

ECD Policy Development and Implementation in Africa

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Abstract: ECD policies are influenced by the contexts in which they develop. Those contexts include historical, cultural, social, economic and diverse conceptual dimensions operating at international, regional, country and local levels. These forces impact on policy development as well as on policy implementation. This article briefly situates ECD policy directions in global and regional contexts before exploring dynamics that are operational at African country levels as seen through the eyes and activities of ECDVU participants. Four of the five participants are employed by a national government, one is with an NGO. Each project explores a different facet of policy development and implementation; collectively they speak to the complexity inherent within policy work.

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Early childhood care, education and development (ECD) is a topic whose time has arrived, both around the world and in Africa. That 'arrival' has been driven by a number of factors, many of which are international in scope, but the particular ways in which ECD moves forward varies from region to region and country to country. This article will provide: 1) a brief initial context regarding international development activities that have supported greater attention to ECD policy development for children from birth through school entry age; and 2) an overview of key ECD events and activities in Africa; before 3) focusing more specifically on work undertaken by a number of the ECDVU participants in various African countries that represents particular aspects of policy development and implementation in those countries.

ECD in an International Context

The period around 1990 marked significant changes for children and for ECD internationally. On November 20, 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was formally adopted by the UN General Assembly; signing commenced on January 26, 1990, with 61 countries signing the document that day. By September 1990, 20 countries had ratified the Convention, bringing it into international law. It had been "ratified more quickly and by more countries than any previous human rights instrument" (UNICEF, *We the Children*, September 2001, p. 1).

In March 1990 the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) was held in Jomtien, Thailand, and at that conference the importance of early childhood development was underscored as a crucial part of basic education. The first four words under Article 5 provided ECD with a place at the table: "Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education" (*World Declaration on Education for All*, 1990). For many years ECD had been the 'invisible child' hidden behind the family, disconnected from the recognition that its 'older siblings,' like primary, secondary and tertiary education, had received as key components in international development. Through ECD recognition at Jomtien, the rapid ratification of the CRC, and through the World Summit for Children held in New York City on September 28 and 29, 1990, the early years began to move out of the shadows to a place of recognition in its own right on the international stage.

Robert Myers' (1992) publication of *The Twelve Who Survive* refocused international attention from issues of child survival to a more encompassing understanding of what the increasing percentage of children who survive require in order to thrive. Myers' seminal volume was an advocacy as well as a policy and programming tool.

In 1994 the Carnegie Institute's Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children opened another key front in efforts to better understand the needs and challenges of early development. With their report *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children* (1994), the importance of the early years as a key period of brain development began a movement towards the center stage of childhood discussions. The World Bank was quick to pick up the implications of the Carnegie Report for international development: healthy child development as key to broader social and economic development. In 1996 Mary Eming Young of the World Bank published *Early Child Development: Investing in the Future*, with the importance of brain development as the lead discussion. At approximately the same time, the first of what would become a rapidly growing set of loans for ECD development in various parts of the world were approved by the World Bank.

By the late 1990s, UNICEF was moving towards placing Integrated ECD at the center of its activities as well, incorporating the CRC as an overarching context for all of its work. In less than 10 years, ECD had moved from the periphery of concern for all but a few international donors, such as the Bernard van Leer Foundation and a few others who had made significant contributions to ECD as early as the 1970s, to become a major topic on a significant number of donors' and international organizations' lists of priority issues.

An Education for All follow-up conference to Jomtien took place in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. At the Dakar World Education Forum the profile of ECD was further enhanced as the delegates committed themselves to a number of goals, the first of which was "expanding and improving early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children" (*Dakar Framework for Action*, 2000, p. 8).

A ten-year follow-up to the World Summit for Children was scheduled for New York in 2001, but was postponed as a result of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center towers. The General Assembly's Special Session on Children took place instead in May 2002, with the related publication of *We the Children* (UNICEF, 2001) and *A World Fit for Children* (UNICEF, 2002a). The latter contains a copy of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Special Session on Children documents, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). *We the Children* summarizes much of the international work that had taken place during the intervening decade regarding children's developmental statistics. Sadly, it also notes the increasing challenges to achieving child well-being in many parts of Africa due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, civil unrest and wars, refugee situations, world trade imbalances and other challenges.

ECD in the Context of Africa

African leaders played key roles in a number of the international events described above. The President of Mali, Moussa Traore, co-hosted the 1990 World Summit for Children (with Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada). Senegal's President Abdou Diouf and Traore had played key roles in facilitating approval when they supported a resolution at the Francophone summit to hold the World Summit for Children (Black, 1996, p. 27). African heads of state were amongst the earliest and most enthusiastic supporters of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 1993 the Donors for African Education (now the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, ADEA) organized a Working Group on Early Childhood Development (ADEA-WGECD), which continues to play a key role in African ECD development. In 1994 the first of several African ECD networks was formed, the Early Childhood Development Network in Africa (ECDNA). This was followed by a Francophone network in 1996, Réseau Africain Francophone Prime Enfance (Early Childhood Francophone African Network).

Through support primarily from UNICEF, the ECDNA was able to hold initial meetings in 1994 and 1995 which led, among other activities, to planning for an Africa-wide, three-week leadership seminar to take place in 1996 in Namibia, co-hosted by the University of Victoria and the University of Namibia. Timing for that seminar proved problematic and it was postponed to 1997. Dr. Barnabas Otaala (based in Namibia) and Mrs. Margaret Kabiru (Kenya), leaders of the ECDNA, played key roles (other workshop leaders were Drs. Tuntufye Mwamwenda, Judith Evans and Alan Pence). Dr. Otaala of the University of Namibia served as co-organizer with Dr. Alan Pence of the University of Victoria and Dr. Cyril Dalais of UNICEF. The Namibian seminar led, in turn, to a two-week seminar hosted in The Gambia in 1998, which was followed by World Bank-led support for hosting the First African International ECD Conference in Kampala, Uganda in September 1999 (followed by a second conference in Asmara, Eritrea in 2002 and a third in the series planned for Accra, Ghana in May/June 2005).

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has been an important donor supporting ECD in Africa since the early 1970s. The first two countries to benefit from such support were Kenya and South Africa. In Kenya, the Bernard van Leer Foundation partnered with the Kenyan Ministry of Education to launch the Preschool Education Project through the Kenya Institute of Education, becoming in the 1970s and 1980s one of the best-known ECD projects in Africa and providing Kenya with ECD leaders through to the present. In South Africa, Bernard van Leer supported the

Educare project through support to NGOs—another well-known program from that period of time. While much of the Bernard van Leer Foundation support has gone to initiatives in specific countries, in the early 1990s a Training of Trainers initiative brought together ECD trainers from several African countries (Torkington with Landers, 1995).

In 1997 the World Bank published a survey of African countries regarding the percentage of the education budget allocated to ECD; of the 25 countries responding, only four had any official allocation to ECD and those were for very small amounts (Colletta & Reinhold, 1997). In 1998 the 7th Conference of Ministers of Education of African member states (ADEA-MINEDAF VII) accepted recommendations noting “that clear policies be formulated to promote early childhood education and development” (ADEA-MINEDAF VII, April 1998, *Report of the VII Conference*). This growing level of support for ECD within the African Ministries of Education was followed by the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000 which, as was noted earlier, came forward with ECD as the first goal. Furthermore, the “Dakar EFA goals are intended as an ‘education wing’ of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations, also adopted in 2000” (NEPAD, February 2004, *Education Sector Framework* working draft, p. 9).

Building on activities associated with ten-year anniversaries of the World Summit for Children, signing of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, the Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration, and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (all in 1990), leaders of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held a Pan-African Forum in May 2001 in Cairo that led to an African common position in a declaration and plan of action called *Africa Fit For Children* (Pan-African Forum for Children, 2001). The document notes that the Plan of Action “prioritizes children and youth,” and it goes on to note as the first action: “National planning and international development cooperation should reflect the prioritization of early childhood and youth” (Pan-African Forum for Children, *Africa Fit For Children*, p. 12).

The growing, broadening support for early childhood seen in Africa and in the broader context of international development places an emphasis on countries developing ECD-supportive policies. The ADEA-WGECD, in response to these growing interests, undertook two sequential, policy-related studies. In 1999, “against a backdrop of renewed international commitment to ECD as an important part of Basic Education” (ADEA-WGECD handout at Arusha, Tanzania meeting, MINEDAF VIII, December 2002), the ADEA-WGECD initiated a two-pronged Policy Studies Project consisting of: (1) case studies led by knowledgeable ECD

specialists in Ghana, Namibia and Mauritania describing activities that had led each of the countries to develop an ECD specific policy in the 1990s and events associated with efforts to approve the policy (Ghana) or implement provisions of the policy (Namibia and Mauritania); and (2) a “survey of the ‘state of the art’ of ECD throughout Africa” (ADEA-WGECD handout, 2002, p. 2) to provide a broader context for the case studies (the first project took place in 2000/2001).

The survey was of a general nature, including questions designed to determine the presence of a specific and holistic ECD policy, ages of children considered to be within the scope of ECD, funding availability, types of programs available, local and regional government responsibilities, HIV/AIDS and ECD, and the presence of monitoring and evaluation. Weaknesses identified through the survey were “shared by most of the countries” (33 of 49 surveys were returned) and included:

- ◆ Inadequate financial resources with very limited government funding.
- ◆ Lack of integrated and comprehensive coordinating mechanisms.
- ◆ Lack of a specific ECD policy and no Ministry taking the lead in ECD.
- ◆ ECD policy structures exist but Ministries still continue to work sectorally.
- ◆ Lack of trained personnel in ECD from management level through to grassroots level. (Torkington, 2001, p. 30)

The three case studies were of uneven depth and comprehensiveness. The most critical and, in many ways, the most helpful, study was of Namibia. The Namibian case points out the tremendous gap that can exist between policy statement and policy implementation. While the Namibian policy statement, approved by Cabinet in 1996, is exemplary, far-sighted and flexible, its ‘vision’ began to unravel by 1998, apparently precipitated by a transfer of the unit responsible for implementing the policy from one Ministry to a newly created other Ministry. The Namibian case points out the fragility of policies and their implementation, and it also underscores the tension that often exists between Ministries regarding ‘who will do what, how and with what resources’ when it comes to young children. A similar inter-Ministerial dynamic appears to have been a key factor in the very long delay between initial ECD policy development (approximately 1993/94) and government approval (2004) that transpired in Ghana.

The second policy project undertaken by the ADEA-WGECD emerged from a consultation to discuss the results of the first study. In December of 2001, at a consultative meeting held in The Hague, the discussions “led to expressions of interest for support to draft IECD Policies on the part of three Francophone countries: Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Senegal” (Vargas-Baron, February 29, 2004, p. 5). That project commenced in June

2002 and concluded in November 2003. Six complex sets of challenges were identified by the project consultant. These challenges are not unlike those facing many other African countries:

- ◆ institutional challenges
- ◆ environmental challenges
- ◆ health, nutrition and sanitation challenges
- ◆ education challenges
- ◆ conflict challenges
- ◆ prevalent special challenges for children. (Vargas-Baron, 2004, pp. 6-7)

The two sets of ADEA-WGECD studies have been considered in somewhat more detail than other ECD policy-related events that have taken place in Africa as those two studies, and the work of the ECDVU participants discussed below, represent a relatively rare set of multi-country documents. ECD policy-related studies have only occasionally been undertaken in Africa and typically focus on only one country; some of those that have been undertaken have been on a contract basis and are sometimes not available to a more general readership. Both the ADEA-WGECD studies and the ECDVU participants' projects and theses are available on or through public Websites (see <http://www.adeanet.org/> and <http://www.ecdvu.org/>). Both organizations, realizing the scarcity of such resources, felt that the publications were an important part of the capacity and literature development needed in Africa to better promote ECD work.

Having now provided a brief international and African context for the increasing profile enjoyed by ECD throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, the following section will focus on ECD policy-related work undertaken by members of the inaugural ECDVU program in Africa. As noted in the introduction to this special issue, participants were encouraged to undertake major projects or theses that were of significant national, as well as personal and professional, interest. Four major projects directly address policy development or implementation issues, while a fifth provides additional information of value, particularly for policy implementation. These works will be described in the next section.

ECDVU and ECD Policy Development and Implementation

Policy development and implementation was an important theme throughout the ECDVU program. An initial course assignment for each country 'team' was to develop a comprehensive report on the current status of ECD in their country. Additional assignments addressed individuals' specific interests and/or employment-related activities regarding advancing ECD, and each participant completed a final major project or

thesis under the supervision of a committee with in- and out-of-country members. These works by the 27 participants who completed the full three-year program (as noted earlier, 30 individuals commenced the program in 2001) provide an additional database for a study of ECD policies in Africa. Of particular interest for this report are the several major projects that focused most specifically on policy-related issues.

These studies provide the opportunity for a closer examination of particular aspects of policy development and implementation dynamics than can be found in the earlier noted studies. Information from the following projects will be considered in this section: George Kameka, Tanzania, *Improving Multisectoral Cooperation and Coordination in Support of ECD Programs in Tanzania*; Hilda Nankunda, Uganda, *Policies and Programs in Support of Child Care for Working Families: A Case Study of Data Sets and Current Activities in Uganda*; Margaret Amponsah, Ghana, *The Status of Coordination and Supervision of Early Childhood Education in Ghana*; Francis Chalamanda, Malawi, *Coordinating the Development and Implementation of the 2003-2013 National Plan of Action (NPA) for Survival, Protection and Development of Children in Malawi*. In addition there will be some reference to the work of Abeba Habtom, Eritrea, *Improving the Quality of Childcare Through Parenting Enrichment and Training of Trainers: The Eritrean Model*.

The first four projects (Kameka in Tanzania, Nankunda in Uganda, Amponsah in Ghana, and Chalamanda in Malawi) address key aspects of policy development and/or implementation. Insofar as each of these projects took at least one year to complete (and some were a focus throughout the full three years of participants' involvement in the ECDVU program), they illustrate the amount of time and energy that is required to move forward even fairly discrete elements of policy development and implementation processes.

Tanzania

George Kameka, Commissioner for Social Welfare in the Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sports, focused his major project on the challenges one faces in attempting to achieve a higher degree of inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination across diverse Ministries, each with 'a piece' of ECD (Kameka, 2004). At the same time as Kameka was addressing this topic he, his ECDVU colleagues, and a key NGO, AMANI (led by founder Chanel Croker), were also involved in promoting the development of an ECD Network in Tanzania. To a certain degree, Kameka's project and development of an ECD Network were complementary activities; each involved information sharing, consultation and

networking, one with a primary focus within government, and the other, the ECD Network, looking at government as one of the key ECD stakeholders. Both issues—networking across key stakeholders in a country and working within government to promote inter-sectoral cooperation, coordination and communication—were identified as critical in the ADEA-WGECD Case Studies Project and the Francophone Policy Planning Project.

The idea for a Tanzanian ECD Network grew out of ECDVU's request to AMANI to organize an inter-sectoral, multiorganizational ECD committee to consider whether Tanzania wished to become involved in the ECDVU program. Approximately 18 individuals from 11 organizations attended the first meeting in August 2000, and subsequent meetings led to completion of a proposal to join and the nomination of four individuals to participate: one from government (Kameka, Commissioner for Social Welfare) and three from INGOs (Leoncia Salakana with Plan International, Asha Mohammed Ahmed with the Aga Khan Madrasa programs, and Benedict Missani, initially with Save the Children but completing with the NGO Basic Needs UK).

The ECD Committee felt that the exercise of coming together several times to identify country goals for ECD, to solicit applications and to nominate participants had provided a suitable base from which a continuing, country-wide network could be developed. Between August 2000 and 2004 the Tanzanian Network became a reality. Its first Annual General Meeting in March 2004 was attended by 71 participants representing 10 districts; officers were elected and goals and objectives for the further development of ECD in Tanzania were confirmed. The key learning from this particular story is that while a call for such a network takes only seconds to utter or write, achieving a sustainable, dynamic network is a complex process which typically takes years.

Achieving greater coordination, cooperation, and communication across Ministries responsible for various aspects of ECD is no less time-consuming and complex. Kameka chose to focus his project largely on information-sharing activities, based in part on his own experience as a senior government official whose own orientation towards the importance of intersectoral cooperation had been modified as he came to understand more fully the holistic purpose and intent of ECD. Through approaching other senior officers in other Ministries with 'ECD sensitization' materials, Kameka not only served as a conduit for information sharing but also served as a role model for cooperative work across sectors, placing the interests of the child ahead of sector foci. How successful such sensitization activities will be in increasing inter-sectoral cooperation remains, in Kameka's words, "to be seen," as the time for

implementation was relatively short (approximately seven months at the time of report drafting).

Uganda

Hilda Nankunda's major project work in Uganda represents another important facet in establishing a foundation for policy work in a given country (Nankunda, 2004). Nankunda's focus was on reviewing not only overarching governmental policies (and extra-governmental policies such as structural adjustment programs—SAPs) that had a bearing on ECD and, more specifically, on child care as a support to employed parents, but also accessing and reviewing other public and private employment policies, labour and trade union agreements, and other workers' associations documents. Such studies are often found in Euro-western countries, but have thus far largely been absent from the African ECD literature. As many parts of Africa continue the transition from largely rural to urban and from unskilled to skilled and professional employment, and as international laws and agreements increasingly impact African governments, the need for and the number of studies such as Nankunda's will increase.

Nankunda's work highlights not only the invisibility of young children in policy documents in Uganda but, in many cases, the invisibility of women and mothers in the labour force. Few documents from governmental, employer or union sources adequately profile the role of women in the in-home and out-of-home labour forces. Women typically carry a disproportionate share of family support on their shoulders, but their roles as primary caregiver or in contributing to the economy of the country are too seldom noted in influential or official documents.

In addition to accessing and reviewing documents, Nankunda also undertook a number of interviews to determine the awareness of such policies, or the need for policies, amongst employers, human resource managers, union and workers' associations, and employees. As anticipated, policies associated with 'family friendly,' 'mother friendly' or 'child friendly' practices are very much in their infancy in Uganda; while in some cases such terms have been heard, little is moving them towards an operational reality. Nankunda's findings support that "existing policies and programs are inadequate to support working families with quality child care, [and] there is limited awareness of international and national provisions in support of working families" (Nankunda, 2004, p. ii).

Nankunda's work represents an additional aspect of the foundation that must be built for ECD to move forward effectively across the multitude of fronts implied by holistic, integrated ECD.

Ghana

Margaret Amponsah is the National Coordinator for ECCD within the Basic Education Division, Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. While Kameka, from his more senior position, focused primarily on reaching across Ministries and sectors, Amponsah focused on her own Ministry and the degree to which ECCD was understood amongst her own division heads and down the line to service delivery (Amponsah, 2004). Her work highlights additional key impediments to realizing quality ECD care and education in an African context. As with Kameka, staff exposure to well-conceptualized IECD information is part of the problem, but the governmental system dynamics themselves pose additional problems, both within and across Ministries.

Amponsah's research highlights important gaps in her Ministry's handling of ECD, including "the absence of policy statements regarding the coordination and supervision of ECCD programs" (p. 60). In addition, division head familiarity with ECD generally, with the need for coordination of planning and services, and with provisions in the draft policy is weak. As a result, in the districts surveyed, "there is the absence of a comprehensive operational plan and a systematic training program for ECD coordinators, head teachers and teachers of preschools" (p. 60). As Amponsah notes: "Because ECD was relegated to the background some years back, most of the regional coordinators were withdrawn and reassigned to handle other schedules, which has also impeded the smooth running of the program within the public sector" (p. 61). The picture that emerges is that of a program that has been marginalized within the system, lacking visibility, priority, and coordination from more senior levels (Divisions within the Ministry) through to the delivery of services on the ground. In addition, basic data regarding enrolment numbers were difficult to collect, further impeding future planning efforts.

The very recent (August 2004) approval of the long-awaited Ghana policy on ECD may provide the impetus for reformation of the ECD systems in the country. But Amponsah's study of ECD in one Ministry indicates how fundamental and systemic those challenges will be.

Malawi

Francis Chalamanda, National Coordinator for ECD based in the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services (formerly the Ministry of Gender and Community Services), entered the ECDVU program at a time that the government of Malawi was considering

enacting a National Policy on Early Childhood Development. Chalamanda, together with the other ECDVU Malawi team members, assisted the completion of the ECD policy, as well as a policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Both policies were approved by Cabinet in February 2003 and officially launched March 1, 2004. The focus of Chalamanda's major project was supporting the development, coordination and implementation of a *National Action Plan (NAP) for the survival, protection and development of children in Malawi from 2003 to 2013* (Chalamanda, 2004).

Chalamanda's work focuses on an essential key to forward movement in ECD in African countries: not only must policies be developed, but action plans must be developed, coordinated, monitored, and updated as needed for the intent of the policies to be realized.

Malawi's 2004 NAP is the second in its history. The first was developed in 1992 for the period 1992-2002 (*National Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection of Children in the 1990s*). Progress on the implementation of that plan was reported to the UN General Assembly in 2002, and the nine main challenges to its implementation formed the background for the 2004 NAP, along with a UNICEF 2002 Situation Analysis to assess the implementation of the 1997-2001 Program for Children and Women (Chalamanda, p. 9).

Chalamanda saw the NAP as central to the future of ECD in Malawi and chose it as the focus of his major project in order to:

- ◆ identify strategies that facilitate implementation of the ECD and OVC policies and other sectoral strategic plans;
- ◆ outline mechanisms, processes, and strategies for coordinating the development and implementation of the NAP; and
- ◆ outline operational linkages and networks between the two policies and other existing child care policies, sectoral strategic plans, and institutions. (Chalamanda, p. 3)

Towards the completion of his major project, Chalamanda flagged the following as some of the significant challenges he faced in his coordination work:

- ◆ Limited number of committed partners taking part in the development of the NAP
- ◆ Limited capacity of some partners to follow systematically the agreed-upon framework
- ◆ Achieving synergy across the 12 thematic areas of the NAP is challenging
- ◆ Some partners are challenged by the role of children and caregivers in the process of developing the NAP
- ◆ Inadequate resources in terms of funds, transport, books, stationary, and computers to be used by the partners in their work

The challenges noted in Malawi have a familiar ring: a small nucleus of concerned, committed, and informed individuals; bureaucratic challenges to working across sectors; inadequate resources of various forms; inadequate knowledge in the public domain regarding the importance of ECD; and marginalized importance of ECD within government. At the same time, there is progress: developing a critical mass in Tanzania across organizations and sectors; approving ECD policies in Ghana and Malawi; achieving the potential for greater resources for ECD in some jurisdictions; successful efforts to link and coordinate ECD with related movements, for example, with OVC in Malawi; and promoting heightened awareness of international and African literature linking ECD with social and economic development, with the Millennium Development Goals, and with Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans. While the challenges are great, there are indications of progress.

The work of one other ECDVU participant feeds and supports these inter-related policy-associated advances.

Eritrea

Abeba Habtom is the Section Head for Early Childhood Development and Special Needs in the Ministry of Education in Eritrea. Habtom's major project is discussed in greater detail in one of the other articles in this special issue (see Marfo et al.); however, her work is also very relevant to this paper insofar as Habtom has been unusually successful in addressing one of the most significant challenges facing many Africa countries, that of achieving impacts at regional and local levels.

Habtom's work has been part of a larger set of ECD initiatives called the Integrated Early Childhood Development Project, supported in part through World Bank loan agreements. An exemplary aspect of the Project has been its multisectoral and multifaceted approach to promoting child well-being. A paramount concern has been the importance of reaching the child and the family at the local level. Habtom's project has a particular focus on that issue: "This project is notable for its attempt to develop an Eritrean Parenting Enrichment strategy using a participatory process . . . with parents and grassroots communities at the forefront" (Habtom, 2004, p. ii). Further, the project was developed with a very high level of sensitivity to cultural and ethnic differences regarding what constitutes desirable parenting behaviour within the broader Eritrean context. The approach taken was decidedly not a top-down model.

Under Habtom's leadership, the last three years have seen the finalization of a curriculum for both formal and non-formal community-based children's programs, linked with an outreach services model

reaching all Zobas (districts) in the country (the curriculum has been translated into eight official languages). In addition, she has sought to address long-term community capacity building through the implementation of a multimedia Parenting Enrichment Strategy utilizing a Training of Trainers model.

Habtom's work in Eritrea also provides useful insights into ways in which within- and between-Ministry dynamics can become more supportive of integrated ECD activities and, through such support, have greater impacts at regional and local levels. The parenting enrichment strategy is designed to enhance local-level awareness of the importance of the early years, providing at the same time a stronger and more informed 'social will' supportive of ECD issues.

Conclusion

The preceding excerpts from ECDVU major projects and theses provides a very brief look inside the complex dynamics that influence various aspects of ECD policy development and implementation in some African countries. A theme that reverberates across all of the accounts is the 'thinness' of knowledge about and informed support for the complex, holistic nature of ECD. To the degree that there is an ECD strength in various countries, it is sectoral in nature; for example, health and immunizations, worming clinics, or food supplement activities. Such programs have, in many cases, a relatively long history and staff who have come to know and understand that particular facet of ECD. Attempting to link health clinics with broader parent information and support initiatives or with informal care programs or in any number of ways seeking to extend, integrate, or move to a more holistic early childhood model can, and often does, create tensions and resistance from those who feel competent and clear about their particular activities but may not be ready or feel sufficiently informed to expand beyond that area of expertise and service. In addition, programs too often feel that they are in a position of competition with other programs for a share of scarce resources.

All five of the policy-related projects discussed in this section acknowledge the enormity of these inter-sectoral, inter-organizational, inter-Ministerial, and even intra-Ministerial, challenges. Limited access to information, to resources, and to meaningful motivators hampers coordination and cooperation. Each of these projects has worked to address knowledge deficits through leadership in developing new materials and new training and in instituting new lines of communication.

Most of the work reported here is early in its development; much remains to be done before one can determine exactly what longer-term

impacts may accrue as part of these activities. Nevertheless, even given the early nature of the work, a number of concrete advances have been made, for example:

- ◆ Tanzania is well on its way to developing a country-wide, inter-sectoral network capable of lobbying government to more adequately support and coordinate integrated ECD;
- ◆ Malawi and Ghana have recently approved national ECD policies evidencing growing government support for ECD and for promoting the foundation upon which action plans and funding priorities can be developed;
- ◆ Uganda has advanced in understanding its data needs to support ECD and, through dialogue sessions envisioned in the report, will be in a position to better address gaps in policies; and
- ◆ Eritrea has developed an effective system to promote ECD in rural and remote areas and while it emanates from one Ministry (Education), that Ministry has effectively coordinated activities with other Ministries, including the Ministry responsible for local and regional governments.

Each of these advances is incremental in nature; each step provides the base for the next. They are steps taken by individuals who are leaders within-country, individuals familiar with ECD and its particular dynamics in their home country, individuals with contacts, with history, and with a deep understanding of context. ECD policy in Africa cannot be built from the outside; indeed, policy formulation may well not be the first priority if one is to more effectively address child well-being. Policy must move in concert with other forces—with programs, training, and enhanced practices. Each must inform the other, each must reach out to other approaches and seek to bridge, understand, and support. The focus must be on addressing the holistic needs of the child and on achieving an integrated approach to meeting those needs. The work described in this paper must interact with initiatives described in the other articles of this special issue. From the strengths described in these articles and from those programs, policies, research, and practices yet to be described across the region, advances in child well-being in Africa can be achieved.

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