Zanzibar Regional Technical Workshop of the Africa ECD Initiative Advances Country Strategies for Going to Scale

With 53 senior officials from Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania mainland, Zambia, and Zanzibar, as well as teams from the World Bank, Aga Khan Foundation, UNICEF, USAID and Educational Development Center, the Regional Technical Workshop of the Africa Early Childhood Care and Development Initiative successfully advanced a series of proposals to scale up ECD programming in the region. The workshop was held in Zanzibar, Tanzania on October 26-28, 2009, hosted by the Government of Zanzibar, with support from the EFA-FTI Education Program Development Fund (EPDF).

The World Bank staff, led by Marito Garcia, Lead Economist and Program Leader for ECD - Africa, Arun Joshi, Senior Education Specialist, and Michelle Neuman, Senior ECD Specialist, together with international ECD experts Kathy Bartlett of the Aga Khan Foundation and the Consultative Group for ECCD, Sharon Lynn Kagany and Columbia universities, USA, Lynette Okeng’o of Kenya, and Juliana Seleti of South Africa, facilitated the workshop, and were joined by World Bank task team leaders and staff including Olatunde Adekola, Adama Ouédraogo, Josephine Kiyenje, Amy Quinn, and Nadège Nouviale. The workshop delved into cost-effective, contextually-relevant ECD strategies in the respective countries, echoing the workshop theme of Advancing Quality Early Childhood Development for All: Strategies for Going to Scale. Innovative strategies for financing ECD proved to be of particular interest to country teams. In response to country requests for additional information on the subject, Marito Garcia gave a special presentation on how mechanisms such as public-private partnerships, conditional cash transfers, earmarked taxes, and innovative private sector grants successfully increased access and quality of ECD programs in countries like Mexico, Colombia, the Philippines, Brazil and in California, USA. Kathy Bartlett and Najma Rashid from the Aga Khan Foundation provided expert guidance on teacher training, mentoring, and support, based on their experience with the Madrasa Preschools in Uganda, Kenya, and Zanzibar.

The nine country teams developed strategies for expanding access and improving quality of their ECD programs, encapsulated in briefing memos and PowerPoint presentations targeted to their Ministers of Education, Social Welfare, and Finance. Key proposals for expanding access included reducing registration fees (Niger) and building more preschools (Liberia, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Zambia), while proposals for improving quality included creation of curriculum standards (Liberia, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania mainland, Zanzibar), training and certification of teachers (Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania mainland, Zanzibar, Zambia), creating links between early childhood education and health and nutrition (Mal, Nigeria, Senegal, Zanzibar, Zambia), and promotion of parenting education (Mali, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania).

The reports from the Zanzibar Regional Workshop provided key talking points for the ministers of the nine countries at the 4th African International ECD Conference in Dakar, Senegal.
ECD Achieves High-Level Support at the Fourth African International Conference on ECD in Dakar

President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and President Amadou Toure of Mali, along with 3 African First Ladies, and 23 African Ministers of Education, Health, Gender, and Social Welfare were among the champions of ECD at the 4th African International Conference on Early Childhood Development, held November 10-13, 2009 in Dakar, Senegal. The Conference, co-sponsored by the World Bank and 14 partners and convened by the ADEA Working Group on ECD, focused on the theme: From Policy to Action: Expanding Investment in ECD for Sustainable Development.

Christopher Thomas, World Bank Sector Manager for Education, Africa Region, remarked on the World Bank’s new thrusts in ECD during a plenary session on Next Steps: Building Convergence and Gaining Momentum for Action: Public Policy and Corporate Responsibility. Technical papers were presented by World Bank staff, including Marito Garcia, Lead Economist and Program Leader for ECD -Africa, Michelle Neuman, Sr. ECD Specialist, and Sophie Naudeau, Human Development Specialist. Tonia Marek, Lead Public Health Specialist, Carla Bertocino, Economist, and Olatunde Adekola, Sr. Education Specialist, rounded out the strong World Bank delegation.

More than 600 participants from across Africa and around the world explored topics such as: expanding ECD investment and assessing costs; implementing and strengthening ECD policies and plans; increasing access to quality ECD and going to scale; and expanding services for vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS, civil conflict, and severe poverty. One of the highlights of the event was a poster presentation competition to spotlight successful field-based projects developed by governments, researchers, and civil society organizations. A Guide to ECD Innovations in Africa with submissions from 19 countries was also launched at the conference and is available at: www.ecdconference.org.

During a session on Mainstreaming ECD into Education Sector Programs, which also included papers by representatives from Guinea, Mali, and UNESCO-BREDA, Michelle Neuman of the World Bank presented a review and analysis of Education Sector Plans for the eight countries receiving support through the Africa ECCD Initiative. Education Sector Plans represent a country’s most complete strategy for meeting the EFA goals and are an important lever for attracting resources, including from the FTI Catalytic Fund. To scale up ECD within EFA-FTI, the paper recommends that countries develop ECD components of Education Sector Plans that: (1) provide research evidence for investment in ECD; (2) identify realistic targets, indicators, costs, and an M&E framework; (3) encourage diverse ECD provision, but also prize strategies for expansion; (4) incorporate local voices, experiences, innovations; and (5) develop quality improvement/assurance systems.

Impact Evaluation of Mozambique’s Escolinhas Highlighted at Dakar ECD Conference

The World Bank and Save the Children US are collaborating with the government of Mozambique to design and implement an impact evaluation of Save the Children’s innovative, community-based Escolinhas program in Mozambique. At the Dakar ECD conference, Sophie Naudeau, Human Development Specialist, World Bank Children and Youth Unit, presented the experimental design of the evaluation and its baseline results on behalf of a nine-member research team from both organizations. The Escolinhas ECD program is designed to improve the health and learning outcomes of participating children. The extensive impact evaluation includes a household questionnaire, community leader questionnaire, measurement of children’s physical and mental development, and school administrative data, such as enrollment and repetition rates. Baseline data reveal early deprivation — 42 percent of children are stunted and 50 percent are at risk of developmental delays in cognitive functioning, while 25 percent are at risk in the area of fine motor development and communication, and 10 percent in the area of gross motor and personal-social development. Follow-up data collection is scheduled for the spring of 2010 with a final report expected by late 2010.

Eight African Countries Lead ECD Programming with World Bank and FTI Support

Through the Africa ECCD Initiative, eight countries are working to mainstream ECD within their policy and programming, particularly for the most vulnerable children. With technical assistance from the World Bank and funding from the EFA-FTI Education Program Development Fund, countries are carrying out a range of analytical and capacity-building activities. Though specific projects vary according to country priorities, most fall broadly into three categories: 1) elaboration of the ECD component of Education Sector Plans, 2) capacity development for ECD program implementation, and 3) ECD monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge-sharing. Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Zambia are conducting situation analyses to better inform the development of and mobilize resources for ECD components of their Education Sector Programs; while Guinea, Nigeria, and Senegal are assessing and addressing training gaps for ECD professionals; and its baseline results on behalf of a nine-member research team from both organizations. The World Bank and Save the Children US are collaborating with the government of Mozambique to design and implement an impact evaluation of Save the Children’s innovative, community-based Escolinhas program in Mozambique. At the Dakar ECD conference, Sophie Naudeau, Human Development Specialist, World Bank Children and Youth Unit, presented the experimental design of the evaluation and its baseline results on behalf of a nine-member research team from both organizations. The Escolinhas ECD program is designed to improve the health and learning outcomes of participating children. The extensive impact evaluation includes a household questionnaire, community leader questionnaire, measurement of children’s physical and mental development, and school administrative data, such as enrollment and repetition rates. Baseline data reveal early deprivation — 42 percent of children are stunted and 50 percent are at risk of developmental delays in cognitive functioning, while 25 percent are at risk in the area of fine motor development and communication, and 10 percent in the area of gross motor and personal-social development. Follow-up data collection is scheduled for the spring of 2010 with a final report expected by late 2010.

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Zanzibar’s RISE project extends ECD to under-served children via mentors and a radio program.

Dakar Hosts Third African Cohort of ECD Virtual University (ECDVU)

The Third Sub-Saharan African Cohort (SSA3) of the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) convened in Dakar for the second face-to-face seminar of their one-year graduate program, November 8-21, 2009. The ECDVU program aims to cultivate leadership and to build networks and capacity in ECD in Sub-Saharan Africa. The 28 students of the SSA3 cohort come from 10 countries – Cameroon, The Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. The two-week seminar included reunions of ECDVU graduates, allowing current and former students to network and develop ECD strategies at “strategy for action” meetings. The SSA3 cohort also completed one week of seminar sessions led by Professors Alan Pence of Canada (ECDVU Director), Linda Biersteker of South Africa, Kofi Marfo of Ghana/USA, and Jophus Anamuah-Mensah of Ghana.

Four students in the SSA3 cohort presented papers on a panel at the 4th Conference entitled Roles of Fathers in Increasing Access to ECD and Taking ECD Service to Scale. The panelists were Hedwig Mufer Wirsiy of Cameroon, Alinune Nsemwa of Tanzania, Haddy Khan of The Gambia, and Roseline Sherman of Liberia.

Book on African ECD Wins Prestigious Library Journal Award

A forthcoming publication entitled Cash Transfers: The Emerging Safety Net In Africa, co-authored by Marito Garcia, Lead Economist and Program Leader for ECD - Africa, and Charity Moore, analyzes the impact of cash transfer programs on early childhood development in Africa. The book reviews 125 cash transfer programs implemented between 2000 and 2009 in 37 African countries and presents lessons learned about such factors as conditioning transfers, targeting, financing programs, and impact. The potential of cash transfers to improve early childhood nutrition and early education will be explored in the context of promising efforts in Nigeria, Malawi, Ghana, Senegal, Lesotho, Burkina Faso, Niger, Kenya and Ethiopia. CCTs are increasingly used by the World Bank as part of safety nets in developing countries, such as the $170-million Kenya Cash Transfers Project for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), co-financed with DFID, and the Nigeria CCT ($300-million), is under preparation. Several other CCT projects are under discussion with African governments. Exploiting the potential positive impacts of these large scale programs for ECD is one of the key goals of the African ECD Initiative.

Exploring the Effects of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) on ECD in Africa

A World Bank Publication Africa’s Future, Africa’s Challenge: Early Childhood Development in Sub-Saharan Africa has earned the recognition of the Library Journal, the most respected publication covering the library field in the United States, an honor that few World Bank publications have achieved. The volume covers the following themes: ECD contexts in Africa, socio-historical perspectives, policy development, programming, evaluation and research, and challenges and way forward. Contents are important beyond elucidating the graphic condition of some of Africa’s very young. More than 50 African and Africanist ECD researchers and professionals contributed to the volume, which was edited by Marito Garcia of the World Bank, and Alan Pence of the University of Victoria, Canada, and Judith L. Evans, Director Emeritus of the CGECCD. By popular demand, the book is being translated into French with a projected publication release in May 2010.

World Forum on Early Childhood Development

Two members of the Expert Panel of Advisers of the Africa Early Childhood Care and Development Initiative presented at the 2009 World Forum in Belfast, Northern Ireland, June 16-19. Judith Evans moderated a panel titled “Advocacy for Early Childhood from Around the Globe,” while Louise Zimanyi delivered a lecture on “Young Children and Emerging Issues: Climate Change, Emergencies, and the Economic Crisis.” The event attracted over 600 early childhood professionals from 70 countries and included 120 presenters. Several presentations focused on early childhood in Africa, including a panel on “Better Childhoods for Vulnerable Children,” which advanced grassroots strategies to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS and other threats to young children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child Turns 20

November 20th marked the 20th anniversary of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF commemorated this milestone, and recognized the challenges ahead, through a special edition of their State of the World’s Children report, which is available, along with an accompanying video, at: http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc/