

# ARNEC CONNECTIONS

Working Together for Early Childhood

No. 7, 2013



**THEME: Early Childhood Development on the Global Agenda: Giving all children equal opportunities for lifelong learning, health and success**



**ARNEC**

Asia-Pacific Regional Network  
for Early Childhood

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Working Together for Early Childhood

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## Editorial Note

**By Lynn Ang, Department of Early Years and Primary Education, Institute of Education  
Editor, ARNEC Connections no.7, 2013**

The past thirteen years have seen unprecedented levels of advocacy for children's access to education, health care, equality, and right to a peaceful and secure life. The declaration of the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) in Senegal<sup>1</sup> and the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>2</sup> are watershed moments in the wake of global advocacy for early childhood education and care (ECEC). The targets to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (Goal 1) and to achieve universal primary education (Goal 2) by 2015<sup>3</sup> highlight a strong commitment by the international community to achieve greater social equality for all children, especially for those who are most vulnerable. The MDGs provide an ambitious impetus for governments in the East Asia and Asia Pacific region to strive for equal opportunities for all children, and much-needed leverage at the level of policy development to campaign for better early childhood services.

Despite this important advocacy work, there are still many challenges to overcome, not least the continuing gap between children who live in poor and rich countries; and within countries between those who live well and those who live in abject conditions. More than ten years on from the Dakar and Millennium declarations, reviews undertaken by international agencies<sup>4</sup>

1. UNESCO (2000). The Dakar Framework for Action. Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments, UNESCO: Paris.

2. United Nations (2000). United Nations Millennium Declaration, launched by 189 United Nations (UN) member states. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/millennium-development-goals.html>

3. United Nations (2013). The Millennium Development Goals Report, United Nations: New York.

4. United Nations (2013) The Millennium Development Goals Report, United Nations: New York; United Nations (2013) The Global Partnership for Development: The Challenge We Face, MDG Gap Task Force Report.

indicate that progress towards the global targets has been in danger of waning. In some countries, not one millennium goal will be fulfilled, with issues of access and equality, as well as gaps in policy and governance. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2011)<sup>5</sup> and the United Nations (UN) MDGs Report (2013) reveal daunting challenges persist and progress on ECEC in the East Asia and Asia-Pacific region is mixed.

A report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>6</sup> identifies 47 fragile states that are classified as 'home to an increasingly concentrated proportion of the world's poor' and which are more susceptible to political and socio-economic instability. Almost a third of the fragile states are in the East Asia and Asia Pacific region, with a significant proportion of children and families living in vulnerable situations as a result of poverty, conflict, natural disaster, corruption or other adversity. Critical questions remain at a policy and political level about what can be done to ensure that the well-being of young children is protected, especially those most at risk of being neglected and marginalised.

Against this international backdrop, at the heart of this editorial issue is the recognition of the diverse conditions and challenges that children and families face across the East Asia and Asia Pacific region. For many, there is an urgent need to address issues of access to education, health care and children's rights to basic survival. As some of the papers featured here reveal, the challenge is not just about enabling children to thrive, but to survive, amidst limited health care, nutrition, and sanitation. For others, acute challenges persist in terms of deep socio-economic inequalities and gender discrimination. The article 'Strengthening Resource flows and trends in a shifting world.

5. UNESCO (2011). Education for All Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO.

6. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2013). Fragile States. Resource flows and trends in a shifting world.

Teacher Education Programmes' highlights pervasive political and socio-cultural issues such as in Pakistan that are threatening the future of ECEC in the country. Collectively, the articles show that the factors that influence children's development and well-being are often interrelated, and not just determined by a single factor but a multitude of factors such as limited resources, weak infrastructures, and poor policies. Indeed, the literature shows that poverty and vulnerability in ECEC are multi-causal.

Yet, in spite of the many challenges, this editorial issue is also an opportunity to recognise the valuable work of many practitioners and advocates from countries such as Nepal, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, India and Bangladesh who dedicate their energy and commitment to providing the best possible practices and support for the children and families in their communities.

At a micro-level within families and communities, the articles in this issue show that a supportive family and a strong network of community and civil society are the bedrocks in ensuring that children are given the opportunities to fulfil their potential, regardless of their circumstances.

At a macro-level, the role of ECEC in promoting a wider advocacy agenda for social justice and equality for children and families remain a complex issue. Research shows it is much too simplistic to assume that ECEC provides a universal remedy for all inequalities, even as we recognise the importance of early childhood education in making a difference to children's lives. Tackling problems of social mobility and inequality are more complex than it seems. The author of 'Closing the school readiness gap in Bangladesh' makes an important point that ECEC does not offer a ready panacea for addressing all 'social ills' in society. In the early childhood support programme in Bangladesh, while access to preschool narrowed the school readiness gap between vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers, it did not close

the gap completely. The mothers in the study with low levels of education were also significantly less likely to participate in early childhood education which undermines the potential of ECEC in reducing inequalities in the early years. Likewise, the author of 'Early Childhood Education in Azerbaijan' cautions that it is important for preschool services to remain a universal public good rather than a service accessible only to particular groups from a certain socio-economic background. The big question therefore remains – what can be done to alleviate the unequal distribution of ECEC resources and narrow the gap for children and families?

The strong political will and commitment to ECEC are encouraging steps in the right direction. Advocacy for better opportunities for children ultimately entails increased government investment and increased public expenditure for the early years. This continues to be a tricky issue for many countries in both the developed and developing world. Amidst other competing global and national agendas, government ministries often struggle to making early childhood a priority in their policies and budget allocations. The OECD Starting Strong II (2006)<sup>1</sup> report estimates that 2% of a country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is required for ECEC alone. An acute task for governments is to ensure that high quality early childhood education remains a collective responsibility and a basic right for all children, not a privilege just for a select few.

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1. OECD (2006). Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care, Paris: OECD Publications.

# Reaching Out to the Unreached

By Sri Marpinjun, Ardiani Khrisna Maruti, Maria Mamar Dinantyani Sewar, Plan Indonesia

## Introduction

Quality early experiences will contribute significantly in building a strong foundation of self concept of young children as step up to their future. Family can support young children with quality parenting, however, many families also need support from caregivers of early childhood development (ECD) centres to enable their young children to explore their world. Education for All (EFA, Dakar Declaration 2000) therefore is a strategic global framework to supporting all young children in enjoying their early experiences. According to the Indonesian ratified EFA in 2000, the Indonesian national government targets 75% children with 4-6 year access to ECD centres by 2015 (Bappenas, 2008).

Indonesia is a huge country with huge population, several islands and hundreds of ethnic groups. There are about 30 million children 4-6 and most of them are living in rural and poor areas. ECD service becomes a big challenge to be provided. In fact, this target looks too high, as recently in 2013 ECD centre services across Indonesia were only able to cover 35% children 4-6<sup>1</sup>. Is targeting 100% or "all" children 4-6 access ECD centres impossible?

This article will share an insight into the project implemented by Plan Indonesia with support from Plan Australia and funded by AusAid, in reaching out to young children who do not have access to ECD centres because they were living in poor areas in Sikka district, East Nusa Tenggara Province. This project 'Community Managed Early Childhood Care and Development (CMECCD)' demonstrates an example of a sustainable system of community managed ECCDs that address barriers and strengthen early childhood outcomes, and which can be adopted by more district/sub-district governments. When Plan Indonesia started the project in 2010, there were only 31%

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1. <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/13/02/22/milvzo-peserta-paud-baru-mencapai-35-persen>

of children 4-6 had access to ECD centres in Sikka District. Therefore, in starting the project field activities, this project identified villages which do not have or have limited number of ECD centres, then working together with parents and community to expand ECD services in order to reach more young children have access to quality ECD centres.

## Blatatatin Case

One of the 31 Plan Indonesia CMECCD project areas is Blatatatin. It is a village within Kangae, a sub district in Sikka. It is located 25 km or 30 minutes by motorbike from the capital town in Sikka. The total population in this village is 1535 people (389 households). It was divided into 3 sub villages: Bei, Nara and Wodon. The topography of this village is hilly and people built their houses on hillsides. Infrastructure of this village, like road, was under the process of development. Just recently (the beginning of this year of 2013), the government developed an electricity facility. This area was mostly dry and no natural fresh water source. The people built water reservoir to store rain water. When the dry season lasted too long, and the water reservoir dried up, they had to buy water from the vendors who came over with their tank cars. A tank of water cost USD 15-30. Since the community was poor, several organizations had come in this village to initiate some programmes such as livelihood and water and sanitation. Plan Indonesia introduced water reservoir and ECD supports.

In the first year of this project, only 40% children from 4-6 years accessed ECD centres. There was only one ECD centre in Bei, and only children living around this ECD centre had access to it. The children living in Wodon and Nara which were far away from Bei generally did not go to ECD centre but went directly to primary school when they reached 5 years old. The issue arose that the repetition rate in grade one of primary school in Blatatatin reached up to 16%. The fact was that all the children who repeated grade one were the children who did not

attend an ECD centre<sup>2</sup>.

Another reason why children did not go to ECD centre was that the parents took them along to the field. The field could be far away from home and ECD centre. The root of the problem was actually that parents still could not see the importance of sending children to ECD centre. A parent commented, "What for? They did not learn [at ECD centre], they only sing and dance...they will learn at primary school,"

In 2011, Plan Indonesia came to Kangae sub district office and talked to the head of the sub district about the importance of ECD and initiative to support ECD service. The Head was convinced and would go with Plan team to disseminate this initiative to villages within Kangae sub-district like Blatatain. Plan Indonesia initiative was positively accepted by the village government and community in that area.

The Head of Blatatain village was an enthusiastic person and he was very responsive toward anything that could increase people wellbeing. After he understood about the messages brought by Plan Indonesia, he encouraged parents to join parenting group sessions supported by Plan Indonesia. The first parenting group consisted of 30 parents. The Head of the Village often motivated mothers to actively participate in the PG sessions. Sometimes he attended the session when he was not busy. He also showed his utmost support to Plan Indonesia in the meeting with community leaders. This kind of political will of the village head had changed many things in the community. And he became more motivated to go further. He attended the launch of the second batch of parenting group. When the parents came to him to request his supports for establishing ECD centre in Wodon and Nara, he quickly approved this parents' initiative.

Under approval of village council (*Badan Perwakilan Desa*), the village Head also institutionalized the ECD programme into village programme and allocated budget of USD 100/year for ECD centre operations and USD 25 monthly incentive for ECD caregivers. In 2012, there was higher

2. Primary data collected by Plan Indonesia ECD facilitator.

number of children 4-6 going to ECD centre. In total, 69% children in Blatatain had access to ECD centres.

The demand for ECD service increased along with parents being better aware of the importance of ECD. The parenting group sessions encouraged parents to do more in defending child's rights. "I love to see my child speaking bahasa Indonesia in ECD centre," said a parent. Many parents who traditionally thought that taking child to ECD centre would interrupt their economic work changed their minds, and prioritized child education. Strategically, they worked together with other parents in managing their time. For example, when a parent was too busy, she/he then asked another parent to take her child to the centre, or s/he would do that after picking up their kid from the centre.

In 2011, Plan Indonesia invited caregivers of existing Bei's ECD centre in Blatatain to join training on quality daily routine in ECD centre and making learning materials with low cost and local resources. The daily routines are more child-centered and promote active learning. The ECD centre in Blatatain then applied this daily routine for the school year of 2011-2012. Children had become more active and confident because the teachers played roles as facilitators rather than adults who limited children's expressions. Graduates from this ECD centre also performed much better than children who did not go to any ECD centres. When Plan Indonesia provided second batch of teacher training, the village Head sent two caregivers from Nara and Wodon, sub villages where ECD centre was none, to participate in the training. These two caregivers then established an ECD centre in each of their respective sub-village. In total, there were 3 ECD centres within Blatatain village. As a result, in July 2013, 94% children aged 4-6 in Blatatain enjoyed learning in ECD centres. This achievement had motivated Lambertus to build the capacity of all *posyandu*<sup>3</sup> cadres on stimulation, and caregivers of Bei, Nara, and Wodon became the resource persons for that occasion.

Lambertus was also very aware that there

3. *Posyandu* is a community based integrated service post at sub-village level which run some programmes that covers maternal and child health and development.

were still some children left behind. He responded this with action plan to reach them.

*"We're really keen on the success of parenting groups, ECD centers, and transition programmes. ECD center in Belan [a part of Blatatain] is going to be established so that children in Riit [the most remote part of Blatatain] are able to go to ECD center. We want parents to be aware and understand, therefore making children happy and healthy,"* said Lambertus.

### Approach to Scaling Up

The Head of sub district Kangae was impressed with the progress of the ECD project in Blatatain, Teka Iku and Watumilok (other villages interfered by Plan Indonesia). Then he worked closely with Plan Indonesia in programme development. He attended meetings of the PKK<sup>4</sup> working group and requested Plan Indonesia to give presentation on issues of child development and programme of parenting group, ECD centre and transition to primary schools. He formalized the implementation of ECD by allocating a budget of USD 1000 a year, with a view to implementing this ECD programme up in Blatatain, Teka Iku and Watumilok to other villages within the Kangae district (non Plan's working areas).

### Lessons Learned

Reaching out to unreached children requires systematic efforts. Firstly, it is important to have a database of children of 4-6 years in each village and to know exactly where the children who are not accessing ECD service are. Secondly, government's leadership on ECD and political will is very critical, especially in the context of paternalistic community. Having the government's support is important for programme sustainability. Thirdly, parent's empowerment

4. PKK is a women federation which dedicates to health and welfare of family and community. This federation recruited the wives of public servants or female public servants, and it exists at all levels; from village to national level.

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is a strategic approach, and this will create demands of services for their children and this also leads to community action to support child wellbeing. Fourthly, intensive technical assistances for community cadres/caregivers in facilitating the ECCD development programme for all children in their villages are also required. Last but not least, passionate and committed project facilitators are influential to the social change for justice in the targeted community.

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# Early Childhood Education in Azerbaijan: Case Study of Community-based School Readiness Programme in a Remote Rural Area

By Vitaly Ratsky and Aynur Nabiyeva, Center for Innovations in Education

### Introduction

Early childhood education and development in Azerbaijan is largely defined by public kindergartens. Although Azerbaijan's Education Law specifies preschool education as a crucial stage in ECE and defines school readiness as "necessary" for all children at the age of five, Azerbaijan's preschool enrollment rate is low compared to similar countries in the region, and the access and quality gap between rural and urban areas has widened since the country's independence in 1990; the coverage of children in the age group of 1-5 decreased from 20.6% in 1991 to 15.1% in 2001. Specifically for urban areas this rate went down from 31.3 to 20.4%, whereas in rural areas it remained at approximately 9.5% during the above-mentioned period (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2013). Like many countries in the region, school in Azerbaijan begins with first grade at age six. A system of preschools for both urban and rural areas was built under the Soviet Union, but today, these full-day and full-service preschools serve no more than a third of all children between the ages of 3-6. Enrollment rates for children in rural regions is much lower at 8% because the preschools operating in most rural communities lacks capacity to serve all children between the ages of 3-6. While the number of non-state kindergartens has increased from 5 in 2009 to 37 in 2012 (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2013), most of these are expensive and located in urban areas, especially the capital city of Baku. Though traditional private preschools are not an option for expanding access in rural areas, civil society organisations and international donors have made attempts at developing alternative models of ECE services. The goal of this short paper is to offer a case study description of the alternative preschool

model piloted by the Centre for Innovations in Education (CIE) over the last two years in Azerbaijan which has sparked comparison with international experiences in developing rural early childhood education models.

The Center for Innovations in Education is a non-profit organization based in Baku, Azerbaijan that is dedicated to assisting educators, institutions, policy-makers, advocacy groups, researchers, and the general public in improving the quality and efficiency of Azerbaijan's education system. Its mission is to promote every child's right to quality education through social inclusion and excellence in teaching and active parent involvement. Together with its recently-established Policy Unit, CIE works to provide thorough, policy-relevant data collection and research that fills the research gap currently existing in the education and social spheres in Azerbaijan, and raises the level of policy analysis within the state and civil society organizations.

### Method

The case study method was chosen to create a rich picture of a part-time preschool services provided in one rural community in Azerbaijan. Reflecting on Wittgenstein's philosophy on understanding cases, G. Thomas (2010) explains that a case study is a method which "is composed of facts and states of affairs and objects, all of which are in a constant relationship with one another" (p.12-13). The author discusses case study mainly in terms of unpacking a particular situation or event. In other words, case studies are a method of analysis that focus on the detailed description of a single (or small number) of cases (in this case communities) in order to be able to examine the institutions, relationships, actors, and events that contribute the project. In CIE's alternative preschool project, this paper



looks at the institutional relationships among the CIE, BP and co-venturers, local municipality, and the local educators who are also the major implementers to make the alternative model of part-time preschool provision happen. The case study is based on CIE's experience in implementing the project as well as a field trip to the project site, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers and the local municipality representative.

### Project Description

In 2010, CIE began cooperation with the local British Petroleum (BP and co-venturers) office in Azerbaijan, along with technical assistance received from Open Society Institute's Early Childhood Program to pilot a community-based, alternative preschool project in Dallar Jayir village in the western part of Azerbaijan. The term "community-based" describes the model's use of local resources to create and sustain preschools beyond the length of the short-term project. These local resources include the local municipality which provides a physical building for the preschool, local unemployed pedagogues who are hired and trained to run the preschool, and local communities who pay affordable fees that make up the teacher's salaries. Thus, the Child Development and School Readiness Center (CDC) is set up with a small initial investment, and intended to become sustainable within a very short period of time. The term "alternative" simply refers to the fact that the CDC is an alternative to the state-funded full-care and whole-day model of provision. Both terms are used to refer to the Child Development Center at different times in the paper.

Because of the lack of early childhood opportunities in rural areas, the goal of the CIE's "Community-based Preschool Model" is to develop alternative school readiness programmes for children between the ages of 5-6 as a sustainable, community-based alternative to public preschool institutions. Although public preschools do exist in the village where CIE's community-based Child Development Center (CDC) is being piloted, the pre-project assessment study showed that state preschools, with enrollment of just around 35 children aged 3-6, does not come close to meeting the demand in the village. Despite the fact that the families are largely

reported to require preschool services for their children, there are simply not enough places for most children in the village and many families, especially those where the mother does not work, are left out.

To develop the Child Development Center model, CIE reviewed successful models of alternative preschool programmes implemented internationally for previous experience in ECE. CIE had been aware that over the last decade the Comenius Foundation in Poland had embarked on such a project to develop a free-of charge model of rural early childhood education.<sup>1</sup> The Comenius Foundation's Where There are no Preschools (WTANP) programme was implemented in Poland from 2000 to 2008, and resulted in changes to the Education Law and the development of a tender system for NGOs to apply to the Ministry of Education to implement alternative preschools in rural areas. By 2008, the programme has introduced 300 preschool centres and made it possible for 600 additional centres to be opened by other NGOs.

Poland and Azerbaijan share several similarities in ECE context. Poland saw a sharp decrease in the number of preschools after 1990s. According to the Comenius Foundation report, during 1990-2001 one in every three preschools was shut down (p. 8). Similar trend is observed in Azerbaijan during the same period of time where the number of preschools decreased by 18% (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2013). Difference in access and coverage of preschool services throughout urban and rural location is also characteristic to both countries. The proportion of children attending preschool institutions is much higher in urban areas at 86.9% compared to rural where the enrollment rate is only 55.6% for 2012-2013 school year (EURYPEDIA, 2013). A significant gap between access level in urban versus rural communities exists in Azerbaijan, where the enrollment rates are

1. Sokolinska, Joanna and Ewa Pulkowska (tr.). Report on the Where There are no Preschools project. The Comenius Foundation for Child Development. The Comenius Foundation had in turn adapted its programme from Portugal's early childhood education reform conducted upon joining the European Union in the 1980s.

8.6% and 23.4% accordingly (The Ministry of Education of the Azerbaijan Republic, 2009).

CIE's Child Development Center adopted several aspects from the Polish WTANP model, particularly in terms of overall cooperation with local municipalities, methodological training for the pedagogues hired to lead the preschools. Specifically CIE used Step by Step programme for teacher training. The project is dependent on three organizing institutions: CIE, BP and co-venturers and the local municipality of Dallar Jayir village. CIE, a local Azerbaijani NGO, is the main project developer, and is responsible of nearly all operations including negotiating with local municipalities, hiring and training pedagogues, furnishing the centre, monitoring the running of the centre, and legally registering the centres with relevant authorities (tax, education). BP and co-venturers is the donor, and provides financial support to renovate and equip the CDC and to support CIE in its implementation of the project. They are also involved in negotiating with local municipalities and in the extension of the initiative with the Ministry of Education. Finally, the local municipality provides the building to house the preschool along with occasional in-kind contributions (such as periodic maintenance support and accounting services).

Gaining municipality support for the project is usually one of the most difficult steps of the project, and a major sticking point for the expansion of the model. Local governance in Azerbaijan is done by two parallel institutions: the executive power (appointed by the president) and a locally elected municipality. When it comes to the role of municipality, in Dallar Jayir the municipality provided a room in its office to the centre, and later on it lobbied for getting a separate building for the centre. According to Comenius Foundation reports, local municipalities were often eager to participate in the programme and, at later stages of the project were even responsible for funding teacher salaries and upkeep of the alternative. In fact, the report (Sokolinska) notes that when the Comenius Foundation began its pilot project with 23 centres in 8 communities, it defined success as keeping at least half of the eight communities involved in the programme. However, two years later there were actually 11 communities involved, as the additional

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three communities joined and managed to obtain funding to support the teachers' training (p. 13).

However, such commitment has not been observed in Azerbaijan; most probably because of lacking vision on municipality's role in preschool service provision in communities. Teacher salaries are collected from participating families at an amount agreed upon by parents. The cost of attending the Daller Jayir CDC is 8 AZN (approximately 10 USD) per month, but is paid by parents only if the child attends preschool that particular month. Thus, teacher salaries fluctuate based on the number of children attending that particular month. With the number of children ranging between twenty five and fifty children per month, each teacher will earn between 100 and 200 AZN per month. For formerly unemployed women living in rural areas, this is a substantial addition to the family income considering only 2 work hours per day.<sup>2</sup>

Once the municipality is brought on board (and provides a suitable building for the centre), CIE early childhood experts travel to the village to interview and select and recruit suitable local pedagogues to teach and run the CDC. CIE consultants do this by receiving a list of qualified pedagogues in the village, explaining the project to them, and interviewing the interested candidates. The selected candidates, as well as pedagogues from state preschools and primary schools in the village then go through an intensive training process on child-centered teaching methodologies, because overall improvement of teaching quality in public preschools and primary schools is also included in the project. Pedagogues receive several trainings, and monthly mentorship visits through the first year of running the CDC. These child-centered methods<sup>3</sup> are one of the big draws for parents to send their kids to the centre, and a source of pride for the teachers. In fact, the teachers commented that their teaching methods,

2. Average per capita income in Azerbaijan has risen to approximately 350 AZN per month, though it substantially less in rural areas.

3. The child-centered teaching methodology is based on Open Society Institutes Step-by-Step programme, which CIE has been implementing in Azerbaijan since 1998.

including studying English and Russian, is part of the reason why some parents choose to send their children to the centre instead of the state preschool, and that some children even come from neighboring villages.

In addition to supporting teachers, CIE's other main goal is to establish the Child Development Center as a sustainable, independent institution. The CDC is established as Limited Liability Company by two teachers of the centre and the municipality.<sup>4</sup> Following the initial one-year project with BP and co-venturers that established the first CDC in Daller Jayir, where the centre was supplied and equipped, and the selected preschool teachers were trained, the centre continued its operations after the funding support ended for the initial stage. After the funding from donor was restored to start a second phase of the project, this support was rather through capacity building of municipality and teachers and organizational development of the centre. Mentorship on fundamentals of running a small educational business, governance and board representativeness (community leadership), legislation support, such as registering the centre as a legal entity, tax reporting rules, formalization of children intake, documenting data on children, and on several other organization rules and policies is provided. At the same time, close monitoring and involvement by the Ministry of Education is necessary in order for the long-term expansion and sustainability of the alternative preschool options in Azerbaijan.

### Discussion

The Child Development Centers aimed to increase access to quality preschool education in the selected communities of Shamkir. Although a full impact assessment has not been yet conducted, according to project reporting and anecdotal evidence from parents and first-grade teachers in the village, children who attended the centre show better social and educational results in primary grades compared to those who attended public kindergarten and those who did not attend any preschool education. Although these are promising short-term indicators, a more comprehensive research is needed to identify the long-term effects of this community-based preschool on children's development. For example, CIE used a single-subject study to explore the impact of the programme on the development and child-readiness of a 6-year old child. Through non-participant observation method, the study showed that a randomly selected participant of the school-readiness programme showed progress in his social skills, such as improved ability to communicate with the other children, and deeper involvement in different teacher-led activities. Although this study is limited in the amount of generated data, it provides a good example that can be expanded to the whole programme, thus providing a more comprehensive picture about the quality and impact of the programme.

4. CIE provides legal assistance with this process.

term indicators, a more comprehensive research is needed to identify the long-term effects of this community-based preschool on children's development. For example, CIE used a single-subject study to explore the impact of the programme on the development and child-readiness of a 6-year old child. Through non-participant observation method, the study showed that a randomly selected participant of the school-readiness programme showed progress in his social skills, such as improved ability to communicate with the other children, and deeper involvement in different teacher-led activities. Although this study is limited in the amount of generated data, it provides a good example that can be expanded to the whole programme, thus providing a more comprehensive picture about the quality and impact of the programme.

In addition to a more thorough evaluation of the impact of the CDC on improving child development, the alternative preschool model is yet to be tested at scale. Although it has shown success in expanding access to preschool in one rural village, the alternative preschool model still needs to be taken up by the Ministry and other policy makers as a viable solution to expand the necessary preschool services to disadvantaged children, who are mostly from rural areas. Considering Azerbaijan has a much lower preschool enrollment rate compared to global and regional averages, it seems necessary to supplement the state's provision of preschool services. While it is important that diversified efforts in preschool provision are being promoted, preschool services should also be ensured as a universal public good rather than a service or commodity available for only groups with a certain socio-economic status. From this aspect, the major policy implication in expanding preschool services through alternative models is that the decentralization of preschool provision should not undermine the state or governmental oversight and support.

The CDC model piloted by CIE in Daller Jayir is just one of three type of community-based preschool models piloted in Azerbaijan over the past couple of years. CIE's experience also includes partnerships with the United Aid for Azerbaijan with the launch of a model based on public kindergarten as a hub providing reach out services to parent self-

help groups in surrounding communities. By utilizing the existing preschool facilities and kindergartens, this alternative model aims to mobilize parents group and use their extensive participation in preschool provision. Cooperation, not competition between these programmes is necessary if civil society wants to make a coherent push to increase access to early childhood education — a vital part of developing Azerbaijan's human capital.

### Conclusion

This article showcased an alternative preschool model initiated by a local NGO in partnership with state and private sector. The model is designed to increase access to and quality of early childhood education in rural communities in Azerbaijan and offers a low-cost, sustainable alternative to full-service state preschools. Thus, the model is designed to scale from one village to potentially most rural areas in Azerbaijan. In addition, the model trains teachers on progressive, child-centered ECED methodology from the Step-by-Step programme to impact not only access, but also the quality of early childhood education. Considering the expansion of preschool education is on the agenda of policymakers, particularly the Ministry of Education, this model can be replicated in many rural areas in Azerbaijan where disadvantaged communities are concentrated. As increasing access to preschool in rural areas is a common challenge throughout much of the world, it is important to share this experience and compare it with similar efforts in other countries. International collaboration in this area is of key importance, because it clearly shows an exciting process of ideas flowing from one place to another; ideas that become adapted to meet specific needs in a given context, and proven to be nurturing and developing children.

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# Reflecting on Early Childhood Development in Kamrangirchor, Dhaka

By Esther Goh

### Introduction

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) began, like many NGOs, as a response to a massive natural disaster. In this case, the devastation was caused by a cyclone in 1970 which was exacerbated by the war of independence that followed in 1971 (Smillie, 2009). As the relief effort drew to a close, BRAC's founder and early supporters agreed that the needs of Bangladesh warranted a shift in focus towards longer-term development (Smillie, 2009). Its first development project, which was funded by Oxfam provided materials and tools for construction of shelters and the re-establishment of livelihoods (Smillie, 2009). Since then, BRAC has grown to include a large number of different programmes and projects, including its pre-primary education programme and maternal health programme. The maternal health programme is called Manoshi. This article aims to discuss both of these programmes and its impact on the Kamrangirchor area of Dhaka district.

As an intern at the Early Childhood Development resource centre of the Institute of Educational Development of BRAC University, experiencing the programmes in action at Kamrangirchor has brought home many issues and heightened the need for these programmes and their relevance

to the community. Through this article, I aim to explore and reflect on both the pre-primary education and health programmes at Kamrangirchor.

### Background

Kamrangirchor is an area of Dhaka district. At the 2011 census, it had a population of 93,601 in an area of 3.68 square kilometers (1.42 square miles) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Within such a small land area, Kamrangirchor is an immensely dense area, with a population density of 25,435 persons per square kilometer. There are over 21000 households here, with an average household size of 4.28 persons (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2013). During my visit to the area, I observed that whilst poor, most families lived in concrete buildings. In addition, many families had small 'factories' where they lived. Members of the family would use the floor space of the home and work on producing a number of different products that can be sold.

### The Pre-primary Programme

The BRAC pre-primary programme has fifteen pre-schools at Kamrangirchor. Each school conducts two sessions of classes per day. Every child that is enrolled attends a 2.5-hour session, six days a week. On average, there are 25-30 children in each

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session, with 1 teacher in the class. The children who attend are 5-6 years old. This means that in one school year, the pre-primary programme would reach 750-900 children. In addition, the schools accept children with mild to moderate disabilities and work towards providing all children a quality, inclusive education.

When asked how BRAC decides where to set up a school, the programme manager replied that this is often decided after the area managers and teachers have consulted with the community to find out how many children there are in the area and what needs there are. As all teachers are from the community, this conversation helped strengthen BRAC's understanding of the area and it also allows for greater ties between the teacher and the community. In addition, the programme works in tandem with both BRAC and government primary schools. With the main aim to place as many children in schools as possible, BRAC works with the government schools to ensure that as many children as possible has the opportunity to attend school.

### The Manoshi Health Programme

With the maternal health programme, known as Manoshi, BRAC has seven centres at Kamrangirchor area. It has a mid-wife and a doctor to help with deliveries, recuperation and cases of any complications before, during and after giving birth. There are around eleven health workers who work in the district, making home visits and educating mothers and their families. These health workers are supported by eighty-nine support staff, who inform them of the location of new mothers and kept track of around 1000-1200 women each year. Regular visits by the health worker start from the 7th month of pregnancy and continue after delivery till the child is one year old.

In addition to working with pregnant mothers, the programme also works towards educating husbands and their families, ensuring that they are aware of the danger signs to look out for, and how to assist the mother during and after her pregnancy. Sessions are held for husbands and families to come and learn together, along with separate sessions for pregnant mothers to learn together. Furthermore, the Manoshi programme provides monetary assistance to families

who need help to pay for medical fees that are related to the pregnancy and birth. When I asked the programme manager what criteria is used to assess whether a family required financial assistance, he replied that as the health workers and programme staff work closely with the families, they are able to make a decision from there, depending on whether the husband is employed, self-employed or unemployed.

### Lessons Learnt and Ways to Move Forward

One key point to note regarding the BRAC programmes is the way the programmes are embedded in the community. Both health workers and teachers are very much part of the community. This relationship plays a large part in encouraging communication between health professionals and mothers, and helps to increase the ability for BRAC to meet the needs of the community. This relationship with the community also encourages children to have equal opportunities to attain a form of education. It reaches children who may have been marginalised in the past, and gives them the chance to succeed in school. Furthermore, in forming relationships and connections with mothers and their families, the Manoshi programme sets a strong foundation for the health and well-being of both mother and child.

Another key learning point is the level of cooperation between the BRAC programmes and the government services. As mentioned by the Manoshi programme manager in Kamrangirchor, they do not want to take over from the government health services, but instead are trying to fill in the gaps between what the government provides such that everyone has the opportunity to access health services. Furthermore, the Manoshi programme aims to educate mothers and their families to know when to seek medical attention. They do so by distributing easy-to-read pictorial pamphlets to families. This has been extremely successful as in the six years that the programme has been in Kamrangirchor, the number of pregnancy-related deaths has decreased from 400 in 2007, to 130 in 2012. These pamphlets are culturally appropriate, use clear pictures and provide much needed information and guidance on a variety of topics, such as breastfeeding, nutrition, health, child

development, and danger signs to look out for. The education programmes also show a high level of cooperation between the government schools and BRAC schools. The BRAC schools work in tandem with government schools by setting up schools in areas where there are no government schools. The teachers work together to share knowledge and information, and this not only helps to create a cohesive community, it also allows for the exchange of expertise to improve both government and BRAC schools.

In moving forwards, increased participation between the health and early childhood programmes could draw many benefits. Currently, both programmes operate separately from each other, with teachers referring mothers to the Manoshi programme if there is a need to. However, there could be much to gain if both the Manoshi and pre-primary schools can work together and share expertise and information. This would create a holistic early childhood development provision. One example of this could be for the health workers or programme managers working with pre-primary school teachers to provide the best care for children with learning disabilities or special needs. This would allow for a system of early intervention that could be extremely beneficial for children and their families. Another example of increased cooperation would be for pre-primary teachers to work with the health workers to create resources that could help encourage early cognitive and physical stimulation for babies and toddlers. This could be done in the creation of pamphlets, or learning resources that parents could borrow to use with their young children. With health workers visiting mothers until a year after giving birth, they are in a prime position to facilitate this information dissemination and exchange.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, both the pre-primary and Manoshi programmes are doing valuable work at the Kamrangirchor area. While there is always room to grow, the programmes have made a positive impact on the community. Being mindful of the context of the community and the residents, BRAC has embedded itself into the community and understood the needs of the people.

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Here, we see 2 students in the Pre-primary programme learning together through a language activity.

Photograph taken by the author, Esther Goh.

# Corporate Social Responsibility: Road Map for Early Childhood Care and Development

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**Introduction**

“Care and development of young children has been the primary responsibility of the family, supplemented by society through strong community bonds, and cultural mores and values” (Konantambigi, 2007, p. 31). The different systems of care are working in tandem to secure the goals of child development. A focus on the ‘Child Rights Approach’ has led to significant changes in policy and practice in the functioning of the Indian State. It is this development of efforts that has today brought us to a place where we are rethinking our strategy - the strategy of ‘shared responsibility’, finding resonance in the ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (CSR) approach.

“Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives (“Triple-Bottom-Line-Approach”), while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders.”(UNIDO, 2013, para. 1). UNICEF states that “Child focused CSR contributes to sustainable development, including health and the welfare of children. It also takes into account the expectations of children and their family as stake-holders” (UNICEF, 2013b, para. 1).

**Understanding Corporate Social Responsibility in India**

The scope of defining and understanding CSR in India is a challenging task. In the advent of globalisation and the ever evolving nature of the concept of CSR, it makes it even more difficult to define what ‘CSR’ is. The diversity, strength and scale of India’s large population prevents us from coming up with ‘one formula for all’. India is a developing

country and is experiencing changes in many domains at the same time. The world of business is also changing along with it. India is not new to the concept of CSR in the true sense. “Business families account for 85 % of businesses in India - have always had a tradition of ‘giving back to society’ “ (Karunakaran, 2013, para. 1). For example, the Tata group founded by Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata in 1868 and currently in the leadership of Ratan Tata has done considerably for the community. “While overall this is well acknowledged, what is less well known is that it has been the benchmark setter for such practices, even before the government had established norms for such practices”(Mitra, 2007,p. 36). Thus, the concept of ‘Best Practices’ is not new. For example, Tata’s had introduced maternity benefit in 1928, much before the first legislation was passed in 1946, which was the Bihar Maternity Act. The Tata group had started many labour welfare schemes in 1917, even before the Factories Act (1948) was passed.

Thus the Tata’s had been much ahead of legislation in India. (Mitra, 2007). Historically, the greatest influence on CSR in India was the concept of “Trusteeship” introduced by Mahatma Gandhi (Mitra, 2007). Gandhi was well aware of the consequences of capitalism in the west and thus wanted a better model for India after the British left. Do we then need legislation, when CSR has been a trend in India? The answer is Yes. “A society does not usually change direction with a sudden jolt. It alters course in incremental amounts, running small, secret stimulations of experiments that achieve their full-scale elaboration only much later” (Deb, 2011, p. 72). Although certain family owned businesses have been working for society on their own. “But the fact remains that many of these businessmen or families still do not find the motivation to give away portions of their individual wealth or give of themselves in meaningful ways”

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para. 2). However, there are individuals like Azim Premji who have been contributing to society from his own personal wealth. However, except for these few people, the larger business community has to be motivated to share part of their profits with society, thus legislation is required to initiate it.

### Legislation – A Revolutionary Move

“Children’s Rights are embedded in child development knowledge, in the law of a particular nation or society and in the values, customs and practices of the culture in which they are formulated and practiced” (Solnit & Nordhaus, 2003, p. 263). “The new Companies Bill is a landmark in the history of Corporate India. The Bill, awaiting the President’s approval, will be formally promulgated as the Companies Act, 2013, replacing the Companies Act, 1956” (Balaji, 2013, para. 1). The new Companies Act (2013) mandates that companies having net worth of rupees five hundred crore or more, or turnover of rupees one thousand crore or more or a net profit of rupees five crore or more during any financial year must engage in Corporate Social Responsibility activities. It also lists certain areas of priority for investment such as reducing child mortality and improving maternal health (GOI, 2013). With this piece of legislation, India has become the first country in the world to mandate corporate social responsibility (CSR) through a statutory provision (Kapoor, 2013). “This is similar to a law in Saudi Arabia, wherein companies have to give 2.5 per cent of their capital and later, revenue, to the government as CSR tax. But the government has a mandate to spend the money”. (Mahajan, 2011, para. 11). Kapoor goes on to add that the companies are now moving away from the traditional ‘cheque book’ approach in which they sponsored existing programmes without adopting them and are moving towards ensuring the sustainability of programmes by monitoring and owning them up. (Kapoor, 2013). With the new draft rules out, there is a serious limitation to the execution of this act. “The draft rules also specify that only activities that are not exclusively for the benefit of employees of the company or their family members will be considered as CSR activities. In other words, if a company provides elementary education for children of its plantation workers, such expenditure would not be

eligible CSR spend.” (Kably & Doval, 2013, para. 5). This is a limitation of the new rule as employee benefit programmes are also important for social development.

### Role of Industry Bodies

There are various industry bodies in India which function as consortium of companies and advise the member companies about different issues. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) are some of the salient ones. CII is a non-government association, which has over 7100 members, from both the private as well as public sectors (CII, 2013). It advises its members on CSR activities and also conducts workshops and conferences on the same. FICCI encourages its members to participate in CSR activities and also gives out yearly awards in the same category. These awards aim at identifying and recognising the efforts of companies in integrating and internalising CSR policies into their core business processes (FICCI, 2013). NASSCOM which is the network of IT and BPO companies engages with its members on critical issues related to CSR such as enhancing diversity in its workforce, inclusive growth and a greener IT (NASSCOM, 2013).

### Research in CSR: Rise in Expectations

A study was conducted in four urban areas - Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, and New Delhi and the industrial township of Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu India by Tata Energy Research Institute (Kumar, Murphy, & Balsari, 2001). The study examined the perceptions and expectations people had in relation to corporate responsibility. The sample comprised of three stakeholders. Firstly, it included the general public from the upper socio economic classes in the age group of 15–65 years. Secondly, it included the workers who worked in corporations and thirdly, it included the executives. The findings suggested that “more than 60% of the general public feel that companies should also be held responsible for bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, reducing human rights abuses, solving social problems, and increasing economic stability” (Kumar et al., 2001, p.11). In the study the IT companies were ranked the

best in providing the most sustainable and diverse CSR Initiatives. This study supports the view that companies are striving to become the ‘Employer of Choice.’

Another study which revealed similar findings was conducted on a sample of 1,084 employees from 17 countries which examined the moderating effects of different Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) cultural value dimensions. It was studied in relationship to employees’ perceptions of their organisation’s social responsibility and their affective organizational commitment. The findings suggested that “... perceived corporate social responsibility (CSR) was positively related to employees’ affective commitment” (Mueller, Hattrup, Spiess & Lin-Hi, 2012, para. 1). To be specific, perceptions of CSR were more positively related to affective commitment in cultures that had higher humane orientation, institutional collectivism, ingroup collectivism, and had an orientation towards future (Mueller et al., 2012).

The role of UNICEF in this campaign of CSR for ECCD is very significant. In an effort led by UNICEF, the UN Global Compact and Save the Children, have developed “... the first comprehensive set of principles to guide companies on the full range of actions they can take in the workplace, marketplace and community to respect and support children’s rights” (UNICEF, 2013a, para. 1). UNICEF has also developed a Workbook titled ‘Children are Everyone’s Business’. “Published at an ideal time, this practical Workbook will help companies in all sectors to understand and take action on their responsibilities to respect and support children’s rights” (UNICEF, 2012, p. 9). The workbook is aimed at helping businesses to take action in order to design and execute CSR programmes for the cause of children.

### Early Childhood Care and Development: The Business Case

Why should Corporate India invest in ECCD? There is widespread support today for early education from both the private and public sectors in the United States of America. James Heckman, a Nobel Memorial Prize winner in Economics has proposed a case for investing in early childhood. “Professor Heckman’s ground-breaking work with a

consortium of economists, psychologists, statisticians and neuroscientists shows that early childhood development directly influences economic, health and social outcomes for individuals and society” (The Heckman Equation, 2013, p. 1). His analysis of a “... Preschool programme shows a 7% to 10% per year return on investment based on increased school and career achievement as well as reduced costs in remedial education, health and criminal justice system expenditures”(The Heckman Equation, 2013, p.1).

DeLauro and Perry have written in the Hill’s Congress blog (2013) that the business community is now mustering around early childhood education because the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has been able to establish the link between early learning and a strong workforce. Corporations such as AT&T and PNC Bank are making big commitments in this area by joining the bandwagon. Referring to the Heckman Equation, DeLauro and Perry explained the difference between children who went to preschool and those that didn’t. “Over the course of their lifetimes, they are 33 percent more likely to be employed and earn on average US\$5,500 more per year than their peers who didn’t participate in early learning programmes. These improved outcomes benefit all of society and the entire economy” (DeLauro & Perry, 2013, para. 4).

### CSR as a Promoter of ECCD

Corporations can invest in existing programmes run by government, NGOs and individuals. Integrated Child Development Services Programmes (ICDS) is the largest programme in the world for children run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. ICDS is a Centrally-sponsored Scheme implemented through the State Governments/UT Administrations in India. There are around 13 lakhs and fifty six thousand Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) in India (GOI, 2013a).

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has proposed the public-private partnership (PPP) model for strengthening the Integrated Child Development Services (GOI, 2008). The ministry suggested ways of partnership in areas such as “... resource mobilisation for construction of anganwadi centers, creating facilities such as child

friendly toilets, kitchen, drinking water, pre-school education kits and regular health check-ups at ICDS health centers” (GOI, 2008, para. 1). Thus, the government is looking towards the private sector to advance its already running programmes. The draft of the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy advocates a PPP model too. “The policy seeks to increase the aggregate spending on quality ECCE interventions through enhanced public spending on ECCE and through Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode” (GOI, 2012, p. 11). This policy is now adopted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2013.

An example of a corporation supporting ICDS in India is the Vedanta Bal Chetna Anganwadi Project. It initiated work under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode in the Indian states of Orissa and Rajasthan. It covers about 3000 Anganwadi centres that are home to 1,25,000 children. “Vedanta Foundation, in partnership in ICDS scheme, also runs its own Day Care Centres for pre-school children all over India” (Vedanta Foundation, 2013, para. 8). Private sector can support the ICDS Programmes in many ways. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has recommended that a ‘Fixed Monthly ECCE Day’ should be organised once every month at the Anganwadi Centre (GOI, 2013b). The private sector can be encouraged to provide resources to the centre on this day. The second way by which corporate can support is by capacity building and teacher education.

A company’s provision of services for the welfare and wellbeing of all cadre and levels of its employees may well be an indicator of wider CSR Ideology. Employers of parents can be encouraged to make community investments for providing technical assistance for child care programmes. Some other employee initiatives can cover aspects related to housing, health, education, parenting and counselling. Sher and Fried (2004) have given creative ways in which an employer can sponsor the child care costs of its employees. One such way is by providing direct services such as on-site/ near site child care centre, programmes for school age children and emergency backup child care. Another way is by providing financial assistance such as voucher system, baby

bonuses, and scholarship money for children especially from disadvantaged homes. An alternative work schedule can also be introduced such as flexitime, job sharing, telecommuting and part-time work. Apart from these services, employers can also provide education and information services such as seminars and workshops on parenting. In the Indian context, since employee benefit programmes which are exclusively for employees of the companies will not qualify as CSR according to the draft rules of the Companies Act 2013, the child care programmes should be designed in a manner so that it includes the larger community as well.

### Conclusion

We must strive to provide environment, culture and programmes that encourage the corporate sector to redefine their personal approaches for profits. CSR should be an integral part of a company’s policy and not merely an act of compliance with law. Each programme for children can be strengthened using Corporate Social Responsibility. It is the need of the hour to integrate CSR with areas such as work structure, employee benefit child care, education, health care and community investments. We have enough research on ECCD that can be used to convince the corporate world to invest in this area. As an old African proverb goes “It takes a whole village to raise a child”. The responsibility of bringing up children has to be shared. The concept of this public private partnership (PPP) thus appears to be a sound model for development in social issues in India and also elsewhere.

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# From Surviving to Thriving: Supporting Lifelong Success through Integrated, Holistic Service Delivery for Young Children in Nepal

By Rachel Machefsky, Save the Children, Nepal

## Developing a Science-based Approach to Help Children Survive and Thrive

While considerable progress has been made in the past decade to reduce child mortality, an estimated one-third of all children under the age of five around the world are not developing to their full potential<sup>1</sup>. Children living in extreme poverty and other adverse conditions are at risk of suboptimal development because of poverty, stress or instability in their environment. Subsequently, they will not be well prepared for primary school and are at risk of underachieving or dropping out of school. In adulthood, they are more likely to have low incomes and compromised physical and mental health<sup>2</sup>. As we approach 2015, the watershed year that marks the end of our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) movement, we must begin to think beyond helping children survive and move towards helping children develop to their full potential. Those societies that support children not only to live, but also to thrive, will be more stable, prosperous and healthy.

Any set of goals or action plans that are developed post-2015 should be based on emerging research from the biological and social sciences on early childhood development. Research advancements have made it increasingly clear that the foundations of healthy development are varied and interrelated. Studies of programmes from low and middle-income countries indicate that early childhood interventions that combine nutritional and psychosocial services more effectively promote both physical growth and psychosocial maturation than interventions that address either areas of development alone<sup>3</sup>. This evidence points to the potential benefits of building a unified framework to address the needs of young children born into adverse circumstances.

Integrated programmes that recognize and respond to the existing overlap across

different areas of development present one of the best opportunities to advance child survival and wellbeing. Children and their families will benefit from programmes that lead to inclusive economic growth, generate opportunities for human development and ensure environmental sustainability. In this context, young children are more likely to have their needs for health, nutrition, safety and stimulation consistently met. Provision of services for children in an integrated fashion will likely increase efficiency and reduce the cost of delivery. Additionally, the cost to parents in seeking out multiple services for their children will be reduced when they are available in one location. For example, providing vaccinations and nutritional supplements at early childhood development (ECD) centres, will most effectively and efficiently promote the health of school-going children.

## Piloting a Coordinated Model of Support for Children in Nepal

In response to the growing body of evidence that integrated services best support the needs of young children and their families, the Government of Nepal is piloting an initiative to coordinate distinct government agencies around one centralized task force focusing on young children. Although currently active in five of Nepal's 75 districts, the government is keen to scale-up the programme throughout the country provided the benefits of the programme are evident. The programme is being implemented with the financial and technical support of Israel's National Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV). The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Save the Children (SC) and Plan International are also supporting with the coordination process and implementation of integrated programmes for children.

In Nepal's 70 districts where the intervention is not being piloted, the Ministry of Education

continues to be responsible for managing early childhood care and development programmes. Although the Government of Nepal has made significant gains in improving child survival and well-being through this framework, some elements of the model of service delivery could be improved. Under this system, it is sometimes unclear to other government ministries that they also have a role in ensuring children's well-being. As a result, they have not made early childhood a focus of their efforts or allocated a budget for early childhood interventions. However, young children have diverse needs, many of which do not fall within the education sector, including health, nutrition and security needs, that can be most expertly met by other ministries. Additionally, as in many countries that made progress towards the attainment of the MDGs, in Nepal, the progress was not achieved evenly across geographical, social and economic groups<sup>4</sup>. The Ministry of Education, alone, is not able to fully address this problem of equity and access.

The pilot programme, in contrast, is multi-sectorial by design and includes the active participation of many different ministries. A steering committee was created in December 2011 to lead the integrated team of governmental agencies at the national level. The committee is chaired by the secretary of the National Planning Commission and comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and Ministry of Local Development, as well as from UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the Children and Plan International.

The steering committee plays both an advocacy and advisory role in meeting the holistic needs of children. Representatives serving on the steering committee ensure that the specific needs of young children are understood and addressed within their ministry. For instance, representatives allocate budget from their distinct ministries

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for activities pertaining to young children. In this way, providing care for young children becomes the responsibility of all government ministries. Members of the steering committee will meet regularly to identify challenges in providing integrated services to children and their families. They will also develop intervention strategies to address the challenges based on their shared experiences and scientific research. The steering committee must also develop a rigorous monitoring and evaluation plan in order to assess whether the results of the pilot justify the scaling-up of the programme at a national level.

The steering committee has planned a range of activities to support the holistic development of children. One core activity is to improve the quality of care provided in ECD centres. To that end, Save the Children, with the support of Israeli ECD specialists from the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC), provided training to ECD facilitators in the intervention districts. The programme also seeks to increase the access of young children to quality health services by providing basic health services in the ECD centres. Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs), already active throughout Nepal, visit ECD centres to distribute vitamin A and iron tablets and provide vaccinations. The Nepal government in collaboration with Save the Children has also prepared a parent education package on health and nutrition for young children that FCHVs can use to educate parents about basic physical care for their children.

In addition to providing technical and financial support, the Government of Israel has served as an example of a government in which ministries are aligned to provide care for the holistic needs of young children. The Nepali framework now being piloted was modeled on the Israeli example. In order to facilitate learning, MASHAV organized and financed a visit of Nepali government ministers and officials to Israel. Through this exposure visit, Nepali officials saw the benefits of providing integrated care to young children. Additionally, they saw firsthand the many roles of various government ministries, not traditionally associated with child development, in meeting the needs of young children. In Israel, Nepali officials also learned about frameworks to facilitate collaboration across diverse ministries. The

exposure visit served as both a learning opportunity and an advocacy activity through which ministers became convinced of the importance of providing integrated, holistic care for young children and learned about the processes by which they can be provided.

While it is still too soon to know the impact of this new model for integrated service delivery in Nepal, significant progress has already been made. The establishment of the steering committee is an achievement that reflects a tremendous coordination effort. Additionally, as a result of the steering committee's advocacy activities, the local level district development committees (DDCs) have provided much needed funds for ECD centres. The respective DDCs have also coordinated the efforts of distinct agencies working within the pilot districts.

### Opportunities for Integrated Services

Effective solutions are needed to help the more than 200 million children worldwide who are not developing to their full potential, not only to survive but also to thrive. Investing in these solutions will support children to mature into healthy, capable adults, who in turn will be better prepared to contribute to the societies in which they live. Advancements in research in the life sciences have underscored the need for and potency of comprehensive interventions that address the varied, but linked needs of young children. These interventions are particularly effective when they begin early, target disadvantaged populations and are of an appropriate intensity and duration<sup>5</sup>. Continuing to invest in and improve ECD programming in the post-2015 global agenda is one of the surest ways to promote a healthier and more prosperous world community.

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# Galli Galli Sim Radiophone Project Converging Technologies to Prepare Children for Life

By Ira Joshi, Vartika Gupta, Antra Khurana, Sesame Workshop, India

## Introduction

Early childhood, the first eight years of a child's life, is universally accepted as the most critical years for optimal development of the child. This development includes and involves the emergence of abilities and skills in areas such as language, physical, social, emotional and cognitive domains. Research in the field of neuroscience has provided convincing evidence that brain development in the early years sets neurological and biological pathways that affect health, learning and behavior throughout life. If these critical periods are not supported by a stimulating and enriching physical and psycho-social environment, the chances of the child's brain developing to its full potential are considerably and irreversibly reduced.

Despite efforts by the Government and Non-Government Organisations, many children in India drop out, do not attend school, or attend poor-quality schools. Often these children come from poor and migrant communities with limited resources. With growing opportunities in cities, families migrate in search of work and very often, children are forced to leave or drop out of schools in their native village. They live in pockets around the construction sites, and encounter language, socio-cultural and economic barriers in accessing basic health and education services. Evidence indicates that migratory populations are large and growing and an estimated 9 million children below the age of fourteen years belong to migrant communities. Clearly there is a great need to address the educational and other needs of migrant labor populations. However, the transient nature of these families prevents any long term sustained on-ground intervention. Hence, it is imperative to consider alternate and innovative approaches that are accessible, affordable and equitable to reach out to these children.

It is with this objective that the Sesame Workshop India (SWI) started its

'Radiophone' project that uses convergence of technologies to target young children, their parents, teachers and community members to positively impact the educational and health needs of these disenfranchised children. 'Sesame Workshop India' is an educational organisation that uses the power of media to help children reach their highest potential. The Radiophone initiative is a unique project that builds on the success of popular local community radio stations (CRS) and Galli Galli Sim Sim (GGSS), India's first and indigenously produced educational television programme for young children. It relies on use of a variety of technologies to reach out to children in remote and inaccessible areas and improve their learning.

## Radiophone Project – Converging Technology to Improve the Lives of Marginalized Children

Sesame Workshop India's Radiophone project is a unique programme that leverages the success of Community Radio and combines it with telephone-based systems to make educational content accessible to a highly mobile population. This project targets child aged 2-8 years through an educational and entertaining GGSS Radio programme around the key themes of literacy, numeracy, health and hygiene, good nutrition & social skills. The objectives of the project are to; 1) Increase learning levels in children and; 2) Generate a community movement around the importance of education and learning for children. During these 2 years Sesame Workshop India partnered with 10 community radio stations (CRS) across 5 states of North and Central India to reach out to approximately 1.4 million people through its Radiophone project. The project combines the power of community radio, telephone and 3G technologies to reach populations that are migrant and marginalized. It provides a platform to develop and broadcast high quality and engaging educational content made available to children who live in media dark areas, or are migrant and out of school.

The key features of the project include:

- 1. Engaging educational content:** The Radiophone project relies purely on 'audio' content to impart learning to young children. To ensure the content is engaging and relevant, formative research was undertaken to test its appeal and accessibility with the children and their caregivers. The content developers worked closely with the production team to ensure that the audio programme included stories, songs, interactive games and techniques like sound-scaping to engage children and impact their learning.
- 2. Access to tailor-made localised content:** Each of the 12 minute GGSS episodes includes a recorded voice of the community segment (Vox-pop) recorded. This 2 minute segment captures pre-recorded interaction between a GGSS character and local community members around the primary messages or theme of the episode. It allows integration of voices of children (girls and boys) in the show, which then gets broadcasted across all the radio stations. This participatory method generates interest in the programme and allows children from each community to participate and share their voices. This process makes the radio programme inclusive and yet distinct for its target group. Under this project, 91 GGSS audio episodes were developed, localised and then broadcasted across the CR stations.
- 3. Increased participation and inclusion:** In addition to the GGSS radio programme, each CR station also creates a completely localised community segment. The purpose of the segment is to capture thoughts, views, opinions and experiences of the community members and children and reinforce the key messages in socially and culturally relevant ways. These segments are scripted and produced locally. To-date, almost 400 localised community segments have been produced by the 10 community radio stations. Finally a call-in interactive

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segment allows participation and sharing of experiences, stories and challenges by the community members.

**Table 1: Format of the Localised Radio Episode**

1. **Introduction** to the GGSS radio show (locally produced)
2. **Galli Galli Sim Sim episode**
3. **Vox-pop** (pre-recorded interaction)
4. **Community segment** (locally produced)
5. **Live phone call-in** (to engage listeners)

### 4. Increased audience participation via GRINS:

This project used GRINS (*Gramin Rural Inter Networking System*), a plug and play server for community radio stations. This system assists CR stations to manage broadcasts, thematic archiving, retrieval of the content and enables them to handle calls, storing, retrieving and play out of the calls and retrieve feedback. With the help of GRINS, the live calls received during the programme are managed and tagged. The data generated from GRINS indicates good response to this programme as evident from the 2000 exclusive calls made by the community members. It also allows Sesame Workshop India to identify popular episodes and critical messages that should be focused on for future programming.

### Using Technology for Continued Access and Reach

The Radiophone project is designed to specifically include messages to enhance child learning on language and pre-literacy skills, numeracy skills including thinking and reasoning, numbers and operations, health and hygiene & good nutrition. However, the high mobility of the population and network issues beyond the coverage area of the CR station proved to be challenging. To mitigate these issues, SWI used an innovative method to ensure continued access, interactivity, reinforcement and continuity of key messages for children. This unique approach called Radio over Telephony (ROT) system involved the development of an internet interface that allowed children and families to access archived radio segments, educational activities and other

information. Each community radio station used a pre-assigned phone number where children or parents could call in and leave a missed call. The system calls them back and the listeners can listen to up to 6 previous episodes, ensuring that children call and continue to listen to the radio broadcast, anytime from anywhere in the country, without incurring any cost. This ensured continued educational inputs and learning opportunities for children beyond the coverage of the community radio stations.



Photographer, Affiliation – Sesame Workshop, India

### Using Technology to Generate Participation, Ownership and Advocacy Around the Importance of Education for Young Children

The impact of the Radiophone project is measured using a variety of tools that include Ethnographic Action Research (EAR), Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique and Learning Outcome Experiment (LoE) workshops. Preliminary findings indicate that the project was able to create significant community engagement and participation across all the community radio stations. Triangulating findings from the different methods used in the study; including diaries, mind maps, most significant change stories and call tags, it is evident that the project had the greatest impact on increasing community participation in children's learning and development. The stories generated through research reflect that the project has the potential to change behaviours and practices at an individual level.

## Conclusion

The findings from the Radiophone project demonstrate that additional educational inputs through engaging content and access have the potential to improve the knowledge levels, behaviours and practices among children and caregivers from marginalised communities. It further establishes that children's programmes are a good way to engage the community around issues of governance and social behaviors. It has enabled Sesame Workshop India to access a section of hard-to-reach population with engaging and entertaining content, increase community participation and build the capacity of community radio stations to produce children's programmes.

It is evident that while the programme was directed at children, contextual realities of listening patterns including limitations of access to radio and cell phones as listening devices for children are barriers that impact access and learning. For future projects, efforts may be directed to additionally reach out to children in group settings where they can access the programmes through facilitated and sustained listening.

# Rethinking School Readiness and Transition to Primary School: Voices of Teachers for Indonesian Children's Outcomes

By Lara Fridani, Monash University, Australia

This study is about kindergarten and primary school teachers' perspectives and practices on school readiness and transition to primary school in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. School readiness and transition to school are complex issues. Many researchers have pointed out the importance of the role of teachers and their perspectives in understanding the complexities of school readiness, in order to adequately support children entering primary school (Brooker, 2002; Bohan, Baker & Little, 2004; Cassidy, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2005; Dunlop & Fabian, 2003; Margetts, 2005, Peters, 2004). It is unequivocal that teachers play an enormous role in creating the appropriate conditions and opportunities for children's learning and success.

The available literature on children's readiness is still emerging and different countries have tended to apply diverse concepts, approaches and practices to the concept (Graue, 2006; Janus & Offord, 2000). In Indonesia, specifically in Jakarta, debates on the concept and practice of school readiness and transition have just begun. The complexity of this issue becomes apparent when there are different expectations and practices among teachers regarding which skills are important for children to have a successful start to schooling.

This qualitative study explored Indonesian teachers' perspectives on school readiness and transition to primary school practices. The paper reports on data obtained from 10 focus group discussions with 30 kindergarten teachers and 30 primary school teachers selected across the capital city of Jakarta. The results showed that national policy and accountability, expected academic skills, professional knowledge issues, as well as parental factors are key variables that inform school readiness and transition practices.

The data shows that both kindergarten and primary school teacher groups

predominantly conceptualised school readiness in terms of age group, by making reference to the national policy prescription which instructs children's age as the main standard to be accepted in primary school in Indonesia and as a key factor in promoting their transition to primary school. The policy indicates that children are permitted to enter primary school when they reached the designated age of seven years regardless of their experience. The enforcement of this policy might be due to the fact that the majority of primary schools in Indonesia are public schools which are managed by the government, implying that the schools must adhere strictly to the policy requirements.

All teacher groups in this study explored what the policy prescribes about age to help identify who should go to primary school. By following this policy, some schools favor older children during admission to primary schools. This view seemed to lead to the policy of deferring school entry for some younger children whose age is judged as being not ready for school. In such cases, the assumption is that providing children with additional time to mature will support children's development and learning.

The concept of age criteria for school readiness in Indonesia is still debatable especially as there has been no system in place to have consensus on what constitutes readiness and how to measure it. Perceiving children's readiness in this way is problematic because there are some children who are younger and more ready to learn at school while some older children may not be. Furthermore, because children develop at different rates, the establishment of a specific chronological age range for children to begin school ensures that some children who satisfy the chronological age criteria may not necessarily achieve the demanding school requirements. Due to the implementation of an 'age and a cut-off date' as a criteria for school entry, there is often a diverse range of ages and abilities

represented by children in the classroom.

The findings also suggest that most of kindergarten teacher groups prioritize academic skills such as reading, writing and computing as the more important aspects of school readiness. Many kindergarten teachers said: "We increase the level of reading, writing and computing skills by drilling the children in the second semester of kindergarten." Some teacher groups felt positive about giving children some homework to make them learn at home: "We give children a homework every day, so they can repeat the lesson at home." One group of teachers reflected on the importance of training children to be confident in their academic skills through competitions: "We encourage children to join the reading, writing or math competition so they can have a useful experience from it."

It is evident that many kindergarten teachers in Jakarta view cognitive development as a priority aspect of school readiness. It would seem that teachers hold misunderstood beliefs about children's capabilities and have high expectations for children to learn academic skills such as reading, writing and computing. In practice, teachers are more likely to use rote learning and drilling, including the memorization of words and practicing arithmetic facts. This practice does not tailor the programme to the strengths and needs of the children. Rather, it places children at risk of failure and boredom even before or when entering primary school. The focus on academic skills and cognitive development for preparing children's entry to primary schooling is contradictory with current research and literature that highlights the importance of considering all aspects of children's development when considering school readiness (Denton, 2000; Schoen & Nagle, 2004). Janus and Offord (2000) argue that repetitive practice is debatable because it does not recognise the importance of less structured aspects of early childhood learning including social competence,

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physical health and emotional adjustment, as well as language and cognitive skills and general knowledge. It is also interesting that when queried, some teacher groups in the study believed that drilling children on their academic skills and can better prepare children for primary school by building on their confidence. The study also shows that there is a significant difference between kindergarten teacher and primary school teacher practices on preparing children transition to primary school. In a primary school context, transition to school is often limited to orientation day programmes as prescribed by the national policy. When primary school teacher groups discussed current transition activities in their school, one trend became evident. All primary school teacher groups associated transition to school programme with orientation day given by the local government which is conducted in the first three days of primary school entry. As one teacher says “Each programme takes about 1-3 hours, where we take the children to have a tour around the school, and give them opportunity to know their new friends, teachers, and staff.” Some primary school teacher groups also commented, “we do not teach children reading and writing these days because we just want them to feel comfortable at school.” However, several groups of primary school teachers are concerned about whether children have the appropriate academic skills to starting school. They believe that academic skills influence children’s transition to school and that a smooth transition requires children to have specific literacy skills.

The existing literature states that transition to school is a process that occurs—and a function of the ecological, dynamic relationships between children, family, teachers and the community in both the prior-to school and formal school settings – rather than an event that just happens to a child (Bohan-Baker & Little, 2004; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). It is noteworthy that many Indonesian primary school teachers perceived transition programmes as similar with orientation day which can be considered as an event that happened to the child. There is a general lack of a planning which cannot support children to be ready to learn and feel valued. Furthermore what has not been accounted is the importance of the relationships between schools, homes and communities.

The ecological model of Bronfenbrenner offers a multifaceted theoretical framework which incorporates a broad picture of children’s abilities, health, and behaviours, as well as the capacity of families, educational programmes and the broader community to support children’s early learning and development (Boethel 2004). The theory situates conceptions of school readiness and transition within interrelated factors – microsystem, exosystem, mesosystem and macrosystem. This means unless families, schools and communities provide the environments and experiences that support the physical, social, emotional, language, literacy, and cognitive development of children, school readiness would become isolated. This model is useful in better understanding the transition from kindergarten to primary school in the Indonesian context which acknowledges a shared responsibility of all the stakeholders and recognizes the dynamic nature of the relationships involved in the process. This conceptual model views children’s ‘readiness’ for school as depending on how relationships form between key players in their transition to school, rather than on the development of a specific skill set in the child.

In conclusion, rethinking the school readiness concept and the transition practice in Indonesia is crucial. Teachers can improve the readiness of children by making connections with macro-level policies to create their own micro-level practices. This might ensure that all stakeholders are involved in supporting children’s transition to primary school. Based on the results of this study, the government prescription for accepting children into primary school should be reviewed. There should be a collaboration between home, kindergarten, primary schools settings, and education policy makers when developing school readiness and transition programmes for children. In addition, developing a continuous curriculum framework across educational contexts is also fundamental to have a smooth transition programme for children.

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# Closing the School Readiness Gap in Bangladesh

By SMM Kabir, Aga Khan Foundation, Early Childhood Development Support Programme Bangladesh; Kerrie Proulx, University of Toronto, Canada

There are three broad arguments for investing in early years education. Firstly, high-quality early childhood education has positive short- and longer-term impacts on children's learning and development. Secondly, early childhood education can address inequality, with positive impacts on school readiness greater for those from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds. Thirdly, investing in early childhood education offers an opportunity to address issues such as illiteracy, innumeracy, crime and unemployment. Recognizing the number of benefits associated with early childhood education, both on children and society as a whole, the Government of Bangladesh has been committed to rolling out a universal preschool programme for all 5-year-old children from 2014 onwards.

A key premise behind the Government's proposal is that preschool will enhance school readiness and improve the learning outcomes for all children. However, is this premise achievable: do all children benefit from preschool – and if yes, do they all benefit equally? These questions are related to the equality argument for early childhood education and are addressed in this paper by drawing on empirical evidence that looks at the differential effects of a preschool programme on children's school readiness in Bangladesh.

The research found that children who attended preschool had improved school readiness skills – from recognizing 3-4 letter words to being able to write their name and identify written numbers. Importantly, the positive impacts of preschool were more pronounced for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who were at risk of starting school 'behind' their peers. In particular, we found that children of mothers with low levels of education received greater gains from preschool attendance than children whose mothers had secondary or higher education. While all children benefit to some degree from preschool, the evidence makes a compelling case that preschool has some benefits for address inequality in Bangladesh because the most disadvantaged children

may reap the greatest benefits.

## Methodology

The study is based on a comparison between an intervention group of children who attended a centre-based preschool run by the Bangladesh Shishu Academy under the Early Learning for Child Development (BSA-ELCD) and a control group of children who did not have access to preschool in their local areas. The BSA-ELCD is operated under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in every district across Bangladesh and is designed for children in the year or two prior to entry into Grade 1. It operates six days a week for three hours a day with an average class size of 23 children (range 15-30). The children in the sample ranged from 6 to 7 years and were evenly represented by gender.

The School Readiness Assessment was developed and validated by the Aga Khan Foundation Bangladesh by drawing on standards of development and school readiness identified in the Bangladesh Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS). The ELDS articulate expectations of what young children should know and be able to do prior to primary school entry, taking into

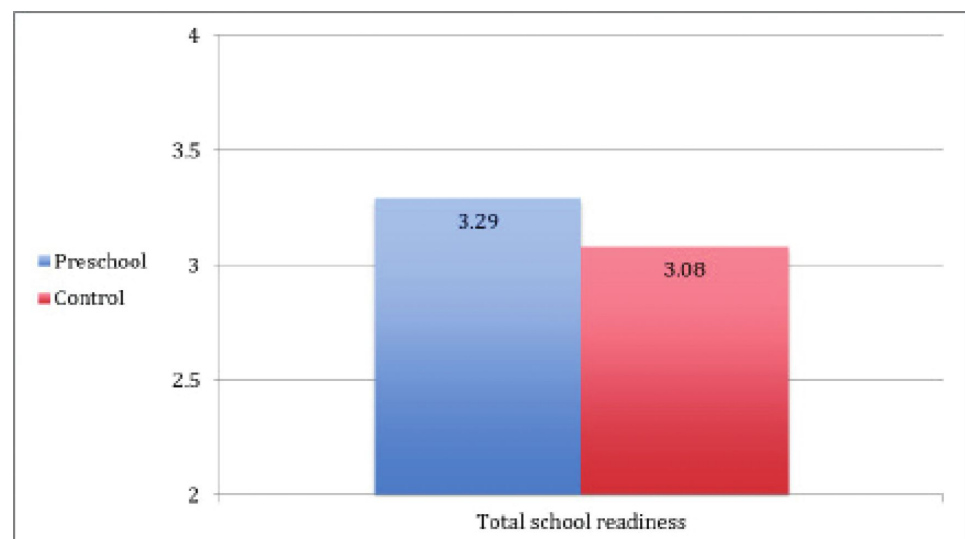
consideration social, cultural and political contexts, in addition to international research on children's learning and development. The standards draw on four widely used domains of school readiness established by the US National Education Goals Panel in 1990: (a) physical and motor development; (b) language and literacy; (c) cognitive development and general knowledge; and (d) social and emotional development. The School Readiness Assessment was thoroughly reviewed by a team of educators, monitoring and evaluation specialists, and research assistants for administration time, clarity of language and instruction, and content validity.

## Findings

The results indicate that attending preschool had a significant overall effect on children's school readiness (see Figure 1). When differences in socio-demographic variables were compensated for, preschool improved children's school readiness by approximately five percentage points, which supports existing evidence that high-quality preschool has positive short-term impacts on children's learning and development in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, the study found a strong

**Figure 1. Mean school readiness results for preschool and control groups**  
 $F(1, 243) = 11.99, p < .001$



## ECE and School Readiness

relationship between maternal level of education and children's school readiness; at the beginning of their first year of school, children of mothers with low levels of education were percentage points behind those whose mothers have secondary or higher education (see Figure 2). Children of parents with low levels of education are likely to have a less stimulating home learning environment. While all children benefit from preschool, the positive impacts on school readiness seem to be greater for children of mothers who had no education or only primary education. These findings are consistent with international evidence, mostly from higher-income countries, which indicates that preschool attendance has greater positive impacts on disadvantaged and vulnerable children than on their more advantaged classmates.

### Discussion

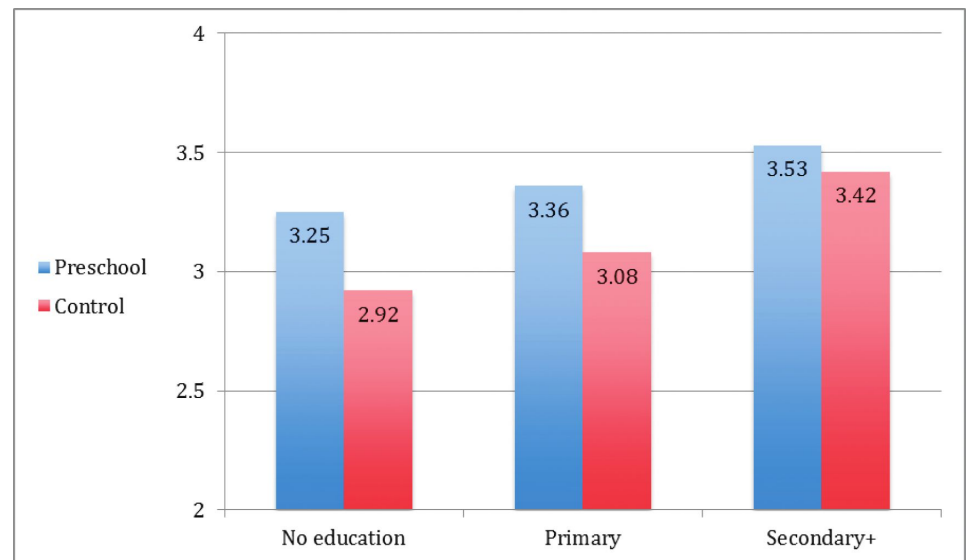
While these findings present a stark picture of inequality in the early years, they also point to a number of opportunities for future programmes and policy that would prevent greater numbers of disadvantaged children from starting school behind their peers. This is particularly pertinent given the Government's intention to invest in universalizing preschool education.

Although all children benefited from preschool, the positive impacts were more pronounced for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular, those whose mothers had low levels of education. According to the first EFA Goal, investments in the early years should be targeted, first and foremost, at expanding access and quality to children identified as "the most vulnerable and disadvantaged". Low maternal education (e.g., mothers with no history of formal school or only primary education) can identify children and families most in need of early years provision, above and beyond other measures of social or economic status.

However, while Preschool narrowed the school readiness gap between vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their most advantaged classmates – but it did not close the gap completely. Even with preschool, children whose mothers had low levels of education did not attain the same level of school readiness as children of

**Figure 2. Mean school readiness results for preschool and control by maternal level of education**

No education  $F(1, 74) = 5.23, p = .03$ ; Primary:  $F(1, 77) = 6.28, p = <.001$ ; Secondary  $F(1, 74) = 1.48, p = .23$



mothers with secondary or higher education. As the Government rolls out the universal preschool programme, focus should be placed on investing in and improving the quality of early childhood education and ensuring participation from families with low levels of maternal education. Currently, children of mothers with low levels of education are significantly less likely to participate in preschool, which undermines the potential of preschool to reduce inequalities in the early years. In addition to improving the quality of centre-based preschool programmes for 5-year-olds to ensure maximum benefits for vulnerable and disadvantaged children, it is equally important to focus on improving the home environment as well through interventions that focus on breastfeeding promotion and nutrition, responsive feeding, child play and stimulation, and family literacy.



# A Story of Change Troops in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia

By Maryam Mursadi, Sampoerna School of Education, Indonesia

'Learning to Share' is the theme of a community service programme conducted by a group of college students (include age group e.g. aged 12-13) of Sampoerna School of Education, Jakarta, Indonesia. This year's theme reflects on the spirit of lifelong learning and the right to education for all. One of the goals of this programme is to provide an opportunity for students to apply their knowledge and skill that has been acquired during studies.

One of the groups 'Change Troops', spent nearly two months in Sukapura village in Karawang, a district in West Java Province. It is a two hour drive by car or bus from Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. The majority of the residents are working as farmworkers or factory workers. Their economic situation is bleak, with challenges in the areas of health, education and social politics. For instance, the percentage of children with malnutrition is high; students' age of 12 (primary school grade 6) reading ability is low even though they show enthusiasm in reading; and political frictions cause societies to be divided. However, the village has a high potential for growth in terms of human resources and natural resources. The village has fertile soil and a rich variety of vegetables and fruits. Focusing on these potentials, the 'Change Troops' programme aims to empower these individuals. The programme is focused on mentoring the early childhood centre careworker, delivering workshops on health and education and initiating the establishment of a library.

## Mentoring Early Childhood Caretaker

From Directorate for Early Childhood Education, Ministry of Education and Culture Republic Indonesia (PAUDNI, 2010) National statistics shows that the issues facing early childhood teachers in Indonesia. The data predicts that by 2015, there will be 727,500 teachers. This amounts to approximately 132.000 early childhood teachers graduating each year. The teachers' college that offers early childhood degree in Indonesia can only

provide for around 4,800 early childhood teachers each year. Currently there are 402,493 existing early childhood teachers in Indonesia, and only 15% of them possess bachelor degree and/or diploma degree S1/D4 qualification. Recent data also show that 35% of early childhood centre tutors have not pass their highschool (PAUDNI, 2013). The data represents the real condition in the Sukapura village. There is only one teacher in each centre whose role includes a teacher and as well as a caretaker. In addition, most teachers have neither the appropriate educational background nor experience to teach children. Therefore, the Change Troops members assist them to develop skills such as designing thematic learning, creating activities that meet the student's development stage(s), modelling the teaching and learning in the classroom and organizing seminars on "The importance of early childhood education" and "Breastfeeding: Saving Mothers and Children". The programme's seminar was generally successful as the participants showed high enthusiasm by raising questions and discussions on child development, early literacy and numeracy issues.

## The Establishment of a Library

During the mentoring session, the Change Troops discovered books and reading materials that were abandoned at the warehouse. The books were donations from individuals or group of individuals who came to visit the village for community service activities; and the reading materials were from the workshops that teachers have attended. The troops classified the books and reading materials and arranged it in the classroom using the limited space to create a library. In this way, the children have more opportunities to see the world from the books they read.

## Overcoming the Challenges

During the implementation of the programmes, the troops faced particular

challenges in their work with the early childhood centre caretaker. There are only two early childhood centres in the village. Each centre belongs to an opposition party who were involved in a political friction in the district's chief election. Therefore, they refused to conduct the training in the opposition's centre. As a result, the troops conducted the mentoring sessions in a venue that is 'neutral' to both parties. The troops also visited each centre to monitor the progress of the programme. The caretakers realized that being the only person who runs the centre is difficult. Thus, they began to seek out for parents' involvement in the process. The other challenge was to gather the community members for seminars. The troops went to every home to encourage the villagers to attend the seminars.

The college students gained valuable experience in this programme. Although the government campaign for compulsory education in Indonesia is up to 12 years, they learnt that in reality, in some regions, it is difficult to be implemented. This programme enabled them to practise their knowledge and skills they have learnt in university such as designing lesson plans, developing age appropriate activities, and creating safe and healthy environments for learning. They have also extended their learning by contextualizing their knowledge and skills based on the villagers' needs. This presented valuable opportunities to be able to learn from the community.



The importance of early childhood education

Photo credit: Evik/SSE/Indonesia



Activity in early childhood centre



Modelling teaching and learning in the classroom

## Strengthening Teacher Education Programmes

By Irum Fatima, Aga Khan University-Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED), Takbir Ali, Pakistan

Pakistan is the world's sixth most populous country with a population of over 160 million. With some of the lowest development indicators in South Asia, the country faces significant development challenges. Pervasive gender discrimination prevents women and girls from accessing basic services, including education and deep rooted government corruption often undercuts development work in the country. Most importantly, Pakistan's weak public education system is undermining the future of millions of children and youth.

The statistics on primary education in Pakistan present a dismal picture. The Annual Status of Education Report survey for 2012, which focuses on children's language and arithmetic competencies and includes 82,521 household surveys in 4,226 villages across 142 rural districts (along with data from urban districts), found:

- Of the 57,503 children surveyed in the 3-5 age groups, 62.9% were not enrolled in any school. Of those enrolled 70.5% were in government schools, 27% in private schools, 1.7% in madrassas, and 0.7% in other institutions.
- Gender disparity was clearly reflected in the survey. School enrolment for children aged 6-16 years fell from 79.9% in 2011 to 77.1% in 2012, comprising 36% girls and 64% boys.
- Of the 22.8% of school-aged children that were out of school, 4.7% had dropped out, while 18.1% had never been enrolled.
- In government schools, only 38% of class 3 students were able to read sentences. Among the out-of-school children, only 5% could read story-level text.
- Among government primary schools, 60.6% had useable water facilities, 49.6% a functional toilet, 61.8% a boundary walls and 30.9% a

playground within the premises.

- In rural Sindh, 61.2% of young children are not in school and only 9% of class 3 students can read a sentence. In Baluchistan, only 5.8% of class 3 students are able to read a sentence.

STEP is a multi-faceted intervention with the **goal** of *improving the quality and delivery of elementary education services appropriate to the poor, particularly women and children*. The immediate **purpose** of the programme is to *strengthen the professional development and performance of teachers, teacher educators and education managers*. To effectively achieve this purpose, the programme focuses simultaneously on three primary components,

### 1. Teacher Education

Improved performance of teacher education institutions in providing quality teacher education,

### 2. Teaching, Learning and Education Management

Improved performance of teachers and education managers in delivering and supporting quality teaching and learning, *and*

### 3. Policies, Practices and networking

Improved policies, practices and networking for the professional development of teachers, teacher educators and education managers.

### 1. Teacher Education

This component focusing on enhancing the performance of teacher education institutions, by improving the quality and impact of teacher training courses through building the capacity of the faculty and management of the institutions and improve course modules, methodologies and delivery mechanisms of teacher education programmes.

STEP offer 2-year M.Ed. Programme, Educational Leadership and Management and Research & Action research courses for teacher education institutions. M.Ed. graduates are implementing their acquired learning from 2-years course in their professional practices of teaching-learning and education management, adopted new teaching methodologies with proper lesson planning, develop and utilizing low cost or no cost teaching material, use activity based learning and also using effective assessment tools and integrating gender concepts in classroom teaching.

Administrators-principals and vice principals of teacher education institutions trained in educational leadership and management course utilize their knowledge and skills to exhibit educational leadership qualities. They brought change in the areas of governance and leadership, curriculum aspects, teaching learning and assessment, learning resource development and infrastructure development.

Faculty members initiated action research work in their institutions on different topics related to teaching and learning. They have a better understanding of approaches to conduct educational research. Also, these research graduates shared their acquired skills with fellow teachers how to conduct small and large-scale educational research projects.

### 2. Teaching, Learning and Education Management

This component aims to improve the performance of teachers and education managers in delivering and supporting quality teaching and learning within the school and classroom by building the capacity of education managers, teacher mentors, and teachers through customized courses and innovative field-based models, Whole School Improvement Programme (WSIP) and Cluster Based Mentoring Programme (CBMP) & offered Education leadership & management course for government officials (ADOEs, school supervisors and Learning Coordinators) from Sindh and Baluchistan.

#### a. Whole School Improvement

20 'Whole School Improvement (WSI)' schools are working to improve the

school, quality of teaching and learning generally by focusing on curriculum aspects, leadership and management, use of teaching and learning resources, professional development, monitoring and evaluation, community participation and gender integration. The selected WSI schools developed 'school development plans' (SDPs) with common vision for school improvement and targets. Whole School Improvement activities are continuing with noticeable improvements observed in student enrolment, attendance and improvements in school infrastructure.

The schools undertook the following interventions to improve the quality of school:

**Curriculum Implementation:** The head teacher effectively engages all teachers to plan their lessons in view of the national curriculum standards and developed mechanism to continuously monitor instructional processes to ensure that the learning activities are related to students learning outcomes.

**Management of teaching and learning:** The head teacher holds review meetings with teachers to ensure better teaching, learning and student performance, involving other teachers in mentoring and peer coaching for professional development at school to achieve the objectives of school improvement process.

**Continuous monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** The school has a written M&E plan to track progress of SDP and keeps and maintained records. The schools now manage students learning records-assessment results, students' work samples as an evidence of learning. Management has good follow up mechanism to ensure student enrolment and attendance. The WSI schools have discipline codes and communicated to teachers and students.

**School infrastructure:** In some WSI schools, the infrastructure of the school has been developed by constructing additional classrooms to cater the school needs.

**Relationship with Community:** The WSI schools have active school development committees to improve quality of education and facilities. There is increased interest of parents to visit school and discuss school

improvement issues. Teachers have been observed motivating students as well as the local community in the improvement of the school environment. As a result of WSIP activities, positive changes in schools are emerging, including higher enrolment, increased attendance and decreases in drop outs. Schools have initiated to host co-curricular activities in order to create more space for student learning and development, including sport activities and observing internationally celebrated days such as Children's day, Environment Day, International World Health day, and Women's Day.

**A WSIP School on the way to transformation:** STEP trained Head and Lead teachers are active and serving their respective school more effectively and efficiently their respective schools. During follow up visits by the STEP academic team, M&E and gender teams, it has been observed that school development plans have been enthusiastically implemented to promote better teaching and learning practices. Head and Lead teachers have improved the school environment, infrastructure, cleanliness, hygiene, facilities and motivated School Management Committee to utilize funds towards school development.

#### b. Cluster Based Mentoring Programme (CBMP)

STEP provides professional support to improve the quality of primary education in selected districts of Sindh and Balochistan through its Cluster Based Mentoring Programme (CBMP). 130 Teacher Mentors trained through a one-year Advanced Diploma in Primary Education, Content Enhancement (ADIPE) to run the CBMP in seven districts of Sindh and three district of Baluchistan. Mentors have developed selected schools as Union Council Tehsil Resource Centres (UC-TRCs). Each UC-TRC has one nucleus school and four to six feeding schools. A total of 135 UC-TRCs have been established by STEP in Sindh and Baluchistan. These UC-TRCs have been supplied resources, including furniture, library books, and instructional materials, so that they can be used for mentoring activities in the CBMP. Teacher Mentors provide training on four subjects (English, Mathematics, Science and social studies) to over 3,000 teacher mentees from the

## Mentoring and Teacher Education

of teachers in experimenting with new and interactive pedagogies. The systematic follow-up of mentoring activities facilitated teaching and learning practices, provide ongoing academic support to mentees in their efforts to implement their learning from the workshops within their classrooms.

Mentors and Mentees have highlighted the benefits of the cluster based workshops in terms of demonstrating modern methods of activity-based learning, due to which students are taking more interest in their work, participate in classroom activities and enhanced confidence in their ability to learn.

The following key improvements as a result of CBMP mentoring have been observed by the STEP team:

**Lesson Planning:** During field visits, mentors encourage mentees to develop lesson plans using the format that they find most suitable for their specific classroom context and the majority of them maintaining written lesson planners.

**Improved Teaching:** Mentors observe classroom teaching, demonstrate effective lesson techniques during their follow-up visits and provide feedback to the Mentees. This has contributed to marked improvement in the way teachers deliver lessons.

**Implementation of National Curriculum:** Mentors and mentees have been provided with a copy of the national curriculum document for teacher use and have received an orientation. Teachers regularly consult the document to reference standards or Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) while preparing their daily lessons.

**Activity Based Learning:** The most important part of CBMP is to develop and deliver activity-based learning strategies. Most of the teachers are implementing activity based learning in their classrooms.

**Use of Low Cost Material:** Activity-based teaching requires variety of instructional material to facilitate learning based on interactive tasks. As government schools are often poorly resourced, in the past it has been a challenge for mentees to create activities that provide hands on experience. However, training at UC-TRCs and workshops has provided mentees with the ability to develop relevant, low cost material for use in activity-

based student learning.

**Exam Paper Design & Planning:** Most government schools do not conduct annual exams through any standard procedures. Mentors guide Mentees to develop a proper exam paper for class IV & V for four basic core subjects and assist mentees in conducting the exams.

Government officials Assistant District Officers, Education (ADOEs), District Education Officers (DEOs) and supervisors who completed the certificate course in Education Leadership and Management (ELM) are playing very active role in the STEP Cluster Based Mentoring and Whole School Improvement programmes.

### 3. Policies, Practices and networking

#### a. Professional Network for Teacher Development

STEP established the Professional Network for Teacher Development (PNTD). Currently, there are PNTDs operating in Sindh, Balochistan Gilgit Baltistan and in Chitral. The PNTD professional teachers benefit from workshops which are designed and arranged in response to needs of teachers. The workshops are conducted in the areas of English, Early Childhood Education, Mathematics, Science, Health and Hygiene, Social Studies, and Gender. Teachers who face problems in attending professional work due to their busy schedules benefit from summer workshops in vacations.

PNTD proved to be useful a platform for teachers and other participants to share their experiences on teaching-learning and engaging with innovative methods of teaching. According PNTD teachers, they are replicating the new strategies, and using learnt skills for planning and delivering new and exciting activities to the students in their classes. The majority of Government school teachers are learning new things which are beneficial to them, their students and colleagues.

#### b. Policy Recommendations

STEP has focused on efforts to influence education policy through its programmes and create greater policy awareness about

critical issues in education - particularly since policy development at the provincial level has become a critical challenge for educational reform.

STEP provides recommendations and inputs to the Government of Pakistan's policy development. Policy dialogues are at held district & provincial government levels. The following recommendations were made during policy dialogues:

#### 1. Governance of Education:

Recommendations included the establishment of a district education board, develop linkages between different departments and establish better working relationship between NGOs and the government and improve school performance through accountability and transparent systems

#### 2. Sustainability of Project-Based Educational Innovations:

What matters? Recommendations included improving coordination between authorities and communities for sustainability educational projects, to ensure long term benefits of educational projects, Integrate STEP project (CBMP and WSIP model) in the existing education system for school improvement and content enhancement of teachers.

#### 3. School Supervision:

Recommendations included providing training to school supervisors/ learning coordinators in school supervision, transparency in appointments through the Sindh Civil Service Commission, develop independent monitoring and evaluation system.

#### Acknowledgment

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# Communicating Early Childhood Care & Health Issues: A Situational Analysis of Innovative Strategies for Capacity Building of Rural Media for Extended Media Dialogue on Routine Immunization (RI)

By Anu Kumari Mishra and S. Saunand, India

## Introduction

Universal immunization is one of the most important targets in today's health support systems. It is also one of the highly conspicuous and cost effective ways of minimizing disease prevalence for any country. Quality, holistic and accessible child development programmes are essential for building a robust human capital in any part of World and especially in India.

The National Policy for Children in 1974 declared children to be a 'supreme national asset' in India (Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Government of India, 2012). The policy pledged to secure and safeguard children's needs while declaring that this could be done by making wise use of available national resources. Subsequently, it was noted that ten successive five-year plans neither allocated nor utilized an adequate share of available national resources to meet the needs of children or to honour their rights (MWCD, 2012). This situation therefore induces the type of approaches made by governments to broaden Health Information, Education & Communication (IEC) practices and merge thematic areas for an inclusive health development.

The Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) was established in 1974 through a World Health Assembly resolution to build on the success of the global smallpox eradication programme, and to ensure that all children in all countries benefited from life-saving vaccines. The first diseases targeted by the EPI were diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, measles, poliomyelitis and tuberculosis. India was one of the countries to adopt the World Health Organization's Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) which started globally in 1974 and was

initiated by the Indian Government in 1978 (Mathew, 2012).

As a country, India continues to rank poorly on several key indicators in terms of the health and well being of children globally. The burden of vaccine preventable diseases remains unacceptably high in comparison to developed countries and also many developing countries (Mathew, 2012). India also continues to have the largest number of unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children globally (N. Pradhan et al.).

The short commentary below describes the status of child survival rates in India:

## Status of Child Survival & Child Health in India

2.5 million Children die in India every year, accounting for one in five deaths in the world, with girls being 50 percent more likely to die (HDR 2005). One out of 16 children die before they attain one year of age, and one out of 11 die before they attain five years of age. India accounts for 35 per cent of the developing world's low birth weight babies and 40 per cent of child malnutrition in developing countries, one of the highest levels in the world. Although India's neonatal mortality rate declined in the 1990s from 69 per 1000 live births in 1980 to 53 per 1000 live births in 1990, it remained static, dropping only four points from 48 to 44 per 1000 live births between 1995 and 2000.

Source: Report of Working Group on Development of Children (2007-2012), Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. Of India

High mortality and morbidity, poor outcome achievement in education and development; chronic imbalances in access to services and

opportunities; high risks of neglect and lack of protection; fragmented and sectionalized service outreach to address cross-sectoral needs, unequal distribution of development benefits, and low levels of investment and attention have been seen to affect the lives of a majority of children in India (MWCD, 2012).

Globally, media linkages in creating health equity – through various communication strategies – play a crucial role in realizing the objectives of reaching out to masses at grass-roots. They have always been seen as the 'most important agents of change' especially in communicating critical health concerns. Multiple research reports and two meta-analyses of 48 US and 39 international programmes indicate people often change their behaviour as a result of strategic communication campaigns and programmes. An effect or influence of 9-10 percentage points in the desired health behaviour can occur as a result of large-scale communication campaigns (Snyder & Hamilton, 2002; Snyder et al., 2003; Hornik, 2002).

Comprehensive programmes using mass media as well as community activities are more effective than small-scale efforts. Qualitatively, the media discourse for programmes like "pulse polio vaccination" has been more successful in informing grassroots while communication strategies for other similar health issues have not picked up. It was reiterated that programmes based on a coherent national strategy can go to scale to achieve national impact (Hornik, 2002; Piotrow et al., 1997; Snyder et al., 2003).

This study focuses on health communication strategies at grassroots and how it fosters sustainable health equity of the marginalized

communities. It is an attempt to focus on the dynamics of health communication through rural media and their possible implications between the present state of media systems in India and their perceived role in bridging health inequalities in India and elsewhere.

### **Development Goals & Health Inequity in India vis-à-vis Routine Immunisation**

The climate of development depends on governance and the benevolence of the State in reaching out to the community and family base (MWCD, 2012). Greater child survival and development prospects of any society depend upon ensuring the deliverables of the governance. Children in a country like India face pressures of survival and thus become 'at risk groups' as they are young, small & powerless (MWCD, 2012). There exists rural-urban and class-caste divides amongst Indian communities which also underline the importance of making strategic communication planning & action capable of addressing disparities in different social & cultural settings.

With an allocation of more than 63, 000 crores (with an average of 12000 crores per year) on children during 11th plan period, inequality in child immunization programmes in India still exists in large states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh etc. The inequalities in health is reflected in inequalities in coverage of health interventions as well as inequalities in health outcomes across different social and economic groups (NIMS, ICMR and UNICEF, 2012). In actual fact, there have been no fundamental changes in the structure and organization of basic health support by governments. In addition, it is also reiterated that the communication strategies involving strategic media discourse has not gone well with stakeholders due to logistic and operational constraints that require streamlining. Only 500 crores of the total budget has been given for media plan for Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD), Government of India during the period (Table 1). Though in the present context, there still exists an ambiguity in defining the terms 'Media Plan' (Saunand & Mishra, 2012).

As per the Report from the Working Group on Development of Children (2007-2012), the

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, offers very low immunization coverage for diseases such as Polio, Measles, Diphtheria etc. has been a critical concern in combination with other health linked issues such as high MMR, low birth weight, occurrence of anaemia amongst children in India. This trend varies regionally among different social groups and girls respectively (MWCD 2012). Therefore, a 'Pan Indian' approach in resolving and taking forward the mandate of Routine Immunization strategies have to be relooked especially from viewpoint of strategic health communication (Saunand & Mishra, 2012).

Saunand & Mishra, 2012 argue that the present development practices vis-à-vis health communication show that they are directed from global needs to the local needs. They describe it as 'an inverted pyramid approach' as a result of which they put forward the line of reasoning a "Communication curtain" which can be created during the sustainable development of society. They further augmented that this may become more pronounced due to unsound health communication processes. Saunand & Mishra 2012 emphasized that the communication strategies should have an altruistic approach in reaching out to the marginalized and affected section of societies to reduce the inequities.

### **Success Story: Building capacity of district & state media Catalyzing Media dialogue on Routine Immunization: A Media Discourse Narrative in India**

#### **Key Highlights**

In May 2011, a media capacity building exercise saw over 80 district, state and national media from Madhya Pradesh, India interacting simultaneously on Routine Immunization (RI), using Indira Gandhi National Open University's video conferencing system. This capacity building exercise culminated with a High Level Editors' meet on RI in April 2012.

If scaled up across states, this initiative could leverage existing Government infrastructure (IGNOU) and its network of 60 regional centres located in remotest corners of the country to catalyze media discourse on RI, linking national, state and district media

simultaneously.

Innovative use of technology: videoconference, mobiles, blog coupled with face-to-face interaction and field visits to initiate and sustain balanced and informed reporting.

Post-media analysis shows 40 % increase in reportage on RI issues from national and state (Madhya Pradesh) media.

#### **Background About the Initiative**

Capacity building of district and state media simultaneously with national media: India/ Madhya Pradesh (Pilot State)

UNICEF and IGNOU partnership: Establishing a core group of select media on RI, launch of an online platform to capture trained journalists' writings: [www.media4child.blogspot.com](http://www.media4child.blogspot.com), recognition certificates.

Reduce Infant Mortality: MDG 4 and create enabling environment for acceptance of Routine Immunization programmes

#### **The Development Context**

A partnership was thus forged, with the country's largest distance education University, IGNOU having presence in the remotest corners of the country. This partnership was established, keeping in mind the need to build capacities of media present in difficult-to-access regions of the country. The state of Madhya Pradesh with 42% immunization rate (against the national average of 60%) was chosen as a pilot state. IGNOU's regional centres in Jabalpur and Bhopal were utilized to link up with the national media in Delhi.

A pre-intervention media analysis was conducted to understand the tone and content of media reportage on RI. Results showed that two third of the coverage was event based, 61% of the stories were negative with tendency to sensationalize news reports especially those filed at district level, attributing AEFI deaths to the vaccine.

The engagement strategy was divided into three phases. The first phase in May-June 2011 connected over 40 district level media from Jabalpur with 30 state level

media from Bhopal and ten senior national media from Delhi, simultaneously through videoconference facilities of IGNOU. This helped to highlight the urgency of the issue among a large cross-section of media.

In July-Sept, these 80 journalists were taken to field visits in Bhopal and Jabalpur. Journalists were exposed to hospitals and Anganwadi immunization sessions, walk-in coolers and freezers for demonstrating cold-chain vaccine storage.

In April 2012 over 20 top-level editors from regional and national level media houses were engaged with, to create commitment and space for Routine Immunization at the highest level. Journalist icons, Mr. Vinod Mehta and Sir Mark Tully publicly recognized efforts of some of the best journalists for their articles on RI engaged in May 2011.

#### Analysis of Success Factors

Choice of partner: IGNOU is a government entity and shares a common equity focused vision with UNICEF- that of reaching the unreached.

Low cost technology for communication and capacity building: IGNOU has robust infrastructure of videoconferencing facilities, IGNOU's internal SMS mobile system as well as network of television and radio – Gyan Vani and Gyan Darshan. These amenities kept the infrastructural costs low and enabled simultaneous engagement and ensured compressed learning times with a large number of media.

Media analysis: A pre and post media analysis showed a 40 per cent increase in the number of non-event based stories. The sustained engagement through the year combined with field visits led to highlighting a wide variety of topics such as role of ASHAs, cold chain management, importance and factual information on RI sessions.

#### Key Recommendations for Scaling Up

2012 has been declared as the Year of Immunization by the Government of India. A national and state level partnership between the Ministry of Health, IGNOU regional centres and UNICEF state offices can ensure that this combination of using videoconferencing technology, SMS,

University radio and television combined with actual field visits can be used to its maximum potential for building capacities of district, state and national level media.

Media analysis shows that negative AEFI based stories are sourced largely at the district level and are printed in multiple editions, thus contributing to lack of trust and fear of the vaccination programme. It is thus essential to adopt innovative methods as described in this report, to build capacities of district level media and create networks for them to be in touch with relevant State immunization officers and partner organizations.

Use of low cost tablets as a self-instructional tool on RI for media and frontline health workers could act as a catalyst for two-way communication and informed reporting.

#### Why it has Worked?

A strategic plan of engaging the media phase-wise over ten months helped ensure that we nurture and build capacities of a core group of media over a longer time. Usually media have high turnovers but the creation of an alternative platform to showcase their writings helped overcome this issue.

Creation of ([www.media4child.blogspot.com](http://www.media4child.blogspot.com)) and awarding the best writers at the end of the engagement helped sustain the interest of the journalists over a longer time.

Strong teamwork between UNICEF national and state office teams as well as IGNOU

and its regional centres.

Reinforcement of learning by video conference through field visits and body mapping exercises.

Periodic sharing of RI related messages through SMS ensured that we remain in touch with those media who do not have access to computers/emails. This helped when for reporting AEFI they had our / State immunization Officers' numbers to call back and clarify information before reporting.

#### What Challenges Have Been Faced and Overcome?

Some of the remote regional centres may have non-working computers/ video-conferencing facilities or may lack two way conferencing. In such situations UNICEF intervened to provide back-up/ bolster technical facilities in the existing studios so that interaction at national, state and district level could take place smoothly.

#### Factors Which Need Particular Attention for Scaling Up or Replication in other Contexts?

It is essential that the same group of journalists who are engaged during video conference are re-engaged for the field visits and subsequently encouraged to contribute more articles. The best among them can be recognized publicly as this was demonstrated in this case-study. It is also necessary to constantly provide these trained media with data and research papers



Over 20 top editors from English and Hindi print and TV media at the Editors' meet on RI

on RI (local niche specific) which can act an impetus for more articles.

Use of SMS to be constantly in touch with the core group of media hence being trained ensures that the journalists have a ready-reference number in case they want to revert for further details. It also provides triggers for writing their stories as was providing this case-study.

Engaging the senior editors of these trained journalists ensured and envisaged the commitment of space and importance to the issue are ensured. Often health correspondents who may have been trained have to convince why they are focusing on a seemingly “non priority” issue like RI.

**Learning from the Project, Recommendations at a Local level include:**

1. Culturally responsive action catering to immediate and long term health needs of people with special reference to routine immunization.
2. Implementation of successful communication models and strategies for holistic health development of regions with indigenous communities.
3. Strengthening of local media economies through participatory media dialogue and discourse.
4. Using innovative approaches through new media & technologies outside.

**Recommendations at National and Regional Level include:**

1. Development of specific policy frameworks for routine immunization.
2. Programme formulation for identifying the cultural and traditional approaches.

**Recommendations at a Global Level include:**

1. Formation of a Special Interest Groups for RI development (SIGRID) in ARNEC to look after regional health inequity issues. These groups can work in consonance with the regional and local level special interest groups like ARNEC Task Force.
2. Formulation RI Plan through innovation & use of ICTs for rural & remote communities.
3. ARNEC could augment through enhanced

participation of transnational corporations through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in furthering RI coverage.

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# ARNEC CONNECTIONS

Working Together for Early Childhood

## ARNEC Connections No. 7, 2013

**Theme:** Early Childhood Development on the Global Agenda: Giving all children equal opportunities for lifelong learning, health and success

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## UNDERSTANDING OUR NETWORK

support.

*“ARNEC works towards a vision in which the developmental potential of the young child is realised with support from families, communities and states in all member countries in the Asia-Pacific region.”*

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

## MISSION AND ACTION PILLARS

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

### *Advocacy for Policy Change:*

Support national partners and members in their assessment and review of national early childhood policies, frameworks and implementation, and facilitate the exchange of models and tools from other contexts.

### *Knowledge Generation:*

Facilitate the continuous analysis and synthesis of regional ECD evidence and research, identify priority areas for further learning, and support strategic research activities.

### *Information Management and Dissemination:*

Provide a platform for ECD professionals to share information and resources, ensuring these are easily accessible to all.

### *Capacity Building:*

Provide opportunities for professional development and learning related to ECD through strategic ARNEC events, external outlets, and strengthen national networks through targeted technical

### *Partnership Building:*

Build external partnerships and coalitions to create a supportive environment to leverage resources for ECD and ARNEC's capacity to fulfil its mission

ARNEC is guided by 15 Steering Committee members made up of early childhood experts from the Asia-Pacific region who provides direction for the planning and development of the Network and its activities.

The Network is supported by the following organisations: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Office for Education, UNICEF, Plan International, Open Society Foundation, Save the Children and SEED Institute.

## WHO ARE OUR MEMBERS?

Our members are individuals in the field of early childhood who are concerned with young children and families of Asia and the Pacific. The Network's strengths draws upon the support of our members who are experts in health, education, nutrition, social welfare, human development, social research or policy, sociology, or anthropology. Becoming an active ARNEC member means you are able to contribute your knowledge and share with others your experiences.

Friends of ARNEC, or institutional memberships, are also available and receive additional benefits such as the eligibility to enter into joint activities with ARNEC and be featured on our website.

Interested individuals or organisations may find out more information about the ARNEC membership categories on [www.arnec.net](http://www.arnec.net)

<http://community.arnec.net>

# ARNEC: A Call to action

- 1. Expanding access to holistic early childhood development and promoting equity**
- 2. Ensuring good quality of early childhood intervention**
- 3. Building and enabling policy environment for holistic early childhood development**
- 4. Strengthening capacities of parents, families and communities**
- 5. Creating a movement to support holistic development and learning of young children**

**For more information:  
[www.arnec.net](http://www.arnec.net)**