region continue along the ECD idea-to-results journey, concerted efforts must be made by ECD stakeholders to consider all parts of the system to increase the chances of realizing the envisioned outcomes for children, their families, and the communities that they live in. The network of experiences and expertise that exists in ARNEC has the potential to help all of the countries in the region to realize their goals.

Photo credit: © Singapore MFA

Ms. Marine Sukhudyan, Program Coordinator with the Consultative Group on ECCD, and Ms. Natalia Mufel, ECD Specialist with UNICEF Cambodia, during the seminar's coffee break

The seminar's two keynote speakers, Dr. Pia Rebello Britto with Yale University, and Dr. Frank Oberklaid with the Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Australia

The seminar's keynote speaker, Mr. Jack Hailey, from the California State Senate, speaking to a participant at the seminar

Participants from Brunei Darussalam at the seminar

CONCEPT NOTE

Sustainable National Policies for ECD

Pia Rebello Britto & Jan van Ravens
Yale University
December, 2009

Background

The field of early childhood (ECD) has cogently demonstrated that the early years are precious; not only with respect to subjective or poetic interpretations, ratherover the past decade, several fields of study have demonstrated its value. Research across disciplines has synergistically concluded that during early childhood, children make tremendous strides in development; that investing early is leads to high returns; and that high quality programs have a lasting impact (Engle, Black, Behrman et al, 2007; Grantham-McGregor, Cheung, Cueto, & the International Child Development Steering Group, 2007; Heckman & Krueger, 2003; Irwin, Siddqui, & Hertzman, 2007; McCartney & Phillips, 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Walker, Wachs, Meeks, & the International Child Development Steering Group, 2007). Despite this strong evidentiary base, young children in the majority world still bear the greatest burden of poverty, disease, violence and concomitant factors. Outcomes for the youngest in the developing world, and in some instances in the more industrialized countries, are unacceptably abysmal. Daunting statistics paint a bleak future for young children, which is particularly unfortunate given the strong evidence in favor of ameliorating such circumstances and concomitant impact on children. There is an urgent need to apply knowledge and evidence to policies to improve the lives and uphold the rights of children.

The time has come to build on this evidentiary body of knowledge by working towards the next generation of questions that take us from knowing to acting. These 2nd generation questions seek to ensure that ECD programs and policies, and hence children, benefit fully from our enhanced scientific knowledge base. In particular, mechanisms are needed to apply science in order to create **Sustainable National Policies (SNPs)** for ECD.

1. What is the Definition of a National Sustainable Policy?

Currently, there is a growing momentum in countries to enhance ECD. Governments, NGO-providers, civil society, and donors are keen to advance this area (UNESCO, 2007). Several countries are interested in employing systematic processes to develop strong and coherent *sustainable national* policies.

In this section, we briefly define the terms ECD policy framework, national policy, and sustainable policy. Depending on the disciplinary and/or sectoral perspectives this often used policy nomenclature holds multiple connotations.

ECD Policy Framework is defined as a set of social policies with a particular focus on children (prenatal to 8 or 9 years of age), supported by a publicly funded institution (e.g., government) while addressing early childhood. An ECD policy framework is also aligned with other national policies via shared goals. The ECD policy framework fills the gaps by providing directives for areas not covered by existing policies, yet evidentially known to be important for children's development.

Figure 1. ECD Policy Framework
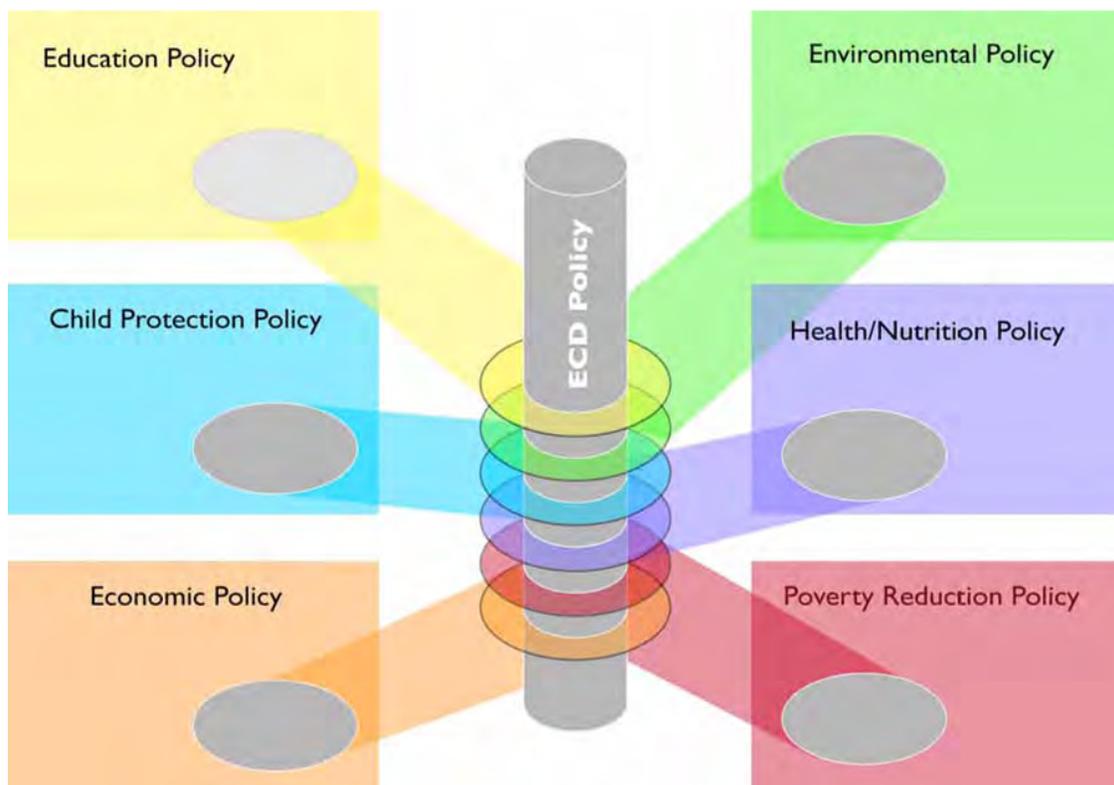
Britto, P.R., Cerezo, A., & Ogbunugafor, B. (2008)

National Policy is defined as, but not limited to, an encompassing policy that pays attention to all critical elements of ECD for the country in a coherent way. It is also understood that the provision of ECD services, at national levels often remain diverse and under the jurisdiction of a variety of sectors. The national character of the policy is reflected in the stipulation of policy directives that respond to the national need, in the inclusion of national values, with attention to minority perspectives and those of vulnerable populations. The imperative of national policies is to ensure access & equity while maintaining quality across the diverse and disparate regions of the country.

Sustainable Policies are conceptualized along 4 dimensions: Socially sustainable means that the policy is owned and easily implementable by parents, communities, and civil society. Politically sustainable means that there is no risk that the provision is jeopardized once a new coalition takes power. Financially sustainable means that funding is secured, even if it has to rely changes in funding sources over time. Capacity sustainability refers to the technical capacity in the country to implement the policy.

National Sustainable policies are characterized by 4 components and 2 underlying processes (See Figure 2). The components of the policy are: Vision and goals; activities and strategies; governance; and finance. These components are all linked and developed in aligned with each other. The processes that are important to create these four components are evidence and participation. Hence you see in Figure 2, National and Sustainable are the characteristics of the policy, with 4 major components. The pencils connote process, and it is the evidence and participation jointly the lead to policy planning and implementation. The components and processes are described in detail below.

Figure 2. Components and Processes of National Sustainable Policies.
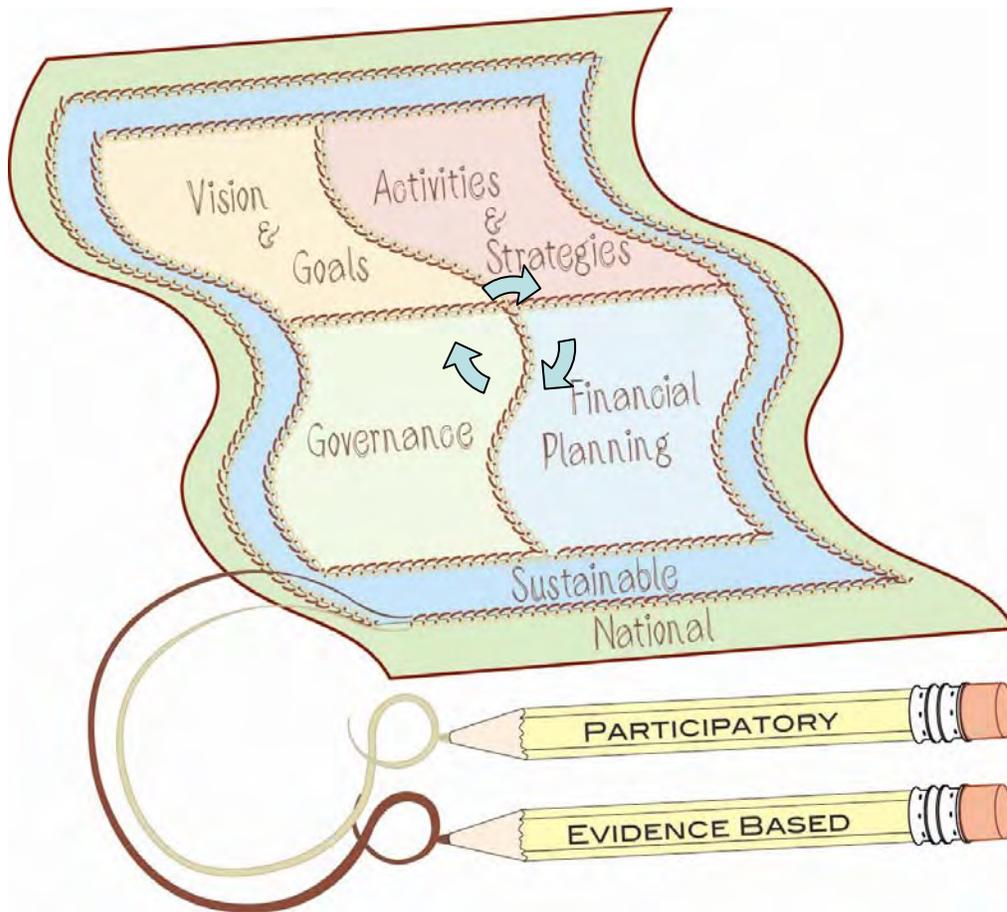
2. What are the Components of National Sustainable Policies?

In order to build a framework for the development of SNPs, it is imperative to understand the components of the framework and the type of evidence required to inform each of the components. While the literature provides several frameworks for conceptualizing policies and policy components, we propose four major components for an ECD policy framework: vision and goals; programs and strategies; governance and management; and financial planning and implementation (Britto, Cerezo, & Ogbunugafor, 2008; Britto & Ulkuer, 2007; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Jolly, 2007; Kamerman, et. al., 2003; OECD, 2001; UNESCO, 2007; Vagas-Baron, 2005).

The components of the framework are created in accordance with specific criteria and in response to a basic set of guiding questions.

The criteria for the framework are: i) demonstrate the rationale for the development of the framework, ii) capture the values and ideology, and iii) comprehensively cover the scope of ECD issues.

The <u>questions guiding</u> the framework components are: a) what does the policy aspire to achieve?, b) how will these aspirations be achieved? c) who will be responsible to carrying out the tasks towards the achievement?, and d) what is the financial and human resource capacity to achieve these aspiration?[1]

Component 1 - Vision and Goals. The vision is an articulation of what the policy framework hopes to achieve. The vision is the broadest level of aspiration stated in the policy. The goals are aspects of the vision which can be reflected at multiple levels: population (children and families), programs and services, and alignment with other national polices and international goals. The goals provide the direction for the programs and strategies while also setting the targets to be achieved by the policy. The targets, measured by a series of indicators are the monitoring aspect of the policy framework.

Component 2 – Activities. This 2nd component is designed to respond to the question of how will the policy vision and goals be achieved. Typically, policy directives, tools, programs and strategies are listed under policy activities. *Programs and Strategies* refer to the multiple ways in which ECD is implemented, which is often complex given that programs for children are distributed across multiple sectors. Also, the stages of early childhood differ in need, risks and opportunities for promoting development. Therefore, the activities of the framework, while adhering to the vision incorporate the variety of approaches involved in programming across the ECD age spectrum.

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[1] A common aspect that should be included in all 4 components is that of monitoring. Monitoring systems provide important information on the implementation and oversight of the policy. Albeit this component is not described in detail in the framework, and typically addressed in the strategic plan, nonetheless it is important to both include mention of it in the framework and acknowledge its important for policy effectiveness measurement. To the end, the vision and goals component, should present the monitoring indicators that align with the policy goals. The activities component should contain a series of indicators that could be used to measure the implementation of the activities. Indicators that comprise the governance component should measure the degree to which the relevant stakeholders and partners fulfill their responsibilities with respect to accountabilities and the financial component monitoring system should measure if the estimated the costs and expenditures of the policy are validated and if funding is obtained and distributed with fidelity to the policy.

Figure 2
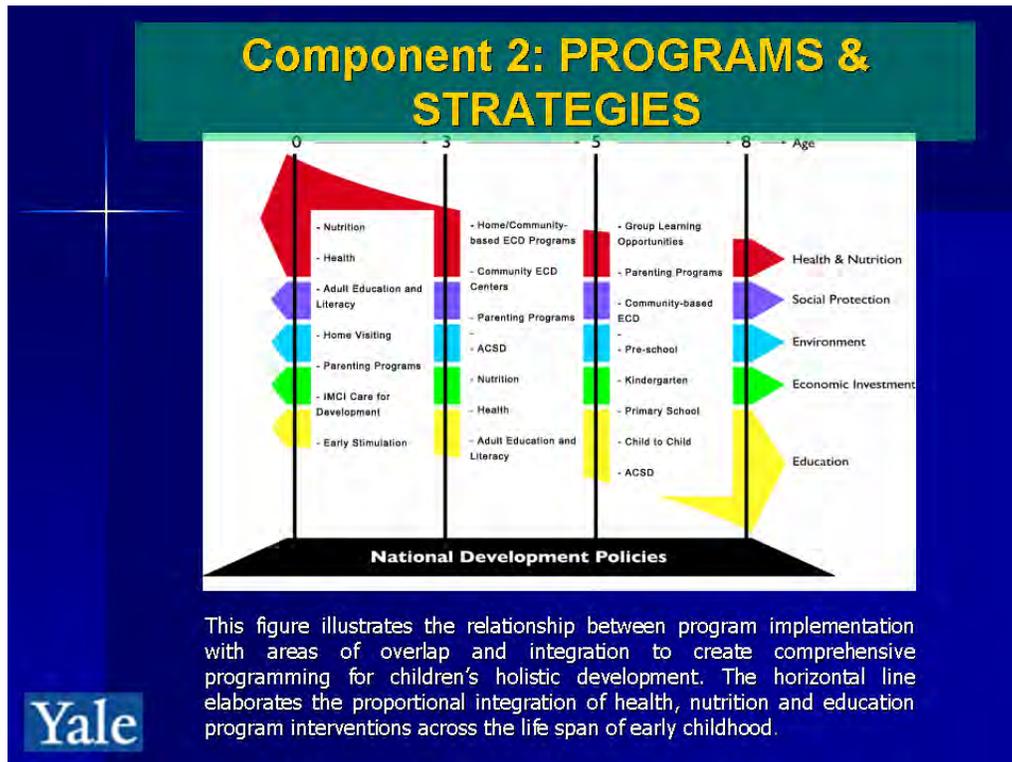
Component 3 – Governance. This component captures who will be responsible in the differing capacities to achieve the vision of the policy. Governance lays out the roles and responsibilities of the different parties, at the levels of government, partners, communities and civil society. The roles include, but are not limited to, planning, coordination, implementation, finance, and evaluation. The governance component of the policy is often measured with respect to the accountabilities of roles and responsibilities.

Component 4 - Financial Planning. Critical to policy implementation is the consideration to how much will it cost to achieve the goals and how will the activities get funded. Without careful costing and allocation of resources, the sustainability and effectiveness of a policy is limited and at best, circumspect. Often policies fail to meet their vision because of inadequate financial allocations and unrealistic planning for revenue generation.

3. Processes for Developing National Sustainable ECD Policies

The process for policy development is defined by 2 critical features, as determined by the literature on social policy development: evidence-based; and participatory.

Evidence Based Policy. Notwithstanding the multiple influences on policy such as ideology, institutions, infrastructure, interest and lobby groups (Weiss, 1995), the era of evidence-based policy has arrived (Huston, 2008). No longer are policies based on opinions accepted *carte blanche*. Over the past decade we have noted a phenomenal growth in the body of evidence on early childhood and social policy, not just as single disciplines, but also interdisciplinary. Given the hybridization of knowledge, increase in monitoring evidence and data access, we are not able to move to the 2nd generation of questions that focus on how knowledge can be applied to policy. The four components of the policy framework draw upon that knowledge base and work through the questions of applying information and evidence to their development and implementation. require an amalgamation and understanding of different bodies of evidence in order to fully inform their development.

- The *Vision and Goals* of the framework require a strong knowledge of the national policy landscape of the country and of the science of holistic child development. These two bodies of information are then culled together to discern if currently existing policies are meeting the rights and needs of **_all_** young children in order to enable them to develop to their full developmental potential.

- The *Programs and Strategies* require an understanding of currently existing programs, strategies and tools. Also imperative to this component is knowledge of evidence on effective program strategies that directly or indirectly have improved the lives of young children. Within the country, it is important to know which programs have had strong results and in general what types of programs, strategies, and tools work best under what circumstances so as to generate recommendations for action towards improving child outcomes.

- *Governance* of policies calls upon another body of evidence and knowledge. Typically the responsibility for young child survival and development is split among national agencies and across sectors. Therefore, governance and management of the policy requires knowledge of key actors in ECD and their roles and responsibilities.

- The critical element of sustainability is the *Financial Planning and Implementation* component of the policy. For this component, evidence on cost calculations and the formula for estimating the long term investment in strategies and programs is required. The basis of the

costing component is culled from the knowledge on costing and financing policies, which requires information on how public (and private, in partnership) funding can be allocated to ECD policies.

Participatory. The policy development process is often lengthy and complex (Babajanova, 2006; Evans, Myers, & Ilfeld, 2000; Myers, 1995 Pence, 2004. Most models emphasize a participatory process for policy planning to include both governmental institutions and civil society, calling for broad stakeholder involvement to promote public support (Addison, 2006; Vargas-Baron, 2005). Further elaborated in this process is the type and nature of participation, which varies depending on the components being developed.

- The *Vision and Goals* of the framework require the participation of several key groups of stakeholders. First, families and communities who truly have a vision for early childhood and what they would like their children to be know and able to do. Communities have a keen sense of what they should provide for children and families. Leaders at sub-national and national level are able to provide the vision and guidance for a national policy. Involvement of representation from these different groups will not only ensure a national vision for the policy but also ownership and sustainability.

- As stated earlier *Programs and Strategies* require an understanding of currently existing programs, strategies and tools. Therefore it is important to involve those who oversee and implement programs for children and families across the sectors. These should also include major NGO partners, private sector, foundations and other groups who are involved in programming and services for children.

- *Governance* for early childhood policies requires intersectoral collaboration given that ECD issues are typically split among national agencies and across sectors. The participation for detailing the governance functions of the policy should involve all relevant decision makers from key sectors at national and sub-national levels.

- The *Financial Planning* component of the policy calls upon very detailed and technical information. Therefore it is important to involve and include the participation of individuals from sectors who are knowledgeable about the costing of the programs and sources of funding. In addition to understanding revenue generation, this component also describe revenue allocation, to that end, individuals who are provide information on how funding should be allocated to programs should participate.

In summary, the ECD policy framework is a social policy with a particular focus on ECD while being aligned with other national policies via shared goals. The framework most be supported by the government. The purpose of the framework to fill the gaps in current service provision for young children and their families by

providing directives for areas not covered by existing policies, yet evidentially known to be important for children's development. The framework is characterized by national relevance and social, financial, political and human capacity sustainability. The core components of the framework are the vision, the activities, the governance and the financial planning and implementation. The processes that are important to acknowledge for framework development are the reliance on evidence and participation of multiple sectors, level of government and key stakeholders.

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Regional Early Childhood Development Policy Review Seminar

"Sustainable Policies for Early Childhood Development"

Sponsored by the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNICEF EAPRO
and
Organised by ARNEC and the SEED Institute

on 1-2 December 2009

at AMARA Hotel, Singapore

1. Background :

During 2006-2008, UNESCO Asia Pacific Regional Bureau for Education and UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office jointly supported a regional policy review exercise on early childhood. This regional project launched in September 2006 aimed to support countries in the Asia-Pacific region in meeting the first goal of Education for All (EFA) on Early Childhood Care and Education by identifying, documenting and sharing good practices as well as constraints and challenges in early childhood policy development and implementation. Eight countries have joined this initiative and undertaken the policy review; namely, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

The initiative placed particular emphasis on building national capacities among personnel of government and technical institutions in conducting policy review and development. Therefore, the process of sharing across countries and learning from experience were given a lot of value. The concrete output of this 1 ½ year initiative was a series of national early childhood policy review reports. An unintended major outcome from the whole process was the creation of a regional professional network on early childhood, namely the Asia-Pacific Regional Network on Early Childhood (ARNEC[1]), which was formally launched in February 2008.

In November 2008, a Southeast Asia policy review seminar was held in Malaysia to disseminate findings and review process from the aforementioned policy review exercise in the sub-region including some additional countries, namely, Cambodia, Singapore, and Timor Leste. ARNEC joined the UNICEF and UNESCO in this effort. In May 2009, SEED Institute (formerly RTRC Asia) of Singapore was selected to become the host of ARNEC and the Secretariat will be shifted from Bangkok, Thailand to Singapore by November 2009.

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[1] ARNEC is a professional network established to build strong partnerships in early childhood across sectors and different disciplines in the Asia-Pacific region. ARNEC covers a wide geographical area from East and Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Pacific, totaling 47 countries. Its mission is to strengthen advocacy, policy reviews and development, research and innovative practices in early childhood at national and regional levels with the goals to align these to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to ensure that all children in the region will achieve optimal holistic development.

The proposed regional 2009 Early Childhood Policy Seminar is part of the ongoing efforts in Asia-Pacific region and will keep up the momentum in national policy improvements in early childhood while further expanding partnerships and peer learning and exchange between countries in the region. At the same time, this seminar will serve to commemorate ARNEC Secretariat being housed in Singapore.

2. Theme and objectives of Policy Seminar

While policy development garners major attention in the policy process, policy planning and implementation are often compromised. However it is that latter those are vital for the effective execution of policies. The aspects most impinging policy implementation are costing and finance and governance. Costing and finance provides critical input for sustainability and governance for effective policy directives and strategies. During the policy review exercise and in the National EFA Mid-Decade Assessment reports lack of funding and/or budget planning to implement policies was highlighted by all the countries as a gap area that needed strengthening. It is critical for countries to increase public investments in early childhood programmes, especially in improving access to quality services for the most disadvantaged and have solid finance planning (i.e. costing and funding) and strong governance in place in making policies that are effective and implementable.

The key focus of this policy review seminar will be on the links between ECD Policy, Costing & Financing and governance as imperative for effective and sustainable policy planning and implementation. The seminar will provide learning opportunities for country teams and individual ECD experts on the critical theme by introducing practical policy planning and measuring tools with country experiences in applying these. There will also be a panel presentation where countries can present their draft and/or newly finalised ECD policies with opportunity for peer review and support.

The specific objectives of the seminar are as follows:
1. Share knowledge and orient participants with the concept of Sustainable ECD policy framework, especially the areas of finance (i.e. costing and funding) & governance
2. Introduce practical tools that guide policy planning and measure policy effectiveness that are being used by some countries in the region
3. Provide opportunities for countries to share their draft or newly developed ECD policies for peer review and support
4. Launch the ARNEC's new Secretariat base in the SEED Institute in Singapore and introduce ARNEC and its activities to the wider audiences and future members

3. Regional Seminar Agenda:

Expected outputs:
- Knowledge on sustainable ECD policy frameworks and how costing and financing and governance relate to the broader policy making and implementation

- Technical familiarity with processes and tools to guide policy planning and measure its effectiveness
- Concrete technical inputs on draft national policies that have been shared for peer review
- Knowledge gained on emerging national and sub-regional issues and trends in early childhood policies
- ARNEC mission and its activities widely known and potential regional-level policy and advocacy themes identified for follow up in the next few years

Day 1: Tuesday, 1 December	
8.30 – 9.15	Registration

9.30 – 10.00	Welcome address : Chan Tee Seng , Director SEED Institute
	
	Opening Remarks :
	    1. UNICEF EAPRO: Dr. Festo Kavishe, Deputy Regional Director
	    2. Guest of Honour : Mrs. Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Singapore)

10.00 – 10.15	Signing ceremony: Launch of the new ARNEC Secretariat base Group Photos
10.15 -10.45	Tea Break
10.45– 11.15	Regional efforts in advancing ECD: Overview of ARNEC& ECD situation in Asia and the Pacific (ARNEC)
11.15 – 12.00	Key Note: Creating sustainable national policies for ECD (Dr. Pia Britto, Yale University)
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch

13.00 – 14.00	Strengthening ECD policies (1): Governance
	
	- Plenary
	    Country presentations
	      1. Thailand, 2. Malaysia, 3. Lao PDR

14.00 – 15.00	(Cont'd) *Strengthening ECD policies (1): Governance* - Parallel Working Groups - Sharing and peer review of ECD policies focusing on the governance aspect of the policies using hands on tools for analysis and recommendations

15.00 – 15.15	Tea Break
15.15 – 15.55	(Cont'd) *Strengthening ECD policies (1): Governance* - Plenary: Reporting back & Drawing on the peer recommendations
15.55 – 17.10	(Cont'd) *Strengthening ECD policies (1): Governance* Coordination among Sectors: Closer link with Health and Nutrition for Holistic ECD Panel discussion: Country presentations: 1. Cambodia. 2. Sri Lanka Agencies perspectives - Dr. Basil Rodrigues, Regional Health Advisor, UNICEF EAPRO - Dr. Rajesh Mehta, National Professional Officer, Family and Child Health, WHO India - Ms. Mohimi Venkatesh, School Health and Nutrition Specialist, Save the Children
17.10 – 17.20	Wrap up and closing of Day 1

Day 2: Wednesday, 2 December	
8.30 – 10.00	Strengthening ECD policies (2): Finance - The Role of ECD Costing & Financing Research in Informing National Policy: Case of Indonesia (Ibu Nina, Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Cultural Affair, State Ministry of National Development Planning**,** Indonesia) - Early Childhood Education Finance: Mr. Jack Hailey, California State Senate, Committee on Human Services, California USA - Impact of the Economic Crisis on Early Childhood Development in Asia and the Pacific: Dr. Cliff Meyers, Regional Education Advisor, UNICEF EAPRO
10.00 – 10.15	Tea Break

10.15 – 10.45	(Cont'd) *Strengthening ECD policies (2): Finance*
	
	- Plenary
	    Country presentations
	        1. Mongolia, 2. Solomon Islands

10.45 – 11.30	(Cont'd) *Strengthening ECD policies (2): Finance* - Parallel Working Groups - Sharing and peer review of ECD policies focusing on the finance aspect of the policies using hands on tools for analysis and recommendations
11.30 – 12.15	(Cont'd) *Strengthening ECD policies (2): Finance* - Plenary: Reporting back & Drawing on the peer recommendations
12.15 – 13.15	Lunch
13.15 – 14.30	Strengthening ECD policies (3): Monitoring effectiveness of ECD policy efforts - Use of a school entry population tool – the Australian Early Developmental Index – to measure ECD, as well as to inform policy development and service planning (Professor. Frank Oberklaid, Director, Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, University of Melbourne, Australia) - Developing child outcomes measures for policy and planning: The case of East Asia and Pacific (Ms. Junko Miyahara, UNICEF EAPRO) - Observations from developing Early Learning and Development Guidelines in China (Professor Xin Zhou, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China) - Choosing between different outcome measures for monitoring and evaluating ECD policy efforts in the Asian context. (Prof. Nirmala Rao, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong)

14.30 – 15.00	(Cont'd) *Strengthening ECD policies (3): Monitoring*
	
	- Plenary
	    Country presentations
	      1. Singapore, 2. Philippines

15.00 – 15.35	(Cont'd) *Strengthening ECD policies (3):Monitoring* - Parallel Working Groups - Sharing and peer review of ECD policies focusing on the monitoring aspect of the policies using hands on tools for analysis and

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	recommendations
15.35 – 15.50	Tea Break
15.50 – 16.30	*(Cont'd)* : *Strengthening ECD policies (3): Monitoring* - Plenary: Reporting back & Drawing on the peer recommendations
16.30 – 17.00	Ways forward and Recommendations - Regional level activities & support
17.00 – 17.15	Closure and Evaluation

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