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Kingston Cluster Office for the Caribbean

The World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education:

Response Opportunities and Challenges for the Caribbean Action Agenda

An Early Childhood Policy Brief

**The World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education:
Response Opportunities and Challenges for the Caribbean Action Agenda**

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	v
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	vii
Policy Brief: The World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education: Response Opportunities and Challenges for the Caribbean Action Agenda.....	8
 Appendices	
A. Executive Summary: ECCE in the Caribbean Community: Report prepared for the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE) MOSCOW, September 2010	18
B. Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation Harnessing the Wealth of Nations.....	22

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
COHSOD	Council on Human and Social Development
CPOA	Caribbean Plan of Action for Education, Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education For All
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
NCTVET	National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PATH	Programme of Advancement through Health and Education
PPC	Parenting Partners Caribbean
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
WCECCE	World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education

Policy Brief
**The World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education:
Response Opportunities and Challenges for the Caribbean Action Agenda**

INTRODUCTION

The World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE) was organised by UNESCO and held in Moscow in September 2010. It was attended by ministers and vice-ministers from 67 countries and participants from 101 UNESCO member states, along with representatives from UN agencies, development agencies, civil society, and subject experts. It culminated in agreement on the *Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation: Harnessing the Wealth of Nations* (hereafter, Moscow Framework) which calls on ALL governments to mobilize stronger commitment to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE); to reinforce effective ECCE programme delivery; to harness resources for ECCE; and to encourage mutual cooperation and exchange.

This Policy Brief examines the opportunities and challenges of implementing the *Moscow Framework* within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), given the existing regional context in ECCE. It presents an Action Agenda for the region which capitalises on the opportunities and proposes approaches for overcoming the challenges; identifies linkages with existing national and regional/sub-regional policy and planning frameworks for ECCE; and makes recommendations for government policy makers to support same.

RATIONALE

The lines of action agreed to in Moscow were in response to the specific issues, challenges and critical development trends identified during the Regional consultations that preceded the Conference and the Special reports that were prepared for the Conference. One of these Special reports was done for the CARICOM region¹.

These actions are intended to harness the benefits of ECCE for all countries, given the broad consensus that ECCE is the main foundation for holistic human development, is instrumental in poverty eradication and is a critical stage to seed foundation for sustainable development².

Investment in these early years is a powerful economic strategy, with returns over the life course many times the size of the original expenditure³. Recent studies of early childhood investments done in line with the basic principles of neuroscience indicate that providing supportive conditions for early childhood development is more cost-effective than attempting to address the consequences of early stress and adversity later on⁴.

The evidence also indicates that that the provision of a high quality early childhood environment enhances the quality of a society's human capital by promoting individuals' competencies and skills for participating in civil society and the workforce⁵. Research in many parts of the world has found a direct link between poor early childhood development experiences in children and later involvement in crime, low paid employment and recurring poverty⁶.

¹ The information in this Policy Brief is based on the Regional Report titled "ECCE in the Caribbean Community"

² *Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation: Harnessing the Wealth of Nations*

³ Hertzman, 2010

⁴ Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron & Shonkoff, 2006

⁵ Ibid

⁶ *Scientific Evidence For The Importance Of Supporting Development Of Children 0-3 Years. Maureen Samms-Vaughan, Presentation to Regional Forum On Birth To Three, St. Vincent, June 2011*

MOBILIZATION OF STRONGER COMMITMENT TO ECCE

The *Moscow Framework* sees commitment to ECCE as being expressed through the existence of appropriate legislation, policies and strategies; provision of access particularly targeting the most disadvantaged and vulnerable; and through the availability of mechanisms that facilitate ongoing monitoring and evaluation of ECCE programmes to guide sound policies through the provision of reliable, relevant and timely disaggregated data for informed decision making.

Based on these criteria, the CARICOM region has not demonstrated a strong commitment to ECCE thus placing the children of the region and the developmental potential of the region at risk.

Existence of Appropriate Legislation, Policies and Strategies

The CARICOM Secretariat has taken the lead in encouraging countries to implement appropriate legislation, policies and strategies and has collaborated with partners on a number of shared initiatives at the regional level. This includes, *inter alia*, the convening of a CARICOM Caribbean Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy Forum in 2006 which sensitized policy makers to the importance of investment in ECD and the extent to which the success of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy depended on the adequate development of human resources, starting with the region's youngest citizens. The CARICOM Secretariat also led a regional process for developing the CARICOM ECD Minimum Service Standard and regional guidelines for developing policy, regulation and standards at national level. This Minimum Service Standard was adopted by the Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in 2008 and is being used by countries to guide their policy development processes.

Across the region, 72% of the countries (13 of 18 reporting countries) reported having either formally approved, or draft, policy frameworks for maternal and child health.

Thirteen countries have reported formal policies⁷ being developed for early childhood care and education, with ten of these still in draft awaiting approval and ten of the eleven legal frameworks that have been developed for early childhood care and education are in draft awaiting approval. It is also significant to note the relative absence of institutional and legal frameworks that included early stimulation⁸ - five (5) countries; developmental monitoring - seven (7) countries; and parental and family supports⁹ - six (6) countries.

⁷ Since the WCECCE, a few more policies have been developed (in draft in Haiti, Guyana and Belize; approved in Montserrat) in keeping with the regional commitment to develop policies in all countries.

⁸ Early Stimulation Programmes, Services and Interventions are provided to parents and children in poor and vulnerable communities, usually on a prioritised basis, and include home visiting (such as the roving caregivers programme), parenting support in the home, or clinic based interventions to encourage parent child interaction.

⁹ Parental and family support services include parenting programmes provided on a group basis (that is, different from home visiting, one-to-one support for parents) for parents either as part of national programmes, or as a community based or school/centre based programmes in parenting education or support.

There is a critical need therefore for these policies and legal frameworks to be approved and implemented. This was agreed to at the 20th CARICOM Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in October 2010, and should receive priority attention from all governments. Implementation will require strategies to respond to the challenges that have been identified including:

- Resistance to formalisation of sector from existing operators;
- Limited human resource capacity;
- Financial constraints on the part of government and operators;
- Over-burdened legal departments, which created extended delays in the preparation of legal documentation for parliament;
- Poor inter-ministerial coordination; and
- Lack of political will.

Action Point #1: All governments to approve outstanding policy/plans of action and legal frameworks as agreed to at the 20th COHSOD.

Provision of Access Particularly Targeting the Most Disadvantaged and Vulnerable

Universal access to ECCE remains a challenge which must be addressed as significant portions of the early childhood cohorts are not exposed to structured early childhood programming. While the region, for the most part, enjoys very good access to maternal and child health care, with low maternal mortality rates, low infant mortality rates and high immunisation rates, major gaps exist in the provision of early stimulation, development monitoring and early intervention, and early childhood education.

Early Stimulation

Early stimulation of children traditionally takes place in the home and, in the case of working parents who do not have anyone at home to look after their children, also in day care services. Unstimulating environments are a major risk factor for poor development. Regional research¹⁰ has demonstrated that early childhood stimulation programmes have positive economic, cognitive and social outcomes, and the home-visiting approach with both parent and child focus has sustained benefits. Parenting knowledge and practices are supported to do age appropriate activities, facilitate language development, encourage child learning and self-discipline and encourage healthy and responsive feeding. Early stimulation programmes are limited to a few communities in seven (7)¹¹ countries in the region. It is integrated into the parenting education being supported by Parenting Partners Caribbean. Access to day care services is very limited throughout the region.

Action Point #2: Governments must place emphasis on educating parents on the importance and practice of early stimulation, especially targeting the most vulnerable with support

¹⁰ Walker, S et al. Effects of early childhood psychosocial stimulation and nutritional supplementation on cognition and education in growth-retarded Jamaican children: prospective cohort study *Lancet*, 19 October 2005

¹¹ Roving Care Giver Programmes are provided in a few communities in 7 countries; the early childhood health outreach programme is provided in one health district in one country; and an early stimulation programme is provided in Jamaica by the Government in the capital city.

Given the importance of early stimulation, it is critical that governments place emphasis on educating parents on the importance and practice of early stimulation, especially targeting the most vulnerable.

Developmental Screening

This is an area where the region is seriously deficient, with only one country, Bermuda, having a sustainable system in place to perform developmental screening and provide adequate follow up support. The net result is that children with developmental delays – physical, behavioural, social emotional, sensory, communication as well as cognitive – are not systematically identified until they are well past the age of 5, many times as a consequence of poor performance in primary schools.

This is much too late for significantly helping many of them as the research has shown that the first 3-4 years are critical for the development of sensory pathways (hearing and vision), social and emotional development and the basic pathways for reading and mathematics. If these pathways are not adequately developed in the early years, tremendous human and financial resources must be expended to address deficiencies. Normal development is often not possible¹².

Some countries – St. Lucia, Jamaica and Barbados – have initiated programming aimed at strengthening this area.

Given the impact of late identification on a child's life, it is important that all governments strive to introduce developmental monitoring and early intervention services as a matter of priority.

Action Point #3: All governments to introduce developmental monitoring and early intervention services as a matter of priority.

Early Childhood Education

Data on participation rates in formal early childhood programmes, expressed as percentages of the eligible age cohorts, across seven (7) countries¹³ that provided usable responses in this area¹⁴ show that significant proportions of the early childhood cohorts are not exposed to structured early childhood programming¹⁵. For the birth to three cohorts, the participation rates in 2009 ranged between 17% and 41% for the entire cohort, with a similar gender profile. For the pre primary cohorts, children aged between three and five years of age, the participation rates ranges from 65%, to 100% in two countries.

Partial data provided by other countries not listed in this table tell a similar story, viz:

- Bermuda - 32% of the pre primary cohort;
- Dominica - 34% enrolment for entire birth to five cohort;
- Guyana - 62% for the pre primary cohort only; and

¹² *Scientific Evidence For The Importance Of Supporting Development Of Children 0-3 Years. Maureen Samms-Vaughan, Presentation to Regional Forum On Birth To Three, St. Vincent, June 2011.*

¹³ *Antigua; Anguilla; British Virgin Islands; Grenada; Montserrat; St. Kitts and Nevis; St. Lucia.*

¹⁴ *There were significant challenges with the data provided for this analysis. These included (a) provision of aggregate numbers for the respective cohorts, with no disaggregation by gender (b) provision of aggregated data for the entire birth to five cohort, with no breakdown into sub-categories (c) absence of accurate population data for the current period and (b) unavailability of data from some countries.*

¹⁵ *Additional participation data can be obtained from the UIS website at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/>*

- Jamaica - 43% for entire birth to five cohort.

Access to early childhood education therefore continues to be a challenge across the entire region. Reasons advanced for this include:

- Inability to pay the fees at private institutions, with only 19% of institutions owned by governments¹⁶;
- Lack of support from government to support participation of poor and vulnerable groups;
- Insufficient early childhood facilities, with overcrowding in existing ones;
- Logistical challenges in multi-island states and in hinterland communities; and
- Limited human capacity to support expansion.

The low access rates need to be addressed by governments as participation in ECCE provides the foundation for success within the education system. The COHSOD decision to increase access by 2015, to early childhood services in all countries to a minimum of 20% for the birth to two age group and 100% for the three to five age group should be implemented by all countries.

Action Point #4: *The low access rates need to be addressed by the governments as access provides inter alia the foundation for success within the education system. The COHSOD targets for 2015 should be implemented.*

Targeting the Most Vulnerable and Disadvantaged¹⁷

Ten (10) of the seventeen (17) countries who responded noted the existence of rural-urban disparities within their countries. In one country - Dominica - it was noted that there were no day care centres in the rural areas. Jamaica also noted that the majority of day care centres were in urban areas. The larger countries with hinterland communities - Suriname and Guyana, and the multi-island states also noted the limited services available in the communities that were far from the capital. Only five (5) countries reported data on programming for children with Special Needs.

There is a lack of deliberate targeting of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. While some programmes exist in some countries, they are not at the scale needed to tackle the needs in these areas. There is a definite need for more conscious programming in this area across all countries and COHSOD 20 agreed "... to adopt by October 2011, national strategic plans for increasing access to quality early childhood services with priority for the needs and circumstances of the differently-able, children in poverty and those facing other forms of vulnerability". This decision should be implemented as a matter of priority.

Action Point #5: *There is a lack of deliberate targeting of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. There is a definite need for more conscious programming in this area across all countries as decided at COHSOD 20.*

¹⁶ Based on responses from 16 countries. Government owned services are predominant in only four countries Bermuda (100%), Grenada (55%), Guyana (100%), Montserrat (67%).

¹⁷ Children living in poverty, children with special challenges, migrant children, children infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation

There is no agreed set of indicators and supporting data systems to monitor and evaluate the status of children's development across the region. This deficiency has been recognised by the CARICOM Secretariat and an initiative is underway to develop such a comprehensive set of regional indicators and supporting data sets and processes.

At the national level, all countries have systems to monitor some of the health aspects of children's development through an internationally established set of indicators that monitor indicators like maternal mortality, child mortality, immunisation rates and the like. However, in most countries, this does not extend to developmental and growth monitoring and participation in early education.

Policy makers therefore do not have access to data on the status of children's development and supporting services, and this has been a major hindrance to advocates for stronger action in support of children's development. The establishment of systems for the collection, collation, analysis and use of data are essential for guiding policy making and programming and should be urgently addressed by all governments.

Action Point #6: *Establishment of systems for the collection, collation, analysis and use of data are essential for monitoring child developmental status and guiding policy making and programming and should be urgently addressed by all governments.*

REINFORCING EFFECTIVE ECCE PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The Moscow Framework sees the effectiveness of ECCE programme delivery as being enhanced through attention to equity and inclusion, programme quality, capacity building and strengthening of partnerships

Equity and Inclusion

Within the CARICOM, equity and inclusion of all children in ECCE have not been achieved and much more work needs to be done to accomplish both of these. Data to clearly establish the extent to which ECCE is equitable to all children are unavailable; however it is clear that a number of disparities exist between rural and urban children, as well as between at risk children, specially disadvantaged children, and children with special needs and children who do not have these challenges. In most countries, children with special needs are not catered for in the mainstream education system and there is no attempt to ensure equity in learning opportunity. There are separate centres established for such children which can lead to exclusion.

A number of other factors including poverty and vulnerability, inability of ECCE provision to provide increased human resource or physical assistance to persons in need, and fear of discrimination of children with HIV and AIDS all serve as barriers to ECCE. More recently migrant children have also been negatively impacted. The Maroon population in Suriname and the Haitian, Chinese and Venezuelan children in Roseau Dominica have limited access to curricula that are mono-lingual and mono-cultural.

Initiatives that promote equity and inclusion have to be a deliberate part of the national and regional ECCE policies and strategies.

Programme Quality

Programme quality is a challenge with quality surveys in seven countries since 2005 showing that the majority of centres in all countries surveyed were inadequate on indicators for indoor space and furnishings; support for language and reasoning; children's activities; programme structure and provisions for parents and staff. Between a quarter and a half of centres in all countries failed to maintain a minimal standard in personal care routines (such as nutrition quality, child care practices, health and safety), or in interaction with the children.

Action Point #7: *Initiatives that promote equity and inclusion have to be a deliberate part of the national and regional ECCE policies and strategies.*

Initiatives are underway to address these deficiencies through the development of a regional ECD Minimum Service Standard supported by appropriate regulations and implementation mechanisms, curriculum development and ECD teacher training at various levels throughout the region - from associate degree and diploma level to bachelor and advanced degree level.

Programme quality is central to achieving the benefits from ECCE, and participation in poor quality programmes sometimes does more harm to children than non-participation. It is therefore important that CARICOM governments set themselves a deadline by which these standards can become fully integrated within the legal framework of their respective countries and become binding to all operators of ECCE.

Capacity Building

Among teachers and caregivers, low levels of training and in particular the absence of teacher trained early childhood practitioners in early childhood settings outside the public sector kindergartens are common characteristics. Expanding teacher training opportunities in early childhood is necessary in each country in the region where training capacity is not sufficient to meet the needs in the sector; however a rigorous examination of how this expansion can be done must be undertaken in tandem with securing employment conditions equitable to those of primary school teachers.

In addition, efforts are being made to enhance the ability of individuals to assess the work done by the ECCE practitioners. To date, eight countries have offered a full 150-hour National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET¹⁸)-approved Level III course developed by Parenting Partners Caribbean (PPC) towards assessment and certification, and five others developed shorter courses of their own, drawing on the PPC framework but modified to meet local

Action Point #8: *It is important that CARICOM governments set themselves a deadline by which these minimum standards can become fully integrated within the legal framework of their respective countries and become binding to all operators of ECCE.*

¹⁸ Based in Jamaica

situations. The support project allows assessors from the eight countries to enable graduates of the full courses being offered throughout the region to obtain NCTVET certification.

Efforts are also being made to equip parents with the necessary training to enable them to assist in ECCE. In the Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Suriname parent's organizations have received capacity building support from PPC who developed standards for parenting group facilitators and a framework for delivering training to achieve these standards.

Action Point #9: *Capacity building of parents and teachers is an absolute necessity for achieving sustainable ECCE programming and should be a central component of the national and regional ECCE strategies.*

Capacity building of parents and teachers is an absolute necessity for achieving sustainable ECCE programming and should be a central component of the national and regional ECCE strategies.

HARNESSING RESOURCES

The Moscow Framework calls for increased budget allocations by all governments and the mobilisation of diverse and innovative financing sources and mechanisms in support of quality ECCE for children 0-8 years old. It also calls for increased targeting of the early years and for financial analysis of ECCE provisions and service delivery.

Access to adequate levels of financing is one of the biggest challenges that the region faces with respect to ECCE. Actual comparative data on government expenditure were very difficult to obtain, but the reality across the region is that, with the exception of four countries - Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts-Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago - the health aspects of ECCE are funded by the government, while the developmental and educational aspects have been left to the non-governmental sector.

In some countries, the State has provided special incentives to providers of ECCE services:

- Annual subventions/subsidies for preschools;
- Tax exemptions for materials and vehicles;
- Grants, subsidies and assistance with teachers' salaries;
- Ongoing training for staff; and
- Assistance with meals for children.

This has been supplemented in some countries by national sources of funds such as Education Foundations, Debt swap facilities and Lottery funds.

Action Point #10: *It is absolutely necessary for the State to begin making specific budget allocations for ECCE, particularly to address the needs of vulnerable populations, as the civil society operators do not have the financial capacity to address the challenges*

It is absolutely necessary for the State to begin making specific budget allocations for ECCE, particularly to address the needs of vulnerable populations, as the civil society operators do not have the financial capacity to address the challenges in the sector.

MUTUAL COOPERATION AND EXCHANGE

The Moscow Framework calls for countries and international organisations to identify specific aspects of ECCE programming and to work together in advancing ECCE.

Regional Mechanisms

The CARICOM region has developed an innovative practice in this area, with the establishment in 2002 of an Early Childhood Working Group, chaired by the CARICOM Secretariat and comprised of all the major development partners in the region. The mandate of the Working Group is *"to identify and coordinate regional activities in ECD which support and facilitate action at the national level in ECD capacity building"*. The work of the Working Group is guided by a Regional Framework for Action (RFA) which was approved by the COHSOD in 2002, and updated in 2008. The 2008 RFA consisted of eight priority actions which were to be implemented by 2011.

National Mechanisms

Five (5) countries - Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica and Suriname - reported national mechanisms to coordinate early childhood programming across sectoral and ministerial boundaries. These countries used multi-stakeholder mechanisms, with representation from health, education, private operators and the NGO communities - Early Childhood Councils, Early Childhood Commissions, and Early Childhood Committees - to achieve this objective.

The other countries reported sectoral approaches to programming, with collaborative or coordinating activities between sectors and ministries as the need arose.

The establishment of national multi-stakeholder mechanisms should be encouraged given the inter-sectoral nature of ECCE programming. Such mechanisms will ensure coordination of action and efficiency of resources use.

Action Point #11: *The establishment of national multi-stakeholder mechanisms should be encouraged given the inter-sectoral nature of ECCE programming.*

ECCE in the Caribbean Community

**Report prepared for
the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE),
MOSCOW, September 2010**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report has been commissioned by the UNESCO Kingston Cluster Office for the Caribbean as part of the preparatory activities for the first ever World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE). The Report addresses the status of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). This includes the fifteen (15) member states of CARICOM¹⁹, as well as the five (5) associate member states²⁰.

The assessment was done within the context of Education for All (EFA) Goal #1 "*Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children*". It takes a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to ECCE and defines ECCE as "*services which support children's survival, growth, development and learning – including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, emotional and physical development, and social protection – from birth to entry into primary school and through the first grades of primary school.*"

The Report concludes that the ECCE sector within the Caribbean Community is very far from achieving that goal, viz:

1. The coverage of ECCE services within the region is far from comprehensive. There are significant gaps in a number of areas, including:
 - Early stimulation services;
 - Developmental monitoring and early intervention;
 - Developmental and care services for the birth to three cohorts; and
 - Access to and quality of preschool education.
2. The region has performed very poorly on deliberate targeting of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged for access to service provision. While some programmes exist in some countries, they are not at the scale needed to tackle the needs in these areas. There is a definite need for more conscious programming in this area across all countries.
3. Underlying the lack of comprehensiveness and targeting is the need to continue to strengthen policy frameworks, to implement strong monitoring mechanisms and to build human and technical capacity to deliver the services at the levels that are required.

However, notwithstanding the gaps and deficiencies that have been identified by this analysis, there are also a number of areas in which the region nonetheless will be able to show significant achievement **by 2015**. These include:

- ***The implementation of comprehensive Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies*** - All Member States are developing comprehensive ECD policies, with implementation plans monitored on an annual basis. These should be completed and fully operational by 2015.

¹⁹ Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago

²⁰ Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos islands

- **National Regulatory Frameworks** - All Member States are developing national ECD regulatory frameworks with standards for early childhood services in keeping with CARICOM guidelines. These should be completed and fully operational by 2015.
- **Quality Improvements** - All Member States are implementing strategic plans for increasing access to quality early childhood services by all children. These should be operational by 2015. They include:
 - Exposing practitioners to early childhood teacher training and qualification and early childhood caregiver training and certification either in state or in collaboration with neighbouring states;
 - Developing and harmonising curriculum offerings that are consistent with the current scientific underpinnings;
 - Providing access to quality education in the first two years of primary school through the provision of early childhood trained teachers and appropriate staff child ratios;
 - Implementing adaptation and mitigation measures needed to reduce impacts of climate change on children, especially in the area of disaster risk reduction.

Outstanding challenges include:

- Extending access to children 0 to 3 years of age for development and care services in a multi disciplinary framework through support to home based day care, childminding and other informal forms of non-parental care, parenting support and information programmes through well child clinics, and cash transfer programmes linked to health check-ups and participation in early childhood programmes;
- Extending access to children 3 – 5 years of age to provide at least one year of pre K in preschools or primary schools, through increased direct government investment in the provision of facilities and direct incentives for private operators to invest and expand;
- Developing the capacity of countries to establish special mechanisms for increasing access of children in vulnerable and poor populations to early detection and prevention services, to supported care and education services.

Follow-up action that can address these challenges include:

- Development of a regional framework to guide programming for the birth to three cohorts in terms of (a) development and care services and (b) early detection and prevention services. Such a framework could identify options that countries could consider, with supports available through the partner agencies in assisting countries to assess and implement the most appropriate options for their circumstances. This process should be led by the CARICOM Early Childhood Working Group, using a similar methodological approach as was used in the policy development process.
- Inclusion of early childhood services in the social safety net programs being developed by governments across the region. Such inclusion should make support for participation in early childhood services by vulnerable children an eligible activity under these

programs. This should be complemented by the establishment of an institutional linkage between the administration of the safety net programs and the administration of the early childhood programs, to ensure that the vulnerable children are addressed as a matter of priority²¹.

- Awareness building on the need for comprehensive ECCE programmes. The driving forces for such programming have to be strengthened using a variety of approaches that will raise the social demand for comprehensive ECCE programmes. This will not be done by national governments and will have to be initiated by the non-governmental sector and civil society.

The complete regional report for Latin America and the Caribbean can be accessed via the following weblink: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/world-conference-on-ecce/reports/>

²¹ *As an example, there could be an arrangement whereby, all children of early childhood age who enter the safety net program would be referred to the early childhood authorities, who would then be responsible for placing them within an appropriate institution. The relevant costs will be paid directly to the institution by the safety net programme.*

**Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation
Harnessing the Wealth of Nations**

World Conference on
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
Building the Wealth of Nations

27-29 September 2010
Moscow, the Russian Federation

Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation

Harnessing the Wealth of Nations

PREAMBLE

1. We, Ministers, Heads of Delegations, representatives of UN agencies, development cooperation agencies, civil society organisations, education agents and experts express our sincere gratitude to the Government of the Russian Federation for having hosted the first World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, and for their warm welcome, generous hospitality and organization of the Conference.

2. We met in Moscow from 27 to 29 September 2010 and reviewed challenges and progress made towards EFA Goal 1, in the particular context of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a social, human and economic development imperative. We adopt a broad and holistic concept of ECCE as the provision of care, education, health, nutrition, and protection of children aged zero to eight years of age. ECCE is therefore a right and an indispensable foundation for lifelong learning. Its proven benefits are manifold, and include better health and nutrition, improved educational efficiency and gender equity, greater employability and earnings, and better quality of life.

3. We understand early childhood care and education must foster in children a spirit of peace, understanding, non-discrimination and harmonious relation with nature, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We recognise the intrinsic value of childhood and children's inherent rights to provision, protection and participation.

4. We base our conclusions on the shared, but also specific, issues, challenges and critical development trends identified during the Regional consultations (Declaration of Damascus, High Level Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, Damascus, Syria, September 2010, - Communiqué: A Call to Action, Fourth African International Conference on Early Childhood Development, Dakar, Senegal, November 2009, - Regional meeting on ECCE, Chile, May 2010) and in the special reports that have been produced for this conference.

5. We reaffirm our commitment to ECCE goal expressed in Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) but we conclude that Education for All (EFA) Goal 1 of expanding Early Childhood Care and Education is at great risk of not being achieved by 2015 unless urgent and resolute action is taken. We therefore reiterate our determination to accelerate the achievement of this as a prerequisite for reaching the other EFA goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the goals of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, as well as other regional and national agendas and priorities. We welcome and support the fact that Africa has demonstrated a clear commitment to ECCE and has prioritised it in its Second Education Decade.

THE CHALLENGES

6. ECCE is part of the right to education and the main foundation for holistic human development. In addition ECCE is instrumental in poverty eradication and a critical stage to seed foundation for sustainable development. ECCE is an investment in the wealth of nations. There is a strong knowledge base; there are models, including at national levels, of high quality scalable provision; there is good evidence that families and communities respond to high quality initiatives; there is knowledge of how to build capacity. But we do face challenges.

7. ECCE policies are not always part of national socio-economic development plans and do not reflect a holistic and integrated approach; they are insufficiently backed by political commitment and are not on a scale to reach all parts of the population. Inadequate core public funding and low external support continue to impede sustained ECCE provision. Existing levels of integration, articulation and coordination of services, institutional weaknesses and poor operational frameworks limit the effectiveness of ECCE programme delivery.

8. Lack of infrastructure, and persistence of cultural and poverty barriers deny access to ECCE to millions of marginalised children, including those living in occupied territories and conflict and disaster affected areas. The benefits of ECCE are put at risk by low quality and lack of inclusiveness of services. There is lack of reliable and timely information on the provision of equitable holistic ECCE services.

9. Low capacity at multiple levels and among various stakeholders' compromise ECCE programmes. Partnership for provision is not what it could be, and there is a need to for all partners to heighten their contribution to service provision-at the household/community level with civil society, the private sector, government and development partners.

10. To address the challenges we need to take advantage of the knowledge base and good experiences that already exist, and universalise these.

ACTION AGENDA

We thus call upon the governments to:

11. Mobilize stronger commitment to ECCE

i) Legislation, Policies and Strategies

a) Develop legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms that are conducive to the implementation of the right of children to ECCE from birth;

- b) Adopt and promote an approach to ECCE that is both holistic and multi-sectoral to ensure good birth outcomes, (prenatal stage), neonatal health and nutritional well-being, care and education of the zero to eight, with a special focus on the zero to three age group;
- c) Integrate ECCE policies into human and socio-economic development policies and thus as a shared responsibility across sectors and departments, parents, families, communities, civil society and the private sector;
- d) Strike an appropriate balance between centralised and decentralised governance guaranteeing collaboration among all spheres with related responsibilities, level of authority and resources;
- e) Strengthen political commitment through evidence based advocacy on the benefits of ECCE for human development.

ii) Access and scaling up

- a) Scale up ECCE efforts, identifying enabling factors in effective ECCE programmes, with careful attention to flexibility and adaptation to diverse contexts and income groups, particularly targeting the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and promoting partnerships with stakeholders at all levels;
- b) Place a key emphasis on achieving good birth outcomes to mitigate poor outcomes for neonates through developing and expanding parenting programmes to orient families in good ECCE practice, with particular emphasis on the 0-3 year old age group;
- c) Develop a framework to improve pathways for successful transitions within ECCE and to primary schooling.

iii) Assessment, Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

- a) Enhance reliable and timely assessments of ECCE services;
- b) Strengthen and institutionalise monitoring and evaluation of ECCE programmes to guide sound policies through the provision of reliable, relevant and timely disaggregated data for informed decision making;
- c) Use locally relevant knowledge for informing policy-making, strengthen ECCE research capacities and contribute to knowledge creation across all regions.

12. Reinforce effective ECCE programme delivery

i) Equity and Inclusion

- a) Take innovative measures to overcome all forms of discrimination in compliance with all Human Right's Conventions and make quality ECCE provision available to children from poor and disadvantaged groups, children with disabilities, as well as to marginalized populations,

those in emergency situations affected by conflict and disasters. Special attention should be devoted to overcoming gender discrimination (EFA goal 5);

b) Value cultural and linguistic diversity, especially in regard to indigenous and minority languages, and encourage the use of familiar language in ECCE and provide adequate resources as part of good teaching. Value multilingualism as an asset;

c) Take targeted measures to put in place early detection interventions for children at high risk of developmental delays and disability.

ii) Quality

a) Empower and strengthen the capacity of parents, families and service providers, so that they can provide protective relationships, quality care and education to the young child;

b) Improve curriculum and methodology in tune with childhood, valuing play, affection, cooperation, talent and creativity, joy, the fostering of self-confidence and autonomy, as well active learning pedagogies that take into account children's point of view;

c) Focus on programme outcomes by adopting consistent assessment criteria and methodologies;

d) Explore and use the full potential of ICT to promote all aspects of ECCE;

e) Include education for sustainable development as a central part of quality ECCE;

f) Put in place human and material conditions required to achieve quality for ECCE; committed valued and trained professionals, appropriate ECCE environments as well as context sensitive curricula and materials.

iii) Capacity building

a) Develop new approaches and methods to build professional capacity, in areas of critical importance to quality improvement;

b) Improve and expand teacher training, accreditation and the professional development of ECCE professionals;

c) Increase knowledge of medical professionals, social workers, parents, caregivers and other professionals about children development and how to promote it.

iv) Partnerships

a) Proactively involve civil society and local communities in the policy debate, programme development, implementation, and monitoring of ECCE policies as well as in guaranteeing the respect, protection and realisation of children's rights; invite national international organizations to facilitate and support national ECCE policies and programmes;

- b) Enhance, when appropriate and with the necessary regulations, resources through partnerships with the private sector. Encourage the regulatory, operational and financing convergence between these schemes and programmes of different ministries, departments and agencies of the government;
- c) Pay close attention to parental voices and take steps to balance power relationships and foster collaboration among different actors of ECCE.

13. Harness resources for ECCE

- a) Support the above measures by increasing budget allocations by all government departments concerned with ECCE promotion, and mobilize diverse and innovative financing sources and mechanisms in support of ECCE. Invest as much as it takes to meet all rights to ECCE according to set quality standards;
- b) Increase targeted resources for programmes for 0-8 years old, with particular attention to the early years due to their importance for human development;
- c) Conduct and encourage finance analysis of ECCE provisions and service delivery.

14. Cooperation

- a) Identify specific aspects of ECCE programming for mutual cooperation and exchange;
- b) Call upon countries to work with UNESCO and other international organisations to mobilize international donors.

15. We call upon Donors to:

- a) Honour their commitment to support all countries in achieving the EFA Goals, especially Goal 1, with increased attention to quality and relevance;
- b) Align external funding with national needs in ECCE giving special priority to countries lagging behind;
- c) Articulate ECCE targets in their sector plans, in line with government priorities.

16. Further, we call upon UNESCO to:

- a) Champion holistic ECCE globally based on the principles of children's rights, in cooperation with other agencies;

- b) Work closely with Member States, UN agencies, civil society, specialised agencies, partners and experts to develop holistic integrated ECCE programmes, with due attention to the 0-3 year old age group;
- c) In consultation with Member State and other organisations, to establish a working group to explore the development of an instrument capable of tracking progress towards EFA goal 1, with particular attention to quality and the holistic aspects of ECCE;
- d) Promote ECCE investments through the corporate and business sector worldwide. Collect and disseminate good practice and lessons learned from experience, in particular those demonstrating the multiple and diverse benefits of ECCE;
- e) Support the creation of ECCE networking at the national, regional and international level and level with related clearing house services;
- f) Intensify efforts aimed at developing affordable, readily available and user-friendly tools and models for assessing child development.

The Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation and other related resources of the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education can be accessed via the following weblink:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/world-conference-on-ecce/reports/>

For more information on UNESCO's Early Childhood Policy Brief Series, please visit:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/early-childhood/unesco-policy-briefs-on-early-childhood/>



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