Early Childhood in Africa
Newsletter of the Africa Early Childhood Care and Development Initiative, Issue IV, January 2011

LATEST RESEARCH & RESOURCES
Moscow ECCE World Conference Releases Africa Region Report
Regional reports have been published following the September World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education in Moscow. The Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Report: Africa gives a status update and compares issues in West and Central Africa to those in East and Southern Africa.

“Getting the basics right”: Research Review on ECE Contributions to EFA Goals
GTZ commissioned a review of research on ECD, analyzing links to education quality and equity later in life. It concludes that ECD initiatives are particularly effective in increasing grade 1 enrollments and higher graduation rates, reducing grade repetition and dropouts, increasing the number of girls in school, and improving intrapersonal and interpersonal behavior.
http://www2.gtz.de/dokumente/bib/gtz2010-0014en-getting-basics-right.pdf

IN SUM: SECOND TECHNICAL WORKSHOP FOR THE AFRICA ECCD INITIATIVE
Collaborative Workshop Promotes ECD in Action

"Action" was the main call of the Africa ECCD Initiative's second technical workshop held from July 26-28 in Cape Town, South Africa. Since the launch of the Initiative in September 2008, participating African countries have successfully developed policy aimed at scaling up early childhood programs, yet progress toward program implementation remained elusive. This workshop, Early Childhood Development in Action: Implementation of Quality Care, Development, and Education for Young Children, helped countries develop Action Plans to move efforts beyond the policy stage and towards the implementation of innovative, and cost-effective programs. Over 70 participants, representing international development partners and ministries of education, health, finance, and social welfare from 12 African countries (Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania/Zanzibar, and Zambia), debated the challenges of implementation, engaged in cross-country dialogue and country clinics, and visited program sites in Cape Town and neighboring areas.

Ruth Kagia (WB Country Director for South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland) challenged participants to think critically about early childhood programs and the Honorable Minister Edna Molewa (South Africa’s Minister of Social Development) encouraged countries to harness the potential of ECD for the accumulation of human capital to facilitate economic growth and poverty reduction. She explained this is no easy task, as program developers must address diverse linguistic, cultural, and social contexts in order to create holistic and integrated programs. As an example of best practice, participants learned about Zanzibar's Interactive Radio Instruction program as a low-cost means of improving equity, access, and quality pedagogy through the use of technology. Participants also examined how Malawi's Community Based Child Care Centers improved ECD access from 2% in 1999 to 32% in 2009.

Participants also had the opportunity to learn and reflect on best practices from South Africa. South Africa has used public funding to expand access through a pre-primary year (Grade R) and developed an expanded public works program to help deliver ECD programs, while addressing unemployment especially of young female adults. Integrated services provided by the ministries of Education, Health, and Social Services have also helped South Africa reach 0-4 year olds and children affected by HIV/AIDS. ECD services have positively impacted children through Prevention of Mother to Child Transmissions (PMTCT), treatment services, child protection, and health screening. New ideas were examined, including ECD training for nurses and midwives and targeting youth groups and schools to reach young women and men before they have children. Participants had the opportunity to visit program sites which included a publicly funded Grade R class, community Grade R classes for disadvantaged children, a program for HIV/AIDS affected children (see picture above), a nutrition project targeting malnutrition rehabilitation through home visits, and the Early Learning Resource Unit that links families to services.

The workshop highlighted a number of the key characteristics of national action plans: strong institutional arrangements, realistic financing measures, collaborative support networks, effective communication, strategic alliances among the agencies and the civil society, and integration of ECD with national development goals.

Each country team presented an Action Plan that prioritized goals for ECD activities, implementation arrangements, and financing strategies. Please check out our new website for more details: http://www.worldbank.org/afr/eccd

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Africa ECCD Initiative Workshop, Cape Town, Site Visit: Etafeni Day Care Centre, Support to HIV/AIDS affected children (Article below)

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COUNTRY UPDATE: Niger

Legislation Promotes Preschools and Teacher Training

ECCD took a big step forward in October in Niger. Prompted by findings from analytical reports supported by the Africa ECCD Initiative, the Minister of Education signed two laws. The first act authorizes each primary school to include a preschool class in an effort towards universal preschool education. The second approves the establishment of an early childhood track at the École Normale de DOSSO, a teacher training college in southwest Niger.

According to the recently concluded situation analysis, access to preschool education is extremely low and needs to be improved systematically to ensure its contribution to school readiness of children. The gross enrollment rate for 3 to 6 year old children in preschool grew from 2.5% in 2008 to 3.59% in 2009, which is still among the lowest in the region. The recent growth is attributed to the development of rural community centers supported by UNICEF and the Ministry. The report also notes some successes from a communications campaign targeted at parents on the rights of the child. A feasibility study proposes options to increase both access and quality of early childhood education, particularly with the expansion of training courses for early childhood professionals. Niger currently has 7 colleges training professionals in primary education. The report concludes that Niger must adopt national policies and create an assistance fund.

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COUNTRY UPDATE: Mali

Government Plans to Expand Support for Vulnerable Children

Recent analytical work commissioned by the Ministry of Education, with guidance from the World Bank, Aga Khan Foundation, and UNICEF highlighted the vulnerabilities of children under age 6 in Mali, as well as the opportunities to support them through community-based ECD interventions. With technical and financial support from the World Bank, EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI), UNICEF, and other development partners, the government is seeking to increase preschool coverage for 4-6 year olds from 4.2% in 2008 to 7% in 2012, with the private and public sectors sharing 60% and 40% of the cost respectively. To strengthen quality, a new early childhood training college recently opened in Ségou and 600 teachers nationally are expected to be trained by the third quarter of 2011. Institutional capacity building for the Division of Preschool and Special Education team is underway to support program expansion. The World Bank (Michelle Neuman and Pierre Kamano, Task Team Leaders) successfully applied for a grant, on behalf of the government, from the Rapid Social Response Multi-Donor Trust Fund to finance a new ECD pilot project in two regions. The pilot project, which is expected to be launched in early 2011, will aim to mitigate the negative effects of the global crisis on young children in rural areas and to identify lessons from cost-effective ECD strategies that can be scaled up. The adoption of a national policy and improved inter-sectoral collaboration is expected to provide further support for the Ministry of Education to improve access, quality, and management in collaboration with communities.

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COUNTRY UPDATE: Zambia

Strong Collaboration Advances ECD Policy

A workshop, organized by the Government of Zambia and the World Bank in May in Lusaka, provided a lively forum for the development of the Zambia National ECD Policy Framework. The policy has passed all executive level clearances and is ready to be submitted to Parliament. During the workshop, the participants discussed strategies for the dissemination of manuals and training for ECD teachers and caregivers. Development partners, including Save the Children, Plan and Sentinel Trust, have stepped forward to publish the comprehensive manual for caregivers, and Sentinel Trust will be providing the training. Further cooperation between the MOE and NGOs is planned to scale up future provisions and address quality issues of ECD. A new draft of the curriculum framework will be piloted and then implemented across the country. The workshop also discussed the analytical report on financial and institutional aspects of ECD for strengthening the efficacy of these programs. With continued inter-sectoral collaboration, Zambia expects to expand national provision of quality ECCDE from the current access rate of 16%.

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LATEST RESEARCH & RESOURCES cont.

Report: Pan-African ECE Seminar

The report for the Pan-African Early Childhood Education Seminar held in Ghana was released. The seminar highlighted the importance of teachers unions in promoting quality education. The report also includes country reports from The Gambia, Zambia, Tanzania, Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, and Benin.


Case Studies of EC in Three Countries: India, South Africa, and Canada

Ailie Cleghorn and Larry Prochner's Shades of Globalization in Three Early Childhood Settings: Views from India, South Africa and Canada (Sens Publishers 2010) integrates policy analysis and ethnographic fieldwork to comparatively study early childhood settings. They discuss the continuities and discontinuities between policy and practice, revealing the tension between global discourse on best practices and the belief in using local knowledge and practice.

https://www.sensepublisher.com/files/9789460911019PR.pdf

Wealth Not Indicator of EC Investment

The 2011 African Report on Child Wellbeing reports that the wealth of an African country is not proportional to its level of investment in childhood education, health, development and social well-being. In fact, some of the poorest countries, such as Niger, Mozambique, and Tanzania, are spending the most on children.

http://www.africanchildforu.org/africanreport/