Report on the Capacity-Building Workshop on Early Childhood Care and Education

Hanoi, Vietnam

19-21 May 2004

1 Prepared by Feny de los Angeles-Bautista to serve as a summary of the workshop. This is not intended to be a detailed documentation of workshop proceedings.
The three-day workshop on ECCE was co-organized by UNESCO-Hanoi in collaboration with the Early Childhood Care and Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) with support from UNESCO Asia & Pacific Regional Office. There were 45 participants from the MoET (representing the Central Education and Training Ministry’s ECCE Department and six Provincial and District offices), National Teacher Training Colleges and Research Institutes, UNICEF, Save the Children UK, USA, Japan and Enfant et Developpement. (France)

During the three-day workshop, there were plenary presentations and discussions that helped to provide information and share experiences as well as raise issues for further discussion. There were also two small-group workshops which allowed for more interaction and collaborative work that involved identifying more specific issues, problems and recommendations to resolve these as well as future actions that are to be taken. The results of these small-group workshops were summarized and presented in plenary sessions.

In welcoming the participants Mrs. Le Ti Anh Tuyet, head of the ECCE Department, of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) acknowledged the significant contribution of the MoET’s partners such as the international organizations like UNESCO, UNICEF, members of the Save the Children Alliance towards the development of ECCE programmes in Vietnam. The national workshop was therefore a welcome opportunity to engage in further interchange about programme experiences and continue the efforts to improve and expand ECCE programmes and policies.

For his part Mr. Chu Shiu-Kee, Country Director for UNESCO Hanoi, recalled the main challenges for Vietnam in relation to ECCE as identified in the National EFA Plan of Action of Vietnam i.e. expanding the coverage of ECCE services particularly in remote areas, improving the quality of ECCE programmes and facilities, securing increased financing and enhancing teacher development, formulating a comprehensive ECCE strategy for medium and long-term development. UNESCO believes that Vietnam is well-placed to achieve the ECCE goals of EFA. First, despite many difficulties and challenges, there is a long and solid experience base to build upon in current efforts to expand access and improve quality of ECCE in Vietnam. Second, there are many examples of successful ECCE programmes and effective practices that can be promoted and disseminated among service providers and managers. Third, there are many institutions and specialists working in the area of ECCE, and the potential for closer and more effective inter-agency and multi-sectoral collaboration is great. Furthermore many international donors and NGOs are firmly committed to supporting ECCE in Vietnam. Mr. Chu Shiu-Kee expressed the hope that the MoET and its partners would find the UNESCO supported study on ECCE in three countries which includes Vietnam to be useful as they renew and re-energize

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3 Ha Noi, Ha Tay, Vinh Phuc, Bac Ninh, Hai Duong, Hung Yen provinces
their continuing efforts towards the achievement of ECCE goals within the EFA framework.

Mr. Lai Huu Mien from the EFA Plan Coordination Unit of MOET reaffirmed the government’s commitment to the framework and goals of Dakar. In order to fulfill these goals, the national commission and international partners have planned for projects to be implemented in the 64 provinces throughout the country which are designed to broaden opportunities for the participation of Vietnamese children aged 0-5 in various ECCE programmes such as kindergartens. He reiterated the need to improve the quality of ECCE programmes so that these can effectively facilitate children’s entry and adjustment to primary school as well as the need to increase attention to disadvantaged children. In order to improve the quality of ECCE programmes and broaden access, more and better teacher training to enhance understanding and support for holistic child development as well as enhancing support and commitment to ECCE commitment at the provincial levels of government will be crucial. Cooperation is also vital to ensuring that the ECCE goals within the National EFA Plan will be accomplished by the year 2015.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Son from the Central Commission for Education and Science is responsible for advising party on policies - national policies to address issues regarding ECCE. He reiterated that the Party and the State are determined to pay attention to the development of Vietnamese children. He commended the MoET for organizing the workshop, acknowledged participation of members of the EFA national commission, teacher training colleges and underscored the advisory and supportive role of UNESCO which is a contribution to the development of ECCE in Vietnam.

Ms. Annelene Rør, focal person for ECCE from the UNESCO-Bangkok office provided an overview of the importance of early childhood care development. Despite the differences in terminology used by various organizations and institutions e.g. ECD, ECCE or ECCD, it is important to focus on the essential nature and requirements of supporting young children. She highlighted the necessity for a holistic approach to ECCE programming given the synergistic relationship between health, nutrition interventions, support for psychosocial development and active learning. This synergism is best illustrated by the impact of the quality of care and early childhood experiences on a young child’s brain development. Like all other stakeholders in the global alliance for EFA which includes ECCD advocates, UNESCO is committed to working closely with its member States towards fulfilling the first goal of the EFA Dakar Framework for Action. This national capacity-building workshop is one contribution of the UNESCO Regional office towards supporting the countries within the region who seek to translate the ECCE goal into more concrete actions that will yield positive benefits for young children particularly those who are most vulnerable and currently excluded. This includes increased attention to the quality of a child’s environment i.e. physical as well as the interaction and relationships with adults and peers. Thus, the added attention to more comprehensive ECCE programmes and policies which include parental education is necessary to ensure that the child grows up within inclusive and learning-friendly environments.

Mr. Nguyen Trung Kien from the ECCE Department of the MoET presented an overview of Vietnam’s National EFA Action Plan for the period 2003-2015 which comprises the Government’s medium to long-term development strategy for the four
education sub-sectors (ECCE, Primary, Lower Secondary and Out-of-school youth). The National EFA Plan sets the objectives and targets to be reached, identifies the action programs that must be carried out in order to achieve these objectives and targets and provides an assessment of the resources needed including potential approaches to securing the necessary financial resources for the implementation of the EFA Plan.

A summary of the country study on ECCE in Vietnam was presented by Ms. Feny de los Angeles-Bautista, UNESCO consultant and regional representative (Southeast Asia) to the Secretariat of the Consultative Group for ECCD. For purposes of the workshop, she emphasized some findings and corresponding recommendations emerging from the study:

1) There is much to build on in Vietnam in terms of successful and effective ECCE practices and programmes which can and should now be systematically used to expand access to and improve the quality of existing ECCE programmes. For example, Vietnam is one of the countries in Southeast Asia where considerable success with some nutrition projects have been demonstrated. Yet malnutrition continues to be a major problem that impedes the well-being and optimum development of a significant number of Vietnamese children. The challenge now is to expand these not only in terms of coverage but also in terms of design to include more comprehensive attention to parent education and community-based approaches to early childhood education.

2) There remains a wide disparity between rates of participation and the quality of ECCE programmes between urban and rural areas as well as children from well-off and middle-income families vis a vis the children from poor families. However, there are interesting examples of viable and effective approaches to ECCE programming in remote rural communities especially intended for children of poor families and of ethnic minorities from which lessons can be drawn. What is necessary is to undertake intensive education, communication and advocacy for ECCD to increase public support, create enabling policies and generate sufficient resources to finance the expansion as well as sustain current efforts where these are already effective.

3) In order to address both expansion of coverage and improvement of quality there is now a need to invest in the human resource base for ECCD by intensifying capacity-building efforts and improving the working conditions of service providers and the supervisory support systems to implement effective and sustained capacity-building programmes. It will be helpful to plan for a medium to long-term human resource development programme and include this in policy formulation in collaboration with the leaders and managers of the formal basic education (secondary) system and teacher training institutions.

**ECCE programmes in Vietnam: Strengths to build on and Challenges to Face**

During the first afternoon and the morning of the second day of the workshop, the focus was on sharing of experiences in programme implementation and current work in ECCE by representatives of the MoET and the international agencies who are among the Government’s major partners in ECCE. Key findings on the current issues and effective practices as well as recommendations earlier presented through the UNESCO-supported country study were affirmed by the experiences and lessons
learned by the primary stakeholders in ECCE in Vietnam at the various levels of programme and policy development from the central levels to provincial and district levels.

Among these are the following:

1. **There exists a legal mandate for expanding commitment to ECCE programmes by the government and its partners in civil society. The broader implementation of ECCE programmes is recognized as integral to achieving the goals of EFA and is seen as essential to education reform efforts.**

For example, Mrs. Vu Thi Ngoc from the ECCE Division of the DOET of Vinh Phuc province described how the legal mandate provided by Decision 161 since 2002 provided the impetus for the government to assume increased responsibility for ECCE programmes intended for disadvantaged groups with greater attention to more active community participation. Thus, the communities involved were mobilized throughout the planning and development process starting with the identification of problems such as the lack of facilities and the poor quality of existing infrastructure, contributing ideas for ECCE programme implementation. Much support was provided from local to central levels, for example by the Education Promotion Association. Aside from improvements in the facilities, the other positive outcomes of these concerted efforts are better working conditions for teachers, most of whom now have contracts and insurance. There were also “semi-boarding” schools established to serve children who live in remote communities and have to travel long distances to attend kindergarten classes.

Dr. Le Thi Anh Tuyet, head of the ECCE Department of the MoET pointed out that given the current challenges for ECCE programme and policy development in Vietnam it may not be feasible to achieve the goals as put forth in Decision 161 to achieve 50% enrolment of all children below age six by 2005 and 80% by 2010. She identified the following as the primary issues and problems that need to be addressed: 1) inadequate quality of care that many young children receive because there is still a lack of awareness and understanding about the importance of early childhood development and knowledge about appropriate caregiving and teaching practices; 2) wide disparities in access to ECCD programmes and the quality of ECCD services available to young children e.g. urban-rural areas; 3) insufficient public investment in ECCD with only 10% of the entire budget for education allocated to ECCE and the coverage of programmes funded by NGOs and international organizations remains limited; 4) the inadequacy of existing legal frameworks and national policies in terms of providing more specific and defined mechanisms for the effective implementation of ECCE programmes including the planning, financing and monitoring of indicators. The latter is viewed as a continuing process. At present all the 64 provinces have their own policies and mechanisms for implementing ECCE programmes. There is now a need for improved coordination at the local levels as well as between central and local levels thus, the need for more comprehensive policies. Information-sharing and more coordinated planning as well as sustained coordinated actions during programme implementation is essential.

The government considers the implementation of Decision 161 as a priority and has so far invested in the development and implementation of a new ECCE curriculum and appropriate learning materials and books as well as the development of
standardized management tools and instruments. To complement this, at the local level the need for curriculum development that promotes the holistic development of children is recognized as a priority. The identification and achievement of consensus on indicators to assess the quality of ECCE programmes from the micro to the macro levels i.e. family, community including service providers e.g. teachers and child care workers, infrastructure and facilities.

2. In order to achieve the goals of ECCE as put forth in the Dakar Framework for Action, it is now necessary to move forward by translating lessons learned from programme implementation into more relevant enabling and comprehensive policies that will be appropriately applied at the national or central and local levels to expand access and improve the quality of ECCE programmes.

There are building blocks on which such enabling policies and shifts in approaches to programming can be anchored. This is because there have been concrete steps taken towards enhancing family and community awareness of the importance of ECCD with a strong emphasis on holistic child growth, development and protection through the promotion of integrated approaches for early childhood care for survival and development (IECD). Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Nga, UNICEF Education Programme Officer reiterated the fact that the Republic of Vietnam-UNICEF Country Programme for Children has identified IECD as one of the five priorities which is reflected in the UNICEF Medium term Strategic Plan 2002-2005. To address the persistently high rates of malnutrition and maternal mortality, it is critical to reach the most disadvantaged children and mothers in Vietnam. Thus, it has been necessary to explore and utilize all possible means of communicating with and interacting with parents and other community members through a variety of interventions and media while at the same time strengthening service delivery systems and community awareness of and support for IECD.

UNICEF’s strategic approach for IECD involved the following components which were implemented at various levels from the household and community to the village and district levels of government: 1) advocacy (launching of a National IECE media campaign and advocacy for enabling policies); 2) capacity-building (involving parents, community-based service providers and community leaders; 3) support for service delivery through the development and production of low-cost learning materials for children and for parents and the improvement of kindergarten facilities; 4) research, monitoring and evaluation.

Among the positive results of implementing this integrated approach to ECCD are: 1) improvements in the kindergartens in terms of teachers’ application of child-centered, developmentally-appropriate approaches, child-friendly facilities and infrastructure; 2) enhanced parenting practices that result in better quality of care for young children; 3) increasing awareness among policy-makers about the importance of ECCD that leads to improved decision-making among local and national leaders responsible for planning and managing ECCE programmes; 4) stronger planning, monitoring and management systems with attention to parents as caregivers.

Complementing the UNICEF-assisted IECD programme interventions, are those supported by other international agencies such as the members of the Save the Children Alliance. Ms. Le Bich Hanh from Save the Children (USA) described their efforts closely coordinate with the efforts of the education and health sectors to raise
community awareness about the importance of ECCE and mobilize community support. This was done through a combination of activities implemented within the communities in their programme areas: community-based information and educational projects such as toy-making competitions, the use of media to provide information about child care and development, children's festivals and community campaigns on ECCE, setting-up community libraries. They also supported the upgrading of child care center facilities and teacher training in order to improve their teaching methods. They assisted their programme areas in setting up monitoring systems linked to existing government systems.

Save the Children Japan has also supported some small-scale ECCE projects in two provinces which involved teacher training that is focused on community development, children's rights, child development and appropriate teaching methodologies, as described by Mrs. Vu Thi Lan Anh.

3) It is now timely and necessary to draw upon all the accumulated experiences in various levels particularly at the grassroots levels in order to establish operational mechanisms to systematically seek, identify and reach the young children and families who are currently not served by any ECCE programmes.

There are encouraging examples of programme experiences that validate the country study findings as well as affirm the wisdom of some of the directions taken or identified by the Government as priorities. More importantly, they amplify both the urgency as well as viability of focused efforts on reaching out to those who are currently most often excluded: the young children of ethnic minorities. These are the integrated, community-based ECCE programmes implemented by Enfant et Developpement and Save the Children UK among ethnic minorities in remote mountain villages. As discussed by Marc Wetz of Enfant et Developpement and Nguyen Thi Bich of Save the Children UK, these projects demonstrated the viability of consciously seeking those who are excluded in order to provide access to ECCE programmes. In addition, there are two significant features of these education projects for children from ethnic communities: 1) facilitating children's participation in ECCE programmes and building local capacity among the human resource base - community members recruited and trained to be teachers was considered as an integral component of the education project and attention was paid to the factors that were viewed as obstacles to children's participation in primary school. e.g. language, social-cultural relevance of the curriculum; 2) approaches to working with communities involved are highly participatory, bottom-up processes that foster self-reliance, organization and ultimately the empowerment of people as collectively responsible for their children's and their own continuing education and the development of their villages.

It is clear from all these experiences that there are lessons to be learned and applied to further policy and programme development: 1) investing in raising public awareness about the importance, the nature of ECCD and supportive practices for optimum early childhood development goes a long way towards improving the quality of care young children receive; 2) it is important to work closely with communities so that parents themselves, service providers and other volunteers involved in ECCE and other education programmes as well as community leaders are active participants in the process of developing and implementing ECCE programmes; 3)
it is possible to develop affordable, cost-effective programme models that are effective and responsive to the needs of children in poor, disadvantaged communities who are least able to access quality ECCE programmes.

Most of the presentations identified the following as the primary challenges that must be confronted at this stage: 1) the focus attention on supporting families as caregivers and improving the quality of communities as children’s growth and learning environments; 2) the need to improve coordination among the various sectors and stakeholders in ECCD in order to achieve the essential convergence and integration of ECCD services especially those intended for disadvantaged groups of children; 3) the need for relevant and enabling government policies to facilitate such coordination and improve service delivery and monitoring of programmes, supervision of service providers.

**Future Directions**

During the three day seminar there were two small-group workshops wherein specific questions were discussed by participants representing the various levels of programme management and implementation, policy and human resource development. Guide questions were provided for the content structure for the two workshops.

The following is a summary of the significant insights and corresponding recommendations that emerged from the two workshops which comprise the proposed future directions for concerted action:

1. There exists a service delivery system for education and health at all levels from the village up to the provincial levels of government and this network for basic social services are generally accessible to and used by people who live in the rural areas. Thus, this same network should be maximized as well as strengthened to provide the basic ECCD services (health, nutrition, parent education, child care and early education through kindergarten and other community-based education services and activities.) In order to enhance participation by children and parents, especially those who are most disadvantaged, there is a need to implement effective communication strategies to inform them about the importance of these basic ECCD services, to encourage them to seek these services. Parent participation also should include providing them with opportunities to work for changes in the service delivery process - from ensuring that they know what changes are being introduced as well as listening to their views about the kinds of changes that they think will help to make programmes more effective and responsive.

2. In the more functional service delivery systems, active participation by parents and community members is evidenced by their regular use of the services, contribution of financial and materials resources, help with maintaining or upgrading of the facilities. There are certain essential features or elements that motivate parents and children to participate in these programmes: a) these programmes must clearly demonstrate their effectiveness in terms of how children benefit from their participation or from the use of the services. b) there is good propaganda or information dissemination to promote these services; c) the services are of sufficient or good quality because the service providers are able to provide such quality services. This implies that in order
to mobilize active participation it is necessary to ensure optimum levels of quality for the ECCE programmes so that positive outcomes for children and parents are clearly demonstrated. Thus, the elements that contribute to improving quality must also be present and prioritized such as capacity-building so that service providers and supervisors can effectively implement these programmes and conduct the activities or provide the services in a way that children can truly benefit.

3. When ECCE programmes and services are truly functional and responsive to children and their caregivers, they serve an important additional purpose: as a context for socialization and interaction among the adults and other family members. This interaction can be truly rewarding for parents and other caregivers. Beyond their contributions or the benefits they gain in terms of time, material, financial and other resources, this particular element is what most effectively helps a community to recognize the benefits of ECCD to their children. It also becomes a critical factor for achieving the kind of improved and sustained coordination between local (village) political leaders and the people in the community. Thus, the national and local administrative agencies and all those who work directly with children and parents should become aware of this important socialization function of ECCD programmes.

4. At present the financial and material resources for ECCE programmes provided through combined sources: from the State budget, contributions from NGOs and communities, from organizations such as farmers, youth, women’s unions. There is a need to modify the current levels of financial investments especially in terms of public education expenditure. Investments in ECCE must be increased to achieve a balance in comparison with other levels of education e.g. primary or tertiary. It was also suggested that international development agencies should increase their support for capacity-building and training, however, there should be more serious thought and deliberate improvements in the kinds of training programmes and activities that will be supported or financed to ensure that both in terms of content, approaches and materials, these will be truly effective. Among the perceived weakness is the lack of attention paid to understanding child development and how best to support children’s growth and early learning. The focus has till now been on the content of the curriculum rather than about understanding children as developing human beings and learners. For training as well as cross-sectoral concerns such as health and nutrition, improved coordination among international donors is also necessary. Mobilization of resources and fund-raising at sub-national levels including the communities must be intensified.

5. The gains from recent experiences in successfully launching media campaigns on integrated ECCD must be maximized for expanding and sustaining such communications and social advocacy programmes. At this crucial juncture, sustained effective information and education efforts along with advocacy with specific target groups who can be mobilized to support and promote access to quality ECCE programmes must be a priority. There should always be attention to families and communities in regard to developing and implementing these information, education and communication components of ECCD programmes. It is they who are in the best position to provide the best possible quality of care that young children need for optimum growth, well-being and development.

6. There is a need to improve coordination of various child-focused services at all levels especially at the local level where implementation is crucial. This is particularly important to achieve between sectors e.g. health and education - coordinate the
various complementary programmes and approaches e.g. Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) with community-based ECCD programmes like kindergartens and child care centers and the parent education through media.

7. There is a need to prioritize the development of viable, effective yet innovative national policies. This is necessary to facilitate the integration and convergence of various efforts and programmes at all levels while also intensifying and systematizing the monitoring of programme implementation and sustaining the gains to be made from advocacy and social mobilization for ECCD. This includes the identification of the most appropriate apex agency at the national level and corresponding coordinating bodies or mechanisms for ECCD sub-national levels. The roles and functions should be defined based on what has been shown to be effective in the Vietnamese context while also looking at other countries’ experiences.
In summary, the matrix for Complementary Approaches to Programming in ECCD which has been promoted by the Consultative Group for ECCD and adapted by the ASEAN ECCD Working group was applied to synthesize the results of the study and examples from the workshop and provide an overview of Vietnam’s national situation. It is clear that all strategies - with a focus on the child aged 0-6 - the corresponding objectives and most models/approaches are being applied in Vietnam. The identified issues and problems as well as priorities must now be addressed if Vietnam seeks to fulfill its promise to all young children - their right to access to quality ECCD programmes in order to ensure their survival, development, special protection and establish a strong foundation for their participation in their own communities and their society.

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<th>FOCUS OF THE INTERVENTION</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>MODELS/APPROACHES</th>
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| 1. Deliver a service to children | the child 0-6 | • ensure survival  
• promote health/nutrition  
• support comprehensive development  
• promote socialisation  
• develop rehabilitation services  
• create child care  
• encourage school achievement | • maternal/child health system  
• home day care  
• child care centers  
• school - kindergarten  
• IEC & media campaigns – for parent education  
• comprehensive community-based child development programme – very effective & successful especially in rural communities among ethnic minorities |
| 2. Support/educate caregivers | Parents/family members (siblings, elders)  
caregivers  
teachers/educators  
health care providers – needs improved coordination with others in the social service sector  
other community members: village development committee | • create awareness  
• increase knowledge  
• change attitudes  
• improve/change practices  
• enhance skills | • home visiting  
• parent education – use of media and communication materials  
• Family life education  
• Support networks for parents/caregivers – stronger attention to training teachers  
• can explore child to child programmes – expand on components of community-based educational programmes e.g. community libraries |
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| 3. Promote child-centred community development | • community members  
• leaders/elders  
• community health workers  
• community organisers and leaders  
➤ lesson learned: interpersonal communication is still the most effective way to raise awareness and knowledge, especially when we talk about children. | • create awareness  
• mobilize for action  
• change conditions  
• take on ownership of programme  
➤ problem: often the context communities have to face is characterized by lack of resources + lack of political will, inadequate enabling policies. | • social marketing  
• social mobilisation  
• early literacy and language bridging programmes  
• school curriculum  
➤ Flexibility in the reform of curriculum and support for incremental gradual change from bottom-up is important and also more viable  
• media |
| 4. Strengthen national resources and capability | • programme personnel  
• supervisors  
• management staff  
• professionals  
• paraprofessionals  
• researchers | • increase knowledge  
• enhance skills  
• change behaviours  
• strengthen and sustain organisations  
• enhance local capability  
• increase local/national resources  
• develop local materials | • organizational development training  
• pre-and-in-service training of caregivers, teachers  
• pilot/demo projects – maximize demonstration kindergartens for building a local support system for teachers & school administrators  
• network building  
➤ build on the successful model of Enfant et Developpement & Save the Children UK – teacher network and vet network |
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| 5. Strengthen demand and awareness | • policy makers  
• general public  
• professionals  
• media | • create awareness  
• build political will  
• increase demand  
• change attitudes  
• create an enabling environment | • social marketing  
✓ invest in people by teaching & strengthening capacity at all levels  
• multimedia dissemination of knowledge  
• advocacy  
✓ expand implementation of UNICEF ECD Communication Campaign |
| 6. Develop national child and family policies | • policy makers  
• families with young children  
• society (over a long term period) | • create awareness  
• assess current policy for families with young children  
• identify gaps  
• create supportive policy | • relate national to international efforts (National EFA Plan, CRC, Committee for the Protection of Children)  
• participatory policy development |
| 7. Develop supportive legal and regulatory frameworks | • policy makers  
• political leaders at national and local levels  
• families with young children  
• society (over time) | • increase awareness of rights and resources  
✓ integrate child protection efforts and ECCD which is the most effective approach to the prevention of child abuse within a child protection programmes  
• create supportive workplace  
• ensure quality child care  
• implement protective environmental standards  
• institute maternity/paternity leave, other supportive family policies  

Problem: we must look at women and their work conditions. Vietnam is a pioneer in concretely supporting women as workers and family caregivers, but there are changes in contemporary family life styles that must now be taken into account. | • create alliances (women’s union, farmers’ groups, cooperatives, other community groups, overseas Vietnamese etc.)  
• innovative public/private collaboration |
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<td>8. Strengthen international collaboration</td>
<td>• governments • donor agencies • bilateral agencies • foundations • international NGOs</td>
<td>• create international standards • share experience • distil and share knowledge • maximise resources • increase awareness • increase resources • maximise impact and effectiveness</td>
<td>• participation in the ASEAN ECCD Working group • Save the Children Alliance • Support from UNICEF, UNESCO and other members of the Consultative Group for ECCD</td>
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