

Concept Note & Work Plan

Early Childhood Development Task Force (ECDtf) for GPcwd

Since the 2012 inception of the Global Partnership for Children with Disabilities (GPcwd), stakeholders committed to the challenges and opportunities inherent in early childhood development (ECD) as a vital pathway toward inclusive development have contributed to the enterprise. As the first wave of Task Forces began their work in Education, Nutrition, Assistive Technologies, and Humanitarian Action, it became increasingly clear that the essential and cross-cutting perspective of ECD would enhance and enrich deliberations and actions. A survey on priorities and governance options fielded by the GPcwd Secretariat in the summer of 2013 for preparation of the 2013 Forum Agenda identified strong interest and rationale for an ECD Task Force. In anticipation of the launch of the new ECD Task Force, GPcwd asked a network of advocates and experts convened by the Partnership for Early Childhood Development & Disability Rights (PECDDR) to draft this concept note defining the scope of the new ECD Task Force and articulating a work plan for 2014 and beyond. Interested parties are encouraged to suggest revisions, formats, references, and updates. Please send to donald.wertlieb@tufts.edu

Challenges and Opportunities for the Early Childhood Development Task Force of GPcwd

Some 18 months ago, as UNICEF, GPDD, IDDC, IDA and UNIASGCRPD launched the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities (GPcwd), a grassroots network of early childhood professionals and advocates emerged to insure that both the problems and solutions for young children with special needs and their families would be visible and fully engaged in this breakthrough enterprise and the post-2015 MDG Agenda. Just prior to the inaugural GPcwd Forum (September, 2012), the Partnership for Early Childhood Development and Disability Rights (PECDDR) convened an informal gathering of a dozen colleagues from a range of academic, NGO, governmental, and foundation venues. Just as the GPcwd grew energetically, doubling its size from 200 to over 400 partners by the time of the 2013 Forum, the grassroots network of early childhood colleagues strengthened – and 30 of us met in advance of the Forum, building on agenda-setting momentum sparked the year before and culminating in the establishment of an Early Childhood Development Task Force (ECDtf) at the Forum on September 24, 2013. While several of us participate actively as GPcwd partners, fully engaged with the original four task forces – Nutrition, Assistive Technology, Humanitarian Response, and Education – we embrace the opportunity to forge ahead with our new ECD task force, growing our network and strengthening our influence in keeping the needs and interests of young children and their families in high profile and priority.

Simultaneous to the formation of the ECDtf, UNICEF (2013) issued its *Report on the State of the World's Children: Children with Disabilities*. (SOWC). This remarkable and unprecedented framework for action can be lauded for its thoughtful and incisive documentation of movement from exclusion to inclusion and its showcasing of powerful and important people, programs, and ideas making a better world for all of us, including children with disabilities and their families. Its amplification of key messages such as "It's about ability!" and "Nothing about us without us!" serves us well in advancing the human rights mission guided by the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD). It argues well for inclusive, comprehensive and integrated systems for education, health, and social protection. It appropriately demands improvements in the type and quality of data we collect as a basis for policy and program improvement. While SOWC repeatedly notes the importance of early identification and intervention on behalf of children with disabilities, it falls short in terms of a sustained and explicit focus on the potential of early childhood development initiatives as the crucial levers for progress and success for its action agenda. The ECDtf for the GPcwd takes on this challenge and brings the diverse community of early childhood development and intervention stakeholders to this endeavor.

Emergent Objectives

1. Launch and sustain the ECDtf
 - a. Articulate this concept note and strategic planning as a basis for level playing field in GPcwd governance and activity
 - b. Secure funding to provide for operations, specific ECDtf projects, and collaborative projects with allied organizations
 - c. Establish a communications and collaboration platform including a resource clearinghouse
 - d. Convene an annual in-person gathering (most likely contiguous to the GPcwd Forum), and quarterly videoconference meetings.
 - e. Link with 2-3 emergent GPcwd and NPcwd initiatives open to an ECD/ECI focus

2. Serve as a network hub for an integrated ECD-ECI voice within GPcwd and in concert with kindred initiatives focused on the inclusion of young children with disabilities and their families in emergent global and regional development agendas and priorities (e.g., post-2015 Development Goals; strategic plans of organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, CG, GPE, etc.)

3. Contribute to and produce documents, tools, and processes that advance ECDtf priorities and themes. Examples include:
 - a. Policy brief documenting the case for inclusion in early childhood policies and programs (update of UNESCO, 2009)
 - b. ECD/ECI Blog for on-line forum such as <http://www.educationinnovations.org>
 - c. Position paper advancing “Triple-Twin-Tracking” (TTT) approach to policy and program quality enhancement: I. Twin-track special and universal services (mainstreaming disability), II. Twin-track child-centered and family-focused services (context matters), and III. Twin-track early childhood and broader child/youth services (development matters.)
 - d. “Unintended consequences” concept note for addressing the data gap regarding increased disability associated with the success of survival interventions.
 - e. Manuscripts for journals featuring early childhood development and disability themes, e.g. <http://acei.org/childhood-education/childhood-education-submission-guidelines.html>, <http://www.childcareinpractice.org/CallforPapers/>, <http://disabilityglobalsouth.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/dgs-call-for-paperschildhood.pdf>; <http://www.editorialmanager.com/iyc/> (*Infants and Young Children*)
 - f. Symposia or panel presentations at relevant global and regional conferences to advance support for ECD/ECI, e.g., CEC, DISES, ISSA, World Forum, ACEI, AOA, ISEI

2015 Work Plan

As the GPcwd formulates its policies and procedures, the ECDtf proceeds toward the objectives noted above. Current and anticipated activities are listed here:

1. Regular consultation with GPcwd secretariat via coordinator Nurten Yilmaz.
 - a. Aiming to participate in construction of policies and procedures, access to funding and other resources, liaison with other task forces, etc.
 - b. Coordinating and integrating membership lists and coordinating original PECD DR participants with task force roles and responsibilities now being defined
2. Establish a strategic planning process with broad participation by members, friends, and stakeholders
3. Convene substantive programming and quarterly networking meet-ups/conference calls
 - a. Plans in place for sessions at ACEI World Summit on Children, Vancouver, April 10-13

4. Establish communication and collaboration platform to maintain regular newsletter messages and support task teams as they get launched.
 - a. Refine and prioritize attached list of issues and topics
5. Identify promising partnerships and opportunities for resource development and fundraising

Issues and topics for consideration by ECDtf

1. Cost-effective practices and programs
 - a. Need for better documentation of evidence base
 - b. Need for better access to materials, training, and technical assistance
 - c. Why such fits & starts with traction?
2. “Invest early, invest smart, invest for ALL”
 - a. Match with World Bank Strategic Planning
3. Celebrate survival successes, BUT confront and address emergent “new morbidity”
 - a. As we reduce infant mortality, more babies survive who would have died in years past. Many are healthy, but many survive with disability and risk. These increases in numbers of children living with impairment and disability are well-documented in US later 20th Century. How these new biological, behavioral and psychosocial “disabilities” manifest now in the rest of the world needs documentation.
 - b. Unintended consequences of technological advances, globalization, etc
 - c. Survive ---→ flourish & thrive
4. ECD is about “smashing silos” – its cross-cutting approaches integrate and transform systems
5. Track record of thought and action in “inclusion”
6. Triple Twin-Tracking:
 - Twin-Track I – “mainstreaming disability” such that policies and services promote inclusive programming for all children and simultaneously promote enhanced special services
 - Twin-track II – simultaneous focus on “child-centered” policies and services along with family-centered and community centered policies and services (Context matters)

Twin-track III – simultaneous implementation of policies and services with an early childhood/first decade of life focus, with anchoring in child and youth approaches/contexts (developmental specificity/sensitivity/appropriateness)

7. Prevention and Promotion trump “treatment”
8. Enhanced engagement and enablement of parents and family members
 - a. Other “opening the tent” or “enlarging the table” options?
9. Articulate, align and harmonize CRC & CRPD objectives for monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and success.
10. Constructing and maintaining effective bridges with other GPcwd Task Forces and national partnerships
 - a. Education
 - b. Nutrition
 - c. Assistive Technologies
 - d. Humanitarian Action
11. Post-2015 strategies, tactics, messages,
 - a. Immediate matter of 9/24 GPcwd call for action
12. Jargon of ECD/ECE/ECCE/ECEC; 0-3, 3-5, 0-8, first decade, etc
13. Data gaps and strategies

References

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