

## EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

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This presentation is based on a review of early childhood care and development (ECCD)<sup>1</sup> commissioned<sup>2</sup> as a contribution to the Year 2000 Assessment of Education for All (EFA). ECCD emerged at Jomtien as an important extension of the more traditional approach to basic education in which education began with entrance into school. Specifically, the Framework for Action fashioned at the World Conference set as one of the targets to be considered by signatories in their plans for the 1990s: "Expansion of early childhood care and development activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children." The Jomtien Declaration stated that "Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities or institutional programmes, as appropriate."

### Changing Contexts

Continuing industrialisation, migration and urbanisation, national conflicts, growing debt burdens, increases in poverty and inequality linked to globalisation, economic recession in some countries, a growing informal sector and increased entry by women into the paid labour force affect government policies and operations as well family structures and child rearing practices, creating new demands for child care and education services of different kinds within tight financial constraints. The powerful influence that these (and other) contextual variables can have on education and welfare suggests that **we should be humble with respect to our expectations about what World Conferences can accomplish**. Modest gains should be celebrated. Moreover, the variety among settings and the immense differences in the timing and incidence of particular trends for particular countries, with accompanying differences in their influence on early childhood care and development, leads us to believe that **generalisations must be tempered; policies and programmes must be adjusted to particular contexts**.

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<sup>1</sup> Early Childhood Care and Development" ECCD) is used throughout the document, taken from the Jomtien Framework for Action. "Learning" and "education" are embedded in development. The phrase is purposely chosen to connote a broad and integral view of learning and education. Other valid terms we might have used include: Early Childhood Care and (Initial) Education (taken from the Jomtien Declaration), Early Childhood Education and Care (OECD), Early Childhood Care for Survival, Growth and Development (UNICEF), or Early Childhood Development (World Bank).

<sup>2</sup> By UNICEF on behalf of the EFA Forum.

## **Tendencies in Early Childhood Care and Development since 1990**

### **In the Well-being of Children**

Over the last 10 years, important advances have been made in Latin America and the Caribbean in reducing infant and child mortality. Declines have occurred also in levels of malnutrition in some countries, and the consumption of micro-nutrients has improved. However, malnutrition continues at high levels in many locations, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, there is evidence that feeding programmes, unless combined with other measures, may not be particularly effective in decreasing malnutrition.

**Unfortunately, very few countries provide us with measures of the psycho-social well-being of young children or of their learning during their early years.**

Improvements are inferred from changes in subsequent school performance and retention, but these are at best indirect measures of a child's general development or psycho-social well-being. The only country evaluation to provide some evidence regarding these outcomes is Chile which reports that: 1) the effects of early education were greater for children in rural areas and in the social-emotional areas of development as contrasted with cognitive development; 2) the effect was sustained for rural children as they move into primary school, and 3) not all programme experiences proved equally effective.

### **In ECCD enrolments<sup>3</sup>**

A table providing information about gross enrolment ratios (GER), taken from country evaluations, is attached as Appendix 1. Caution must be taken in interpreting this data because there are significant differences among countries in: the age group for which information is reported; the baseline year and the most recent year; the definition of what constitutes an early childhood programme; the days and hours that programmes are in session; the coverage accounted for by unregistered programmes. (Appendix 2 provides additional comments on the EFA indicators selected for monitoring ECCD). In spite of these inconsistencies, this information taken together with additional documentation (reports of regional meetings, UNICEF annual reports, special studies, etc.) suggests that:

- the general tendency in the LAC region has been for enrolments to increase since 1990.
- although there are cases of large, and even rather dramatic growth during the period, the increases can more generally be characterised as small and marginal.
- the variation among countries in the region in levels of access for children age 3 to 5 is huge, ranging from a little more than 20% (Paraguay, Bolivia) to over 100% (Jamaica) in 1998.
- attention continues to be concentrated on "pre-schooling" and on children ages 4 to 6, particularly on the year just prior to primary school. A corollary is that few children under 4 are being attended in organised ECCD programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> A special note is attached to this summary up-date commenting on the ECCD enrolment indicators that were recommended for use in the EFA country reviews.

- urban children are more likely to be enrolled in some sort of ECCD programme than rural children.
- children from families that are better off are more likely to be enrolled than children from families with few resources.
- there is relative gender parity in enrolments in the region but in some rural areas of some countries there is still a lack of parity.
- public provision of services dominates in Latin America but the relative importance of the private and social sectors in providing ECCD services is high in the Caribbean.

### **In Conditions Affecting ECCD Programming**

During the decade (according to the survey of knowledgeable people<sup>4</sup> and country reports) changes have occurred, differing from country to country, in conditions that affect the delivery of ECCD services and their potential effect on the well-being of children. These include:

#### **1. Changes in the knowledge base and its dissemination; conceptual shifts.**

During the 1990s an advance occurred in our understanding of how the brain develops and functions. Additional longitudinal studies appeared showing long-term benefits of early intervention programmes for children at risk. New avenues of research that are beginning to influence practice include studies of: "resilience", conditions under which programs can have a negative affect on child development, and childrearing practices and patterns.

Conceptual shifts that seem to be "in process" include movement toward: 1) placing greater emphasis on social and cultural influences on the process of development, replacing a behaviourist viewpoint and complementing a more individual and "constructivist" view of development and giving renewed importance to the role of the teacher and to the place of language in the teaching/learning process; and 2) questioning the concept of universal "best practices" grounded in developmental psychology, accompanied by greater attention to discovering, respecting, and incorporating cultural differences into thinking about how early childhood education and care "should" occur, with viewpoints grounded in anthropology, sociology and ethics.

Conceptual shifts also began to occur in the manner in which planning, programming and implementing organisations conceive of their task. For instance, there is evidence to suggest shifts toward: 1) viewing early childhood programming within a broader framework of poverty alleviation or transitions to democracy, 2) linking the concept of "holistic" development to integral programming cutting across sectoral lines; 3) preventing -- as contrasted with "compensating" for problems once they occur. 4) In the air also is a change in how governments see their role, with a tendency to shift at least some of the burden of providing services from exclusive government responsibility to partnerships and sometimes to the marketplace through "privatisation." 5) The Convention on the Rights of the Child, and perhaps to a lesser extent the conceptual frame provided at

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix for information about participants in an international survey carried out to obtain information for this review.

Jomtien are helping to shift thinking, from a "needs" perspective which tends to be associated more directly with focussed or "targeted" interventions to a universal "rights" perspective, and from early attention as "preschooling" to an ECCD perspective.

The knowledge base has also been fed by experience in the form of many programmes and projects mounted during the 1990s and earlier, that are deemed "effective" and that provide a wealth of ideas and options.

Although the above may sound encouraging, **these shifts in knowledge and concept are slow and there is a lament by many that new knowledge does not seem to transfer into changes in policies or programming.** In part that is related to a feeling that the dissemination process is deficient, despite noted increases in publications, fora, inter-country discussions, websites and the emergence of networks regional and national as well as international networks.

**2. Changes in attitudes/awareness.** Related to the growth of a knowledge base and to its dissemination is an increased awareness, within governments and the NGO community, and among policy-makers and intellectuals, regarding: 1) the importance of early childhood care and education (and particularly of the earliest years), 2) what early childhood development is (for instance, recognition that it is an active, holistic and integral process involving the child as a person) and 3) how to go about fostering it. In the third category is included a new openness to:

- diversifying attention, broadening the range of options and including programmes directed to family and community as well as to the child ;
- acceptance of non-formal approaches (but not as "second best");
- developing home-school partnerships;
- working with non-governmental organisations;
- inter-sectoral collaboration and co-ordination; and
- thinking beyond enrolment to quality.

Although examples may be cited for all of the above, it is clear that **greater awareness often does not translate into changes in policy or programmes;** indeed, these same topics are included in the category of problems to be overcome and in recommendations of lines of action that need to be pursued.

**3. Changes in policies and in legal and legislative frameworks for programming, internationally and nationally.** Country reports and survey respondents often noted specific changes in laws, the development of policies and the explicit inclusion of ECCD in national plans as advances in the field of ECCD. During the decade, several Latin American countries have made the last year of pre-schooling obligatory. At the same time, **the lack of good and comprehensive laws and policies, particularly for children under 3, characterises too many countries.** And, there is considerable criticism of some of the broader government policies (for instance, economic adjustment policies) that affect ECCD indirectly and are often linked to international agency policies.

**4. The availability of resources.** There is no doubt that the overall level of international financing available for ECCD has increased a great deal since 1990, particularly within Latin America as the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank have expanded their ECCD portfolios. At the same time, questions have been raised about the style of funding organisations and about the national capacity to use available international funds well.

The picture is not so clear with respect to national budgets. Although it has not been possible to determine from most country reports the level of funding available for ECCD, the scant evidence suggests that government funding is very low (probably than 2% of the total education budget in most countries) within the region. Chile reports a higher level of relative educational spending on early education but that level has dropped from 8.2% in 1990 to 7.6% in 1998. Mexico spends approximately 5% of its education budget on pre-schools and initial education. In most of the Caribbean, responsibility for ECCD is left largely to families, communities and non-governmental organisations and expenditures are less than 2% of the education budget. In general, **there continues to be a strong feeling that the field is under-funded, that public financial support is low and unstable, and that the lack of resources is an important problem**

A similar picture appears for human resources, with indications of advances in professional formation in many countries set against a strong feeling that human resources are lacking and that training is needed at all levels, but particularly at local levels as decentralisation occurs.

**5. Organisational bases, strengthened and consolidated, both governmental and non-governmental.** Country reports and survey responses made reference to on-going processes of diversification and decentralisation in the region, covering such changes as: new strength in local NGOs and municipal governments and the incorporation of early childhood development into different sectoral programmes. Mention is made in several reports of the formation of inter-sectoral committees and councils.

As with other categories, this set of advances is cited for a limited number of settings and must be set against others in which the organisational weakness of NGOs, and local organisations and governmental bodies is emphasised and the failure to coordinate actions is pointed out.

### **Changes in ECCD practice**

Shifts have occurred in the processes of training and teaching, which, together with creation of new curricula and better materials, are intended to redefine and improve programme quality. However, these advances are modest and **more attention seems to have been given to increasing enrolments than to improving quality**. For instance, although there have been important advances in the number and quality of ECCD training programmes at various levels, **training continues to be seen by many as the most important need in the ECCD field**. And, whereas it is possible to cite curriculum changes in some countries, moving the field toward active learning, play and guided discovery, the tendency to treat early education as an extension downward of primary school continues in

some countries. Cultural constructions of curricula involving indigenous communities have appeared or been strengthened during the decade but much remains to be done in this area.

The good intentions fostered through improvements in training and curricula and materials are often undercut by: an outrageously large ratio of children to adults in ECCD centres; a tendency to treat adults in ECCD parental education programmes as children; an inability to incorporate a community dimension into larger-scale ECCD programmes.

### **Problems and Proposals: Where do we go from here?**

This section sets out problem areas and needs as identified by survey respondents and as found in recent publications. The following listing, which is expressed in terms of "deficits" should not be interpreted to mean that countries have not made advances. Indeed, in addressing these deficits, it would be well to begin by securing and extending the gains already made in these areas.

1. **Weak political will.** The need continues to convince politicians, policy makers, programmers, and education officials, often now at local levels, of the importance of ECCD. To create will, we need to develop:
  - better strategies of communicating, lobbying and advocating.
  - a better information base, with improved indicators, statistics, monitoring systems, studies and evaluations.
2. **Weak policy and legal frameworks.** To formulate and strengthen policy we need to:
  - undertake analytical studies of existing policies affecting children, looking beyond narrowly conceived educational policies to, for instance social welfare, health, and labour policies that affect child care and development during the early years.
  - Seek conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, incorporating principles of the best interests of the child, non-discrimination and participation.
  - Work closely with the legal profession
  - Establish norms and standards (for private as well as public, and including provisions for constant revision) that are not so rigid or high as to be unworkable but which will assure positive attention to children.
3. **Lack of, or poor use of, financial resources.** ECCD programmes generally command a small portion of governmental budgets, relative to percentage of young children in the population. In budgetary terms, children (and especially young children) are clearly not placed first. There is, therefore, a need to:
  - Increase allocations to ECCD in national budgets and make more permanent commitments to such funding;
  - Strengthen the capacity of states and municipalities to obtain resources for ECCD;
  - Seek cost-effective approaches, including quality community-based non-formal approaches to ECCD;

- Explore more vigorously such alternative (to government budgets) avenues of funding as debt swaps, philanthropic contributions, and private sector involvement;
- Co-ordinate the increase of financial resources with attention to the capacity to handle such resources and the strengthening of human resources.
- Provide access to central pots of money by local organisations so as to respond better to local demand expressed in proposals originating in communities.

**4. Uniformity (Lack of options).** The bureaucratically convenient tendency to extend the same programme to all children conflicts with the need to tailor ECCD programmes to cultural, geographic, economic, and age differences. This tendency is reinforced by the notion that ECCD is the same as "pre-school" which, in turn, is simply an extension downward of primary schooling. We need, therefore, to:

- Think in terms of complementary and varied approaches to ECCD that include family and community-based programmes.
- Involve NGOs more actively as partners.
- Decentralise programme responsibility as well as administrative responsibility, with attention to building local capacity.
- Construct culturally relevant programmes with local communities rather than impose ECCD practices from the centre.

**5. Poor quality.** There is a pressing need to:

- Re-examine training and supervision and to provide sound training (both pre-service and in-service) at all levels in with respect to a diversity of ECCD approaches.
- Reduce the number of children (or families) per education/care agent.
- Improve and reformulate curricula, taking into account not only "best practices" but also local definition of what constitutes "best practices".
- Draw upon existing experience in a more systematic way.
- Establish better systems to monitor and evaluate both children and programmes.

**6. Lack of attention to particular populations.** The following "disadvantaged" populations need to be given greater attention: low-income, rural, indigenous, girls, children 0-3, pregnant and lactating mothers, working mothers, fathers.

**7. Lack of co-ordination.** If a holistic and integrated notion of learning and development is to be honoured and if resources are to be used more effectively greater co-ordination is needed a) among government programmes of health, welfare, social security, nutrition, education, rural or community development, etc., b) within the education sector, especially between ECCD and primary schooling, and c) between governmental and non-governmental organisations. We need to:

- Create inter-sectoral, inter-organisational co-ordinating bodies.
- Construct joint programmes crossing bureaucratic boundaries.
- Strengthen the ability of families and communities to call upon and bring together services that are presently offered in an uncoordinated fashion.

- Seek agreement on the populations that are most in need of attention and direct services to those populations in a converging manner.
- Build partnerships. A clearer definition is needed of the roles of the state and civil society and of forms of partnership

8. **Narrow conceptualisation.** The conceptual frameworks guiding programmes intended to improve early childhood care and development and early learning have come primarily from developmental psychology and from formal education. There is a need to go beyond the knowledge that these fields can provide to incorporate broader views with cultural, social and ethical dimensions brought to bear. There is a need also to relate ECCD programming, conceptually and operationally, to other programmes lines that begin from analyses of children's rights, poverty, working mothers, rural development, special needs, street children, refugees, adolescents, gender, etc.

### **Where should the emphasis be placed? Where should we concentrate efforts?**

The first answer to this question must be, "It depends." Regions and countries (and parts of countries) bring to the table extremely different conditions and cultural views and are at very different points in a process. It is therefore inappropriate to try and set general priorities for action in all situations. Consistent with this posture, the second answer to the question must be, "Each country (or perhaps even municipality) must take stock and decide upon its priorities."

Having said the above, it does seem appropriate to 1) present my own biased opinion of areas that seem to need special emphasis and that seem to stretch across many settings and 2) to suggest some general guidelines that represent the author's particular view of what needs to be put front and centre as the field evolves.

#### 1. Some possible areas of special interest.

**A. Training and Supervision.** Starting from the premise that the quality of programmes will be only as good as the people who operate them, it is logical to place emphasis on assuring that ECCD people at various levels are well motivated and are part of a continuous process of training.

**B. Supporting, educating and involving parents and other family members.** Parents and other family members will continue to be the main influences on young children's lives for the foreseeable future, especially for children under 3 or 4 years of age. Perhaps the greatest and most lasting effects on a child's learning and development can come from improvements in the capacity of parents to provide a supportive environment for learning and development. As suggested earlier, there are many possible ways to support and work with parents and family members and the particular combination of how to go about this work will vary with conditions.

**C. Evaluation and monitoring.** Giving priority to building monitoring and evaluation systems derives from more than an academic bias. Among the lessons learned from successful programmes is that effectiveness is fostered if programmes develop slowly



and are monitored and adjusted regularly. The information that comes from monitoring and evaluation will serve advocacy purposes as well as policy and administrative purposes. The information should help the process of reconceptualisation that many survey respondents felt is necessary. The failure of the EFA process to provide for adequate indicators for the ECCD area testifies to the need for work in this area.

## 2. Possible guidelines: a starting point for discussion

- Take a holistic view of the child and of the learning and development process, adopting cross-sectoral policies.
- Concentrate on the well-being of children and not on the size of particular programmes or on building bureaucracies.
- Begin with pre-natal attention.
- Include the excluded. Focus on equity.
- Be family-focused and community-based, fostering participation.
- Seek cultural relevance, determined by those involved, and accommodation, beginning where people are, building on inherent strengths.
- Build child-focussed partnerships.
- Seek cost-effectiveness, broadly defined.
- Avoid formulas. Be open to diversity and to complementary approaches.
- Seek quality.
- Incorporate monitoring and evaluation into programmes from the outset.

### **In Closing**

In this international forum, organised by international organisations, it seems appropriate to reflect on the role that has been, and can be, played by international organisations in promoting and supporting programmes directed at improving the care and development of young children. In gathering information for this review of ECCD, it was clear that international organisations have been given credit for and have played several important roles in helping ECCD to extend and improve. These include assistance in providing frameworks for analysis and action (Jomtien, the Convention), strengthening the knowledge base and disseminating information (supporting research, evaluation, monitoring, the creation of networks, publications, etc), advocating (by organising international fora, by negotiating conditions for financial support, and by marshalling the media), as well as by providing technical and financial support. These efforts have certainly contributed to many of the "advances" noted earlier.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that these forms of assistance represent interventions that imply certain value positions, that they depend for their result as much on the manner in which the assistance is offered as they do on the amount of assistance provided, and that can have negative as well as positive consequences. Consider the following:

1. Frameworks and knowledge -- the basis for lobbying and constructing ECCD programmes -- continue to originate, for the most part, in the Minority World. Accordingly, a tension often arises between "received truth" linked to the Minority World knowledge

base and values guiding an agency, and local knowledge linked to another set of values rooted in some part of the Majority World. These may overlap, but are different. Within the international community there are tensions as well. For instance, the universal rights framework being espoused by some can conflict with a needs-based approach and "targeting". The way in which these tensions are handled determines to some degree how "success" is defined for projects and can wind up creating a barrier to action because agreement is lacking. Implications:

- Although the current attention to involving all "stakeholders" in the process of creating a project represents an important step toward breaking with the past tendency to impose, we are far from making that participation real and meaningful. Additional work is needed to change past styles and methods.
- Major changes are needed in the consultant system which continues to depend for technical assistance on Minority World consultants (myself included). More effort should be put into drawing upon local knowledge and experience, embodied in local consultants.

2. Because programming for ECCD is at an early stage in many countries, it is possible to construct programmes in innovative ways, taking into account differing conditions, seeking convergence, and involving local communities in the process. This implies a need to move slowly, to experiment and reinvent, to build collaborative enterprises, to nurture, to support a variety of initiatives and to build capacity. Unfortunately, these needs run counter to social and political desires to move quickly so that as many people as possible are served. They run counter to bureaucratic desires to simplify administration by providing the same service to all and to avoid collaboration across sectoral lines. And they run counter to the characteristics of many international organisations where promotion and success is equated with the numbers of children and families served, with the ability to promote the particular doctrine of the agency, and/or with the ability to move money. The quantitative focus and a sense of urgency inhibits developing quality programmes, current rhetoric notwithstanding. Implications:

- Place less emphasis on expanding enrolments and on extending one particular programme to all; place more emphasis on quality, beginning with solid support for training, with local input into what is considered a quality programme, and with a vision of "scale" as the sum of many efforts.
- Take a longer term view and begin slowly; avoid overloading systems financially with too much money too soon. Be sure cash is accompanied by capacity-building.
- Develop loan and grant instruments that are demand driven rather than supply-driven, that allow varied responses to differentiated local demands.
- Find ways to work more meaningfully on the ground with NGOs.

For many international organisations, the changes suggested above constitute a huge challenge that goes to the heart of how organisations function. In a meeting where commitment to change by national governments is being sought, a parallel commitment might be asked of international organisations that goes well beyond a resource commitment and includes re-examination of values and the ethics of intervention styles and modes of operation.

**Appendix 1: Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER), programs of Early Childhood Care and Education/Development, circa 1990 and 1998**

COUNTRY	AGE RANGE	ENROLMENT:1990	ENROLMENT:1998
LATIN AMERICA			
Argentina	3-5	48.4% (91)	55.8%
Bolivia	4-5	32.2%	36.4% (99)
Brasil	4-6	35.4% (91)	45.6% (96)
Colombia: formal pre-s	5-6	-	41.7% (96)
	0-6		23.6% (97)
Costa Rica	5-6	61.4%	82.8% (99)
Chile	0-5	20.9%	30.3%
	0-2		3.5%
	2-3		22%
	3-5		35.5%
	5-6		83.0% (96)
Cuba	0-5	29.1%	98.0%
Ecuador	0-5	8.3% (91)	14.2%
Guatemala	5-6	31.3% (92)	37.4%
Honduras	4-6	17.1%	38.9% (99)
México	3-5	62.2%	76.3%
	5	68.7%	81.4%
Nicaragua	3-6	12.4%	23.6%
Paraguay	3-5	8.9%	22.6% (97)
	5	36.7% (94)	61.3% (97)
Peru	3-5	52.3%	60.9%
	5	77.5% (93)	87.7%
Uruguay	3-5	51.9% (96)	63.2% (99)
	4-5		95.0% (99)
Venezuela	4-6	23% (estimate, 89/90)	68.2%
	0-3	?	4.9%
CARIBBEAN			
Barbados	3-5	52.7%	76%
	0-3	23%	33%
Belize	3-5	25%	26%
Dominica	3-5	44%	54%
Grenada	3-5	70%	47%
	0-3	3%	4%
Jamaica	3-5	104%	104%
	0-3	6%	4%
Montserrat	3-5	0%	71%
Turks and Caicos Islands	3-5	0%	99%

Sources: EFA Country Evaluation Reports; Charles, L. (September 1999). "Measuring the Impact. An assessment of the progress made in achieving the objectives of Education for All: Assessment 2000 Process as related to early childhood care and development in the Caribbean." Kingston, Jamaica. (Mimeo)

## Appendix 2: A Brief Note on EFA Indicators

The two indicators that were suggested by the EFA Forum for use in the country Reviews are both quantitative indicators of access or enrolment: a) the percentage of the age group enrolled, and b) the percentage of new entrants to primary school who have had some early education. These indicators are limited in what they can tell us about ECCD and need to be interpreted with caution. Consider the following:

1. Only 2 indicators for ECCD were recommended vs. 13 for primary schooling;
2. Both are indicators of access or enrolment; there are no quality indicators, no indicators of the status of learning or development of children during the early years, no process indicators and no financial indicators.
3. The age range recommended for reporting is 3 to 5, leaving out indicators of attention during the earlier years.
4. Direct comparisons of enrolment levels and percentages among countries should be regarded with some caution because there are significant differences in:
  - the definition of the age group for whom data is presented;<sup>5</sup>
  - the baseline year and the year for which the latest enrolment data are presented;
  - the definition of what constitutes an early childhood program<sup>6</sup>;
  - the days and hours that programmes are operating;
  - the degree to which centres providing early childhood attention are allowed to operate in an irregular manner, outside the official system and therefore outside the official statistics;
  - the use of gross (vs. net) enrolment ratios creates a bias for some countries but not others, related to the varying percentage of over-aged children in programmes; and,
  - the reliability of the figures.
5. When looking at **increases** in enrolment it is important to take into account the baseline from which the increases are being made. It is possible to have increased enrolment by, for instance, 500% over 10 years, but still report an enrolment level that covers less than 5% of the age group. And, as full enrolment is approached, it is more difficult, statistically and in terms of involving more students, to show an increase.
6. In some country reports, the requested data were not presented, sometimes because the enrolment statistics were lacking or because census/population data for the relevant age group was lacking. The number of new entrants with early education was not presented for many countries because this information is not normally collected.

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<sup>5</sup> Some countries report only for the year immediately prior to entry into primary school, others for the age range of 3 to 5, others for 4 to 6, and others take a broader range for reporting.

<sup>6</sup> In some countries, statistics pertain only to formal programmes or to those in the education sector (leaving out, for instance those run by a family welfare or social security organization).

7. Enrolment data tends to be collected at the outset of each year and to be based on registrations rather than actual participation in a program. Such information does not take into account cases of children who never arrive even though they are registered nor changes that occur during the year, including cases of children who decide not to continue after a few days or weeks. The stability of the enrolment of children in programmes varies from country to country.

8. In some country reports the age range was not made clear.

9. In many country studies, the data are not disaggregated to show differences by age, geographic location. In only rare cases are enrolment data presented in relation to "disadvantage" as defined, for instance by levels of poverty or by minority status.

These observations suggest that an immense amount of work needs to be done to obtain meaningful indicators and information, even of a quantitative nature with a focus on enrolment. Two suggestions are offered:

First, all ECCD enrolment information should be disaggregated by age and reported for children 0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc. in relation to the current population figures for each of these age groups. Only then can any kind of international comparison begin to take on meaning.

Second, national committees should be formed and a process initiated intended to reach agreement on the particular indicators thought to be most significant at national and sub-national levels, leaving aside the very restrictive criteria of "international comparison." Included in such deliberations should be attention to combining current information about health, nutrition and physical development with information that might be provided on psycho-social development.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development is currently carrying out country case studies of the status of ECCD indicators in 6 countries (the Philippines, Nepal, Namibia, Jamaica, Colombia and Bolivia). Inter-sectoral groups have been formed in these countries to examine existing indicators, to try and reach agreement on what would be desirable indicators for the future and to recommend changes that are needed in data collection and analysis to put the agreed-upon indicators into use.