

## e-News Flash July 2009



### JULY e-NEWS SUMMARY

For those of you who are wondering about how to become more involved in ARNEC activities, here's your chance! Starting this month, we are looking for articles on early childhood to be published in the second [ARNEC Newsletter 2009](#), which we anticipate to publish by the end of the year and shared regionally and beyond. We highly encourage you to use this opportunity to share your personal and professional experiences with young children. Or, if you prefer depicting early childhood through images rather than words, you can also submit photos to the [ARNEC Photo Contest 2009](#). More information regarding both of these activities can be found below.

Over 600 early childhood professionals also gathered at the 2009 World Forum on Early Care and Education in Belfast on June 16-19 to exchange ideas about the quality of services for young children in diverse settings. Every year, a group of Global Leaders for Young Children are selected from various regions to become agents of change and advocates for quality early childhood development services in their home countries. We had a chance to speak with some of the Global Leaders from the Asia-Pacific region who shared with us their exciting experiences at the World Forum and the Global Leaders Program in this issue.

### ARNEC PHOTO CONTEST 2009 BEGINS



In an effort to encourage family and community involvement in early childhood development (ECD), we would like to encourage you to send in photo entries for the second Photo Contest 2009 on the theme of “Home, Family and Community in Early Childhood Care and Development.” Send all entries to Kanitha Kongrukreatiyos ([kanitha.kong@gmail.com](mailto:kanitha.kong@gmail.com)). Click [here](#) for more information regarding criteria and conditions. **Deadline September 13, 2009.**

The 13 contest winners will have their photographs and brief background information about their organization or themselves featured in the “ARNEC Calendar 2010: Home, Family and Community in ECCE.” This is to be distributed widely throughout the Asia-Pacific and beyond. The winners will also receive complimentary hard copies of the calendar.

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We believe that at the heart of ECD is the child's immediate environment - home. Facilitating responsive and sensitive care, positive interactions and meaningful activities in the daily lives of children in a safe and protective environment are essential for a young child's healthy development. Babies and toddlers form a special relationship with their primary caregiver (usually parents, and often mother) who provides physical and emotional care continuously and consistently in their life. But the relationship with the father is as important, so are those with grandparents, siblings, and other extended family members, who play a significant role in their psychosocial well-being throughout the early childhood years (and onwards).

Young children who have received nurturing care and have established positive relationship with parents (or those significant in their life), are more likely to develop better emotional functioning and social skills, as well as positive disposition for learning. There is also a substantial body of research that indicates that children whose families provide stimulating environments consistently show advanced language and cognitive skills.

While family is a crucial context for child's development, the family itself is embedded in a broader community context with social and economic factors that have direct impact on the lives of children. The community and the families interact with one another to influence the development of children. Moreover, successful EC programmes that show positive impact on young children's developmental outcomes are often characterized by high level of parents/family and community involvement.

Exemplified by the African proverb "it takes a whole village to raise a child", all of us have a shared responsibility for young children in providing a caring and stimulating environment that foster optimal child development.

## **ARNEC CALLS FOR ECD ARTICLES EXPRESSION OF INTERESTS**

We are pleased to invite you to submit an Expression of Interest to publish articles in the second issue of the "ARNEC Newsletter 2009." This is our network's signature publication featuring research findings, national and regional news, updates on program and policy development, descriptions on best practices, workshop and conference information, and an array of topics related to early childhood in the Asia-Pacific region. Click [here](#) for more information on how to submit an Expression of Interest. **Deadline August 16, 2009.**

As ARNEC would like this to be a newsletter for ECD professionals by ECD professionals, all articles in the newsletter are contributed by individuals who are ARNEC members and/or are working within the field of early childhood. We hope to collect your experiences and share them in ways that are useful and meaningful to a wider audience. The selected articles will be featured in the ARNEC Newsletter Issue No. 2 publication, which will be disseminated widely throughout the Asia and Pacific region and beyond, in both paper and electronic format.

## **RTRC STATEMENT ON HOSTING ARNEC SECRETARIAT**

Recently in May, [RTRC Asia](#) was awarded the winning bid to host the new ARNEC Secretariat in Singapore. Director of RTRC Asia, Mr. Chan Tee Seng, comments:

"RTRC Asia is proud to be the host of the ARNEC Secretariat. As the region's leading training institute for Early Childhood (EC) educators, we are committed to inspiring professionals to excel in practice and achieve the best for each child. RTRC is poised to partner ARNEC in its goal to achieve alignment in regional policies and practices with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the optimal holistic development of all children.

We aim to help ARNEC grow a broad membership base for greater influence through the extensive regional network built over the years, training policy makers and educators from across the region. With our experience and increased focus on research, we are confident that

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the launch of the ARNEC research database is possible by 2010. Together, ARNEC 2015 can be a reality, a reality where children enjoy the early childhood experience they have the right to enjoy."

The ARNEC Secretariat is expected to move to Singapore by the end of 2009 once all the preparations are complete for the transition. The current Secretariat has been based at the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok since February 2008.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

We are featuring a new section called "[Jobs and Scholarships](#)" on the ARNEC website, which allows you to browse for employment and scholarship opportunities in ECD from all around the region. If your organization would like to post a job vacancy on the ARNEC website, contact the Secretariat at [arnecc@unescobkk.org](mailto:arnecc@unescobkk.org).

Currently, a scholarship opportunity for PhD students at Macquarie University, Australia is available. Those interested in investigating issues associated with emergency/disaster situations and young children are encouraged to apply. Contact Dr. Jacqueline Hayden ([Jacqueline.Hayden@mq.edu.au](mailto:Jacqueline.Hayden@mq.edu.au)) for more information.

## **RESEARCH TASK FORCE UPDATES**

The Research Task Force continues its primary tasks of 1) Compiling data from existing sources on a wide variety of indicators pertaining to early childhood and 2) obtaining data not readily available through a regional resource mapping survey. Earlier in the year, 47 [country profiles](#) were added to the ARNEC "members-only" section of the webpage. These data are based on the GMR 2008 and the SoWC 2008. Efforts are currently under way to update these pages with more recent data from the GMR 2009 and the SoWC 2009.

Progress on the mapping survey has been slow but steady. Summary survey data from 5 countries (India, Bangladesh, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and PNG) have already been uploaded. We are now working on summary data from 5 more countries. These surveys provide key information on policy indicators, parenting support, network in early childhood, research resources, emergency preparedness etc. We also continue our attempts to build multi-sectoral country teams in our member countries.

## **ELDS PROGRESS IN VANUATU**

By Jennifer James, Ministry of Education Vanuatu



(Photo: Ministry of Education Vanuatu)

In the Pacific Islands, 14% of children are not enrolled in primary school. For the ones that are enrolled, 18% do not reach grade five and only 50% transition to secondary school education. According to UNICEF, education in the Pacific Islands has been characterized by rote learning methodologies, lack of resources and untrained or unmotivated teachers. In order to improve the education system, UNICEF has been working with the Ministry of Education in Vanuatu,

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Kiribati and the Solomon Islands and providing financial and technical assistance in areas of early childhood and primary education.

One of the activities initiated since December 2008 was the development of a national Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) in Vanuatu. ELDS are statements that specify what individual countries believe children should know and be able to do and are developed through a process of community-wide consultation with experts.

In the process of writing the standards, we have set up a Steering and Review Committee. After seven months of drafting the ELDS and throwing it backwards and forwards between the various sectors, we are now reviewing the 4th draft, which would be ready for validation in September 2009.

The ELDS for Vanuatu has been written specifically for children ages 3 -6 years. It is anticipated that these standards will form the basis for the national ECE curriculum by 2010, as well as serve as models for neighboring islands who have indicated an interest in learning from our experience. During the validation process in September, we will have representatives from the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Papua New Guinea participating as observers.

So far, we have decided to take up 6 developmental domains:

- 1) Physical & Motor Development, Health and Well-being
- 2) Cognitive Development
- 3) Spiritual and Moral development
- 4) Language, Literacy and Communication
- 5) Social /Emotional Development
- 6) Custom, Culture and Environment

In December 2009, we will conduct a TOT workshop, in which we hope to train the ECE Provincial Coordinators, the Zone Curriculum Advisors and stakeholders from the Ministry of Health, Chiefs, Youth, Disability, Women's and Church representatives to take the standards out to the communities for trial. For the workshop, we have two committed facilitators - Ufemia Caimatoga, Fiji and Emma Pearson, Griffith University, Australia

We are grateful that UNICEF has been very supportive financially.

## A "GLOBAL" EXPERIENCE

By Indu Capoor, Jigisha Shastri and Joyeeta Sengupta (Current Global Leaders)



At the reception party for Global Leaders

It was a privilege for us to represent India in the Global Leaders for Young Children, a project of the World Forum Foundation. We were a part of the 4<sup>th</sup> cohort (the first cohort met in 2004) nominated as fellows from 13 countries which symbolized a microcosm of the world - coming

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from Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Poland, Netherlands, Fiji, United States, Lebanon, Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil.

The goal of the Global Leaders for Young Children program is to provide mentoring for leadership and advocacy (over a period of two years) to help us become better change agents on behalf of young children and families around the world. The program was held from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> June in Belfast, Northern Ireland, tied up with the 8th annual World Forum on Early Care and Education, where 630 delegates from 76 countries exchanged in order to strengthen the global community as a voice for all the world's children.

The two days with 'the class of 2009' was an experience of a lifetime for all of us in more ways than one!

As the representatives presented their home country reports on the status of young children, major initiatives, and the strengths and challenges relevant to their country; we deepened our understanding of global issues and recognized the gaps in policy and/or implementation that need to be addressed across these countries. It was a revelation to most of us that our challenges were similar and there were commonalties of issues across countries. We also shared our knowledge about early childhood programming and policy, and discussed the need to create networks between politicians, policy makers and program developers/implementers. The exchange of ideas not only helped us to gain a broader perspective but helped us to bond warmly with each other.

The mentors of the program - Dr. Judith Evans, Mr. Youssef Hajjar and Ms. Joan Lombardi - constantly encouraged us to understand the generic nature of our discussions. There was no evaluation or judgment, only acceptance, which went a long way in making everyone comfortable to speak up and debate issues. Since the Global Leaders are expected to take on a leadership role and become the "voices" of young children, there were sessions which gave us a sense of what can happen when we commit to change and how to develop our advocacy skills so that we can confidently promote EC issues in our country.

Another positive fall out of being nominated as an India ensemble of 4 representatives was that we prepared a common presentation on India. We had discussions late into the night on how to portray the macro picture of a diverse country like India from different perspectives. It was enriching as we represented different disciplines of study but shared a common concern. Our presentation included the status of ECCE in India, the multi-sectoral approach, the example of ICDS and major challenges that need to be addressed.

We were mentored for developing and planning the initial stages of our advocacy projects during the week. Each participant was free to choose an advocacy area; appropriate for their country (the option of working in a group was also offered). The mentors helped to consolidate ideas and guided us with specific inputs. We had interactions with the "senior" Global Leaders. Many of them presented the work that they completed in their home countries, which gave us a flavour of how an advocacy project can pan out. The next milestone is the submission of the project proposal. A seed grant will be provided to each Global Leader to implement the advocacy project in their country within a year.

The Global Leaders also got the opportunity to attend a private reception with Mary McAleese, President of Ireland. We visited the Town Hall in Belfast where the Mayoress of the city addressed the group (which included country representatives of the World Forum too).

The World Forum presentations deepened our resolve to work for our children. During the conference, we attended sessions on diverse topics like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Peace Building with Young Children, ECE in Emergencies and many more enriching ideas from multiple perspectives. As we went about attending the conference (with 600 other delegates), all of us felt like old friends. It did not feel like we had met just a couple of days earlier!

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The learning, support and the shared concern amongst the class led to a deep connect and camaraderie, which has continued till date. We have created a strong network of friends and professionals. We are sharing our thoughts with people from all across the world daily and helping each other find the best or alternative ways to move our agendas forward. The warm friendships and the feeling of “oneness” make us feel enabled to go ahead confidently. We know that in the world where early childhood issues are just a blip, all the Global Leaders stand together, gaining strength from each other. We echo the resolve to work towards quality early childhood development services in our home countries across the globe.

Ms. Indu Capoor is a nutritionist and founder director of Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness (CHETNA) which has been working on early childhood issues since the last two and a half decades.

Dr. Jigisha Shastri has 25 years of experience in teaching, research, capacity building, outreach and advocacy. Capacity building of teachers and parents and designing child friendly curriculum for private and Government sector are her core work areas. She is a founder member of Learning Imprints, an organization that works for and about children.

Dr. Joyeeta Sengupta has 16 years of experience in teaching, facilitation, research, counseling, and advocacy. She works with a knowledge research lab which architects collective and individual transformations in human systems ([www.illumine.info](http://www.illumine.info)).

## **BEYOND BOUNDARIES: WORLD FORUM 2009 ON ECE**

By Priyanka Zutshi, Sesame Workshop India (Current Global Leader)



Global Leaders at the World Forum 2009

As soon as I heard about the World Forum 2009 on Early Care and Education, I decided to register immediately. I didn't want to miss out on the opportunity to learn about early care and education (ECE) stories from across the globe and share my experiences with others. I registered as a delegate and had never thought that within a month I would be representing my country through a unique opportunity called the Global Leaders program. It was with a mixed bag of emotions - excitement, a tad of nervousness and anticipation that I boarded my flight for Belfast.

The first two days in Belfast were dedicated to the Global Leaders program. 23 participants from around the world were inducted to Cohort IV of the Global Leaders program with the largest representation coming from India. As a part of the program, I got to hear about the ECE scenario in other countries and the issues/challenges that they grapple with. It was evident from all the presentations that there were many areas that needed attention, but there was also a common recognition in the valuing of early years and the understanding of the importance of investing in young children.



Global Leaders Cohort IV from India

The program provided me a platform to enhance my skills and knowledge on ECE, advocacy and leadership through the training and mentoring workshops. It also gave me the chance to develop and conceptualize a framework for my advocacy project under the guidance of three extraordinarily capable mentors - Judith Evans, Joan Lombardi and Youssef Hajjar.

Raising the awareness on ECE and focusing on quality in early education is central to the work I am presently doing in my capacity as Program Manager, Outreach at Sesame Workshop India. Sesame Workshop India is a non-profit organization that spearheads a multi-media early childhood education initiative called *Galli Galli Sim Sim* in India. Being a part of the Global Leader group strengthened my determination and sense of purpose to move the agenda of early education in my country and made me feel that I am a part of a larger movement working towards giving children a happy, healthy and secure life.

On completion of the Global Leaders program, we were rewarded with several exciting opportunities: the Northern Ireland Study Tour, the World Forum presentations and the privilege of greeting and meeting the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese.

The Northern Ireland Study Tour was an eye-opener. It gave me a first-hand picture of the early education scenario in Northern Ireland and many ideas for reflection. For the tour, the World Forum participants were divided into small groups and went on a field visit to some preschool centers in Northern Ireland.

My group visited two centers: (a) Sugar and Spice located at Omagh, and (b) Rainbow Sure Start located at Castlederg. (Sure Start is the government program to deliver the best start in life for every child). It was amazing to see the educational resources provided at each center and the individual attention given to each child by the teacher. I was also informed that regular parental workshops were conducted by the supervisor and teachers.

In contrast, centers in India have no/very little access to ready-made educational materials and have a terribly unfavorable teacher:child ratio. There were also no sustained awareness generation activities on ECE for parents. Despite these challenges, the field visit did make me realize that some exceptional teachers in India beat these odds, and rely completely on their creativity and the locally available resources to provide joyful and meaningful experiences to children. Some positives that we often don't take notice of.



Sugar and Spice Preschool in Northern Ireland

On the following day, I participated in the plenary and working sessions. I was particularly impressed with the scientific and superbly presented session that Dr. Shanker made on self regulation and brain development. His emphasis on the primary caregiver as the regulatory and stimulating mechanism for the child's brain and the importance of quality caregiver interaction made me think about the potential ideas for my advocacy project, which were:

- (a) Developing an activity guidebook for parents on *Learning Begins at Home*
- (b) Developing a toolkit for teachers that would strengthen the nutrition and early education continuum as there is a need to address both the nutritive stimulation and educative stimulation aspects

All that I have brought back home with me from Belfast will strengthen my pursuit at work and in life. I am keenly looking forward to my journey to the undisclosed destination of the 2010 World Forum to make more noise with my fellow Global Geese.

## **A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE AT THE WORLD FORUM**

By Manjusree Mitra, Save the Children in Bangladesh (Graduated Global Leader)

Everyday, I seek to abate my curious mind that is always searching for answers by learning new things about early childhood development (ECD). I believe that the experiences of working with children is a never ending process as children are almost like researchers - always researching, learning, and coming up with conclusions on their own. I learned many things from children and love to work with them in Early Childhood programs.

I began my career in basic education, and from 1997 onwards I started working on ECD, and since then, have devoted all of my efforts to ECD. In 2006, I was selected as one of the Global Leaders for Young Children from Bangladesh. I was really excited. The World Forum 2007 was held in Malaysia. 36 Global Leaders from different countries participated in the Global Leaders Program while approximately 750 ECD experts participated in the World Forum. Each Global Leader was asked to present their country's status on ECD and their roles. Since every Global Leader belonged to an organization, it was also a great opportunity to share one's own knowledge and each organization's learning and commitments to ECD.

The whole program for Global Leaders lasted eight days. For the first four days, the schedule for Global Leaders was packed with trainings and meeting, while the other four days was dedicated to the World Forum. The mission of the Global Leaders Program is to improve life chances for young children by developing early childhood leaders who can become effective agents and advocates for quality early childhood development services in their home countries.

During the Global Leaders Program, we participated in mentoring and training sessions, studied research findings and reading materials, and visited ECD programs organized by the World Forum. During these field visits, we learned about the different culture and perspectives of the

local preschools. I believe that setting a wider vision than normal is important in order to achieve things and the field trip gave me that scope.

One of the main responsibilities of every Global Leader when they return to their home country after the World Forum would be to implement an advocacy project within the following year. The results and learning from the project would be shared in the next Global Leaders meeting. Each Global Leader had a mentor who coached them in identifying their country's advocacy issues and in developing project proposals. My mentor was Joan Lombardi who provided me with a lot of technical support. Note that the duration of formal support for the Global Leaders is for two years.

My advocacy topic was on "An estimation of budgetary allocation for pre-primary by the Government of Bangladesh". Here, I tried to find out the status and analyze present programs and budgets for the pre-primary education, the government's pre-primary framework, and the allocation needed to cover all pre-primary children in Bangladesh by 2015. This was done with the support of Save the Children and findings were shared in various forums.

I learned a lot from my experience at the World Forum and was able to share with other team members what I learned at the training programs as well, regarding curriculum development, quality program design, strategy development, etc. Being a Global Leader for Young Children definitely made me more confident in the area of early childhood and advocacy.

A word for future Leaders, this is an opportunity of immense proportion for learning and sharing, networking, continuous updates and improvements of country programs. It is a blessing that various countries have seen the need to support and train more people who are experts in ECD and to create a space for them to contribute. All of these, I believe, are for the long lasting and positive changes for children around the globe.

## [CHRISTIAN CHILDREN'S FUND CHANGES NAME TO CHILDFUND INTERNATIONAL](#)

Known for 70 years as Christian Children's Fund, the international NGO helping children in Asia, recently changed its name to ChildFund International to reflect an even stronger passion and vigor for their mission - helping deprived, excluded and vulnerable children have the capacity to improve their lives and the opportunity to become young adults, parents and leaders of enduring change. Professionals working in the child development sector including international NGOs, donor organizations and international organizations are welcome to attend the launch ceremony of their new name on July 30 at Jasmine Hotel, Bangkok. For more information, contact [pjantala@asia.childfund.org](mailto:pjantala@asia.childfund.org).

## [UPCOMING EVENTS](#)

**Regional Conference on Special Needs Education** by Faculty of Education, University of Malaya. July 20-22, 2009. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. For more information: <http://sne2009.um.edu.my>.

**OMEP Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting and Conference "From Caring, Responsible Children to a Sustainable Future: Education for Sustainability in Asia and the Pacific"** by the Singapore Committee of OMEP. August 13-15, Singapore. For more information: <http://www.omep-sgp.org/omepconference.html>.

**ICEFA 2009 International Conference on Education For All "Beyond the Boundaries: Education For All"** by the Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO. August 17-19, 2009. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. For more information: <http://www.um.edu.my>.

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EECERA 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference “Diversities in Early Childhood Education” by European Early Childhood Education Research. August 26-29. Strasbourg, France. For more information: <http://www.lefuret.org/19th%20EECERA/Programme.html>

Their Magical Years: A National Conference on Early Learning and Intuitive Teaching by KATHA and NUEPA. September 3-5. New Delhi, India. For more information: <http://www.katha.org/events-education.html#magical>

ECD Costing Workshop by UNICEF EAPRO. September 16-17. Jakarta, Indonesia.

## **FEATURED RESOURCE**



The report provides compelling evidence on nutritional status of women and children in India. Even after decades of efforts by the government, child malnutrition rates in several parts of India are worse than many sub-Saharan African countries standing in stark contrast to India's burgeoning economy. Backed by evidence, the report reinforces the urgency to tackle hunger and malnutrition on an emergency footing if we are to meet our promises to the world and India's children.

[“Freedom from Hunger for Children Under Six”](#) by Save the Children Alliance, April 2009

## **NEW EC RESOURCES**

[“Women Deliver: A Global Conference on Maternal Health”](#) by UNICEF ROSA

[“Conference Report: Impact of the Economic Crisis on Children”](#) by UNICEF EAPRO, March 2009

[“Economic Crisis Hits Asia's Children's Hard”](#) by Karen Emmons, Asian Development Bank, April 2009

[“Policy Brief No. 15: Caring for Young Children: What Children Need”](#) by Centre for Community Child Health, Melbourne, May 2009

[“Early Experiences Matter: A Guide to Improved Policies for Infants and Toddlers 2009”](#) by Zero to Three

[“State of the World's Mothers 2009: Investing in Early Years”](#) by Save the Children Alliance