Task Force 6
Accelerating SDGs: Exploring New Pathways to the 2030 Agenda

DEVELOPING COMPREHENSIVE AND RESPONSIVE SYSTEMS OF EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND CARE

July 2023

Charlotte Holland, Deputy Dean, Institute of Education, Dublin City University, Ireland.

Jyotsna Jha, Director, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore, India.

Sean Leahy, Director of Creative and Emerging Technologies for Emerging Technology, Arizona State University, United States of America.

Madhusudhan BV Rao, Senior Research Advisor, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore, India.

Dinah Bennett, Global Lead Enterprise Development, Women's Economic Imperative, United Kingdom.

Neha Ghatak, Research Advisor, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore, India.

Huan Ni, Founding Director, Shanghai Green Light-Year Environmental Service Center, China.

वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्

ONE EARTH • ONE FAMILY • ONE FUTURE

Abstract

Target 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals specifies the need to adopt a comprehensive integrated approach to early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood education and care (ECEC). A key issue in addressing the intersectional challenges of poverty, health, wellbeing, education, and gender is the current lack of unified governmental policies and investment in ECD/ECEC in G20 partner countries.

Therefore, the core recommendations for the G20 are:

- To adopt a charter that seeks the commitment of G20 partners to engage in whole-systems approaches to policy and practice in ECD/ ECEC, and
- To convene an ECD/ECEC forum to formulate culturally responsive frameworks for defining and costing comprehensive and responsive ECD/ECEC across diverse contexts

The Challenge

1

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's Education 2030 Agenda and the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for 2030 Roadmap provide guidance to national governments on achieving inclusive and quality education for all (UNESCO, 2016; UNESCO, 2020). The knowledge, skills, and competencies to be developed under the remit of quality education include basic literacy, numeracy skills, technological literacy, health literacy, gender awareness, and education for sustainable development. Target 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) calls out the need to adopt a comprehensive integrated approach to ECD/ECEC: "By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education" (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Furthermore, the Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development places emphasis on the need to integrate sustainability at all levels of education, including that of the early years (UNESCO, 2021). The world over urbanisation has boosted transportation, industry-related pollution, housing density, and technological changes. These have negatively impacted children's independence in movement and as well as their relationship with nature. In their study of outdoor places, Xiaolai and Bin (2019) found that engagement in outdoor places can enhance the degree of resilience or grit, particularly for urban children. Playgrounds can be specially designed to give children the opportunity to reconnect with nature and provide therapeutic benefits for their development (Wang et al., 2018). In many situations however, this does not happen. Furthermore, global advancements towards inclusive and equitable ECD/ECEC are being stymied by the significant variations within and across countries in basic education provision, and in unequal access to high quality early childhood development, education, and care. This has been highlighted in previous T20 policy briefs, including but not limited to the work of Urban et al. (2018, 2019, 2020, 2022).

In 2018 and 2019, Urban et al. highlighted, in Argentina and Japan, the need for competent structures that adopt whole-systems approaches in the developing, resourcing, and governing of early childhood programmes.

These competent systems necessitate participatory approaches allowing for the engagement of children, families, and communities to avoid "persistent, wasteful and ineffective fragmentation of services, and of persistent silo-mentality at the levels of administration and governance" (Urban et al. 2019, 8). The research leading to the now well-known Heckman equation[a] has clearly established that investment in high-quality early childhood development, which focuses on care, education, nutrition, and health leads to significant inter-generational gains and helps in breaking the cycle of poverty (Heckmann et al., 2010). To accelerate progress within the context of ECD/ECEC, there is a need for governmental policy to address the intersectional challenges of poverty, health and wellbeing, and education and gender. Urban et al. (2020) argue that "Competent and sustainable systems require horizontal coordination (across government departments), as well as vertical coordination and leadership across all levels of government - local, regional, and national" (9). Urban et al. (2019, 2020, 2021) point to examples of countries in the Global South and North with holistic responses to ECD/ECEC practices that closely align with competent systems. These include India's Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) (Government of India, 2011), the integrated early child development policy framework or De Cero a Siempre in Colombia (Republic of Colombia, 2013; OECD, 2016), and the Irish whole-of-government strategy for babies, young children, and their families (Government of Ireland, 2018). Urban et al. (2020) further argue that G20 governments can progress towards competent integrated systems of EDC/ECEC by foregrounding policy dimensions seeking to upscale locally grounded, responsive programmes that are inclusive of both government and stakeholders at all levels, which are committed to systematic monitoring and evaluation. These policies would also take into account protection of public sector resourcing for EDC/ECEC within times of crises, otherwise known as anti-cyclical resourcing. With respect to the latter, there is a need to "address governance and fragmentation, as well as budgeting

a Within the Heckman equation or curve, the Nobel laureate and economist James Heckman showed that investment in quality early childhood development improves social, economic and health outcomes for individuals and broader society.

and financing" as highlighted by Urban et al. (2022, 12) to achieve competent systems in ECD/ECEC.

Despite being a frontrunner in adopting a holistic approach by introducing the aforementioned ICDS as early as the 1970s, India continues to face the challenge of low-quality ECD/ ECEC programming largely because of under-investment and absence of clarity regarding what defines comprehensive ECD/ECEC and how much that would cost (Rao and Kaul, 2017). Among the pressures on the ECD/ECEC systems in India, as outlined by UNICEF 2020, is the challenge of huge increases in internal migration, with migrant children constituting one in five of displaced or migrant populations within India. In 2020, Jyotsna Jha and colleagues articulated a framework for defining and costing comprehensive and responsive ECD/ECEC in diverse contexts across India (Jha, Purohit, and Pandey 2020). Built on the following four pillars, the framework has particular relevance in the contexts of developing countries:

- protecting the rights of children and that of teachers/service providers;
- flexibility to respond, taking the context into account, but bound by a set of non-negotiable principles that define the holistic approach to ECD;
- accountability to children and parents through decentralised and collaborative governance; and,
- financial as well as socio-cultural sustainability incorporating local resources and knowledge in the ECD/ECEC model.

However, the very elements that make the Jha et al. (2020) framework flexible and responsive, also make the task of financial estimations required for the purposes of policy-planning in any country or at the level of a sub-national unit, very challenging. While the individual models can be flexible and responsive, aggregate planning and budgeting require definite markers and their indicative costs to be able to allocate resources. The need for a definite figure that can be allocated in the budgets often becomes the rationale for having rigid norms and adopting a one size fits all approach. Taking the framework put forth by Jha et al. (2020) forward, we argue that planning norms can be made more flexible by using cost ranges based on adopted principles, while the averages of those ranges can be used for the purpose of budgeting.

Separation of planning from estimation norms allows for decentralisation of the former and makes way for contextual responses in ECD/ECEC. For instance, if children in indigenous communities have better and more advanced motor skills at an early age, there may not be any need to focus on the above-mentioned separation in the early childhood curriculum (Prabha and Flórez-Romero, 2019). Similarly, children living in congested slums in urban areas may already have well developed survival skills, but may be lacking in the ability to express themselves effectively, and therefore would need a greater focus on literacy and communication skills. This can be facilitated by integrating the non-negotiables of a holistic ECD/ECEC programme, such as that proposed within the Jha et al. (2020) framework.

The G20's Role

2

The G20 is uniquely positioned to respond to this problem given that it has within its midst countries with experience in implementing successful inclusive and equitable ECD/ECEC policies and programmes that respond to intersectionality challenges at local and national levels. An example in this regard is the Indian ICDS model which "demonstrates the importance of ambitious ECD/ECEC policies coordinated at the central (national) level followed by coordination and resources at the territorial and local level" (Urban et al. 2020, 11). The centralised estimation model used within the ICDS model is an issue in realising sustainable and culturally responsive ECD/ECEC systems at local levels but as Jha et al. (2020) have argued from a financial perspective, the separation of planning from estimation norms would allow for more decentralised planning and make way for contextualised responses in ECD/ECEC at local levels in India. Therefore, there are opportunities for countries across the G20 partnership to learn from ECD/ECEC models employed in countries such as India, not only to address the intersectional challenges of poverty, health and wellbeing, and gender but also to transform learning, and build more efficient, equitable, and resilient early education and care systems for all. An important step in this process for policy makers is the identification of culturally responsive frameworks for defining and costing comprehensive and responsive ECD/ECEC in diverse contexts.

Recommendations to the G20

3

Adopt a charter on ECD/ECEC that invokes the G20's commitment to engage in whole-systems approaches to policy and practice in ECD/ECEC

In this regard, the charter will promote strategic actions, which seek to ensure quality education and care for all. It will also commit to unified governmental ECD/ECEC policies and investment that address the intersectional challenges of poverty, health and wellbeing, education and gender as declared within Agenda 2030, the Education 2030 programme, and the ESD for 2030 Roadmap. Prior to the formulation of this charter, the G20 will examine the feasibility of implementing competent and resilient ECD/ECEC systems within its member countries.

Convene a forum to bring together governmental, local council, and other stakeholders in ECD/ECEC to formulate culturally responsive frameworks for defining and costing comprehensive and responsive ECD/ECEC across diverse contexts

Within this forum, the G20 partnership will:

- Identify and learn from successful policy and practice (re-)orientations towards high quality ECD/ECEC within the G20 partnership that can inform ECD/ECEC frameworks within partner countries. To inform this process, there will be scrutiny of economic and social structures within individual partner countries that negatively contribute to the intersectional challenges of poverty, health and wellbeing, and education and gender in early child development contexts.
- Define the non-negotiable principles of universal high quality, equitable, and responsive ECD/ECEC within the G20 partnership that all partner countries can commit to and work towards.
- Enable planners, designers, and developers of urban areas to share ways in which access to nature-based public/outdoor spaces can be enhanced within ECE/ECEC provision.

- Articulate sources of revenue and strategies to fund comprehensive ECD/ECEC in G20 countries. This will be based on a review of revenue bases of the government as well as the experiences of existing successful and comprehensive ECD/ECEC models and incorporate suggestions for collaborations as well as those for innovative and equitable taxation across G20 countries.

- Consider realignment of existing resources for early education, health, nutrition, and protection for a more efficient, effective, and sustainable ECD/ECEC planning based on the agreed framework by the G20 partnership. This could be done in ways that appropriately respond to the diversity in economic and social structures in individual G20 partner countries.

- Examine ways in which the estimate method for allocation of financial resourcing in ECD/ECEC proposed by Jha et al. (2020) could be customised for G20 partner countries.

Attribution: Charlotte Holland et al., "Developing Comprehensive and Responsive Systems of Early Child Development, Education, and Care," *T20 Policy Brief*, July 2023.

Bibliography

Government of India. “Evaluation Study on Integrated Child Development Schemes (ICDS): Volume 1,” March 2011. PEO Report No. 218. Programme Evaluation Organisation, Planning Commission, New Delhi, India. https://dmeo.gov.in/sites/default/files/2019-10/Evaluation%20Report%20on%20Integrated%20Child%20Development%20Services%20Volume%201.pdf

Government of Ireland. “A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028, First 5,” 2018. Department for Children and Youth Affairs, Ireland. https://assets.gov.ie/31184/62acc54f4bdf4405b74e53a4afb8e71b.pdf

Heckman, James, Seong Hyeok Moon, Rodrigo Pinto, Peter A. Savelyev, and Adam Yavitz. “The Rate of Return to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program.” *Journal of Public Economics* 94, no. 1-2 (February 2010): 114-128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2009.11.001

Jha, Jyotsna, Archana Purohit, and Sharad Pandey. “Costs, Costing Principles and Institutional Framework for Responsive Early Childhood Care and Education Models in India: A Proposition’ *Journal of the British Academy* 8, no. 2 (March 2020): 7–39 https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/008s2.007

Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation. “Education in Colombia, Reviews of National Policies for Education,” 2016, OECD. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264250604-en

Prabha, Ketaki, R. Maithreyi, Pallawi Sinha, Arun Viknesh, and Arathi Sriprakash. “Examining Contexts, Practices and Costs of Early Childhood Care and Education in India: Report,” 2019. University of Cambridge: Centre for Budget and Policy Studies and British Academy. https://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/Examining-Contexts-Practices-and-Costs-of-ECCE-in-India-Report-I.pdf

Rao, Nirmala, and Venita Kaul. “India’s Integrated Child Development Services Scheme: Challenges for Scaling Up.” *Child: Care, Health and Development* 44, no. 1 (December 2017): 31-40. https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.12531

Republic of Colombia. “Early Childhood Comprehensive Care Strategy. Political, Technical and Management Fundamentals,” 2013. Office of the President, Bogotá, Colombia. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-177829_archivo_pdf_fundamentos_ceroasiempre.pdf

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation. “Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4,” 2016. UNESCO. https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation. “Education for Sustainable

Development: A Roadmap," 2020. UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation. "Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development, " 2021. UNESCO. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/esdfor2030-berlin-declaration-en.pdf

United Nations General Assembly. "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," A/RES/70/1, 2015. UNGA. https://www.un- .org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

United Nations Children's Fund. "Understanding Child Migration in India: Research Brief," 2020. UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/india/media/3416/file/Child-migration-India2020-policy-brief.pdf

Urban, Mathias, Alejandra Cardini, and Rita Flórez Romero. "It Takes More Than a Village. Effective Early Childhood Development, Education and Care Systems Require Competent Systems," 2018. T20 Argentina. https://t20argentina.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/TF-1-It-takesmore-than-a-village_final_with-template.pdf

Urban, Mathias, Alejandra Cardini, Jennifer Guevara, Lynette Okengo, and Rita Flórez. "Early Childhood Development, Education and Care: The Future is What We Build Today," 2019. T20 Japan. https://t20japan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/t20-japan-tf1-3-early-childhood-development-education-and-care.pdf

Urban, Mathias, Alejandra Cardini, Claudia Costín, Jennifer Guevara, Lynette Okengo, Dwi

Priyono, and Rita Flórez-Romero. "Post-Covid-19 to 2030: Early Childhood Programs as Pathways to Sustainability in Times of Global Uncertainty," 2020. T20 Saudi Arabia. https://t20saudiarabia.org.sa/en/briefs/Documents/T20_TF7_PB3.pdf

Urban, Mathias, Jennifer Guevara, Alejandro Acosta, Pramod K Anand, Emily Vargas-Barón, Claudia Costín, Lynette Okengo, Mercedes Mayol Lassalle, Yulida Pangastuti, and Vina Adrijani. "Education for Survival: Strengthening Multi-Sectoral and Integrated Policy Approaches to Early Childhood Education, Care, and Development as a Global Good," 2022. T20 Indonesia. https://www.t20indonesia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/TF5_Education-for-Survival-Strengthening-Multi-Sectoral-and-Integrated-Policy-Approaches-to-Early-Childhood-Education-Care-and-Development-as-A-Global-Common-Good.pdf

Wang, Xia, Helen Woolley, Ya Tang, Hsiao-yi Liu, Yuyan Luo. "Young Children's and Adults' Perceptions of Natural Play Spaces: A Case Study of Chengdu, Southwestern China." *Cities* 72, Part A (February 2018): 173-180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2017.08.011

Xiaolai, Zhang & Jiang Bin. "Cultivation of Grit: A Type of Nature Education for Urban Preschool Children." *Landscape Architecture* 43, no.10 (October 2019): 40-47. https://doi.org/10.14085/j.fjyl.2019.10.0040.08

वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्

ONE EARTH • ONE FAMILY • ONE FUTURE