

Independent Progress Review of the UNICEF Early Childhood Care and Development Contribution

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Initiative Summary

Initiative Name			
AidWorks initiative number	INI 428 Agreement No. 65322		
Commencement date	01 Dec 2012	Completion date	30 June 2016
Total Australian \$	AUD7,826,0120.00		
Total other \$			
Delivery organisation(s)	DepEd, DSWD, ECCD Council Secretariat		
Implementing partner(s)	UNICEF		
Country/Region	Philippines		
Primary sector	Education		
Initiative objective/s	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved School Readiness of 3-5 years old children in 36 vulnerable areas. 2. Improved Quality of ECCD programmes in 36 vulnerable areas 3. Stimulate the demand for ECCD Services in 36 vulnerable areas 4. Strengthen National Policies, management and supervision of ECCD programmes 		

Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Objective:

- a. Assess the progress of the project implementation (please refer to Annex 1);
- b. Identify the successes and good practices including the gaps and constraints that need to be addressed;
- c. Determine what current partnership modalities are effectively contributing to the attainment of program objectives;
- d. Provide recommendations to improve project implementation until completion; and
- e. Identify options and recommend suitable options for developing future early childhood care and development programs.

Evaluation Completion Date: 15 April 2015

Evaluation Team: Sheldon Shaeffer (Team Leader), Marilyn Manuel (Local ECCD Specialist)

DFAT's response to the evaluation report

Brief overview of DFAT's assessment of the quality of the report (including any issues with evidence, findings, etc.)

This Independent Progress Review provided a qualitative review of the program based on results of document review and validation through field visits to 3 sites and focused group discussions with national partners, local stakeholders and beneficiaries. Quantitative assessments were limited to the appreciation of output versus financial disbursements as the statistical information on the higher level indicators was not available at the time of the review. Based on the revised monitoring plan of the project, these results will be measured at the end of the project through a multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS).

The review was meant to determine the extent to which UNICEF was able to deliver its commitments towards achieving the following program outcomes: (1) improve the quality of ECCD programs in 36 vulnerable areas, (2) stimulate demand for ECCD services in these areas, and (3) strengthen the national policies, coordination, management and supervision of ECCD programs.

With an overall rating of 4.5, the results indicate that in general, the program is still relevant to the interest of the government of Australia and the needs of the government of the Philippines. The team gave a rating of five for effectiveness, monitoring and evaluation and innovation, and four for sustainability, gender equality, risk management and safeguards.

The result showed that while, UNICEF was able to significantly deliver its commitments at outputs level (i.e. developing and printing of learning materials and supporting training of teachers and day care workers in the 36 focus areas), more needs to be done in meeting the outcome level commitments of providing quality ECCD programs and influencing national policies and standards.

The review team rated the program sustainability at four or adequate as there were unfinished commitments of UNICEF and its partners that are crucial for the sustainability of the program. For example, the finalization of the curriculum and teacher competency standards for day care and the establishment of a clearer coordination mechanism across levels from national to local level.

The report represented well-balanced views from different perspectives of stakeholders (National, Region, Division, schools and communities) and supported by a mixture of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

DFAT's overall response to the findings and recommendations

The IPR recommendations are very relevant to the government partners as it allowed them to take stock of how they have been implementing the Early Years Act (EYA). The IPR highlighted the need for alignment of strategies that will allow a seamless transition of learners from daycare/pre-school to Grade 3. An area of disconnect is the use of Mother Tongue as medium of instruction which is required for Kinder to Grade 3 but not in daycare/pre-school level. The quality of training provided and the absence or inconsistencies of policies that will help strengthen the implementation of ECCD at local level is also a concern which was brought to the awareness of the DSWD, DepEd and the ECCD Secretariat during the presentation of the IPR results.

The findings also indicated the weakness of the program on policy level influencing at both local and national levels. The review pointed out that while the program has been able to deliver the goods and trainings in the focus areas, the program had difficulties in influencing the local LGUs to provide a stable budget for ECCD service. At the national front, while funding support was provided to partners, this did not translate into policy decisions especially for education for children 3-4 years old.

The IPR also provided UNICEF with the guidance for prioritising activities that must be completed before the end of the agreement. Since the program by design, intends to provide support to national initiatives for ECCD, UNICEF in the remaining months of the program, will have to accelerate the modelling process that

can provide a sound basis for policy recommendations. Without evidence of these good practices, UNICEF's leverage for policy influencing will not be as strong especially at the ECCD Secretariat level. The ECCD Council Secretariat by law has 5 Million peso a year funding which is more than enough to fund whatever initiatives they wish to undertake within its own timeframe. The Post thinks that strategically, UNICEF is better off approaching the policy influencing at the sector level (i.e. through DSWD, DepEd) rather than at the ECCD Secretariat level and to push for the creation of an interagency Technical Working Group (TWG) that can be a venue for experts to discuss priority issues that needs to be brought forward to the ECCD Governing Board for action.

The Post in general agrees with the recommendations put forward by the Independent Progress Review Team. DFAT will ensure that the recommendations are considered in the work plan of UNICEF and will monitor its accomplishments on a monthly basis. The recommendations are critical activities that will ensure sustainability of the good practices and innovations that have been developed through the program.

DFAT's response to specific recommendations made in the report

Recommendation	Response	Actions	Responsibility
1. Harmonization of the two sets of curriculum for children 3-4 y/o (ECCDC and DSWD)	Agree.	Monitor the progress of UNICEF's work towards the adoption of one standard curriculum by December 2015.	DFAT-PO
2. Alignment of existing parenting education programs i.e PES, FDS and Family Support Program of the ECCDC	Agree. Consistency in the messaging regardless of the venue and the office delivering the advocacy is important.	Monitor the progress of the discussions between UNICEF, DSWD and ECCD Secretariat on the proposed harmonization which UNICEF committed to establish by 3rd Quarter of the 2015.	DFAT-PO
3. Further alignment of all aspects of ECCD leading to seamless, continuous, and developmentally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy for children aged 3-8 (SNPs, DCCs/CDCs, Kinder, Grade 1-3)	Agree. This is where better coordination is required at national level e.g. currently K-12 materials are in mother tongue the day care modules are in English. Same training on contextualization should be done for day care.	Monitor the progress of the discussion between UNICEF, DSWD and DepEd on the alignment of standard curriculum for 3-4 y/o with Kinder-Grade 1 curricula	DFAT-PO
4. Finalization and adoption of the competency standards for ECCD workers	Agree	Monitor the progress of the discussions on the adoption of the competency standards for ECCD workers.	DFAT-PO

Recommendation	Response	Actions	Responsibility
5. Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the DSWD and the ECCD Council Secretariat in the accreditation of DCCs/CDCs and DCWs/CDWs	Agree	Monitor the Adoption of the policy on Registration and Granting of Permit and Recognition to Public and Private Child Development Centers/Learning Centers Offering Early Childhood Programs for 0-4 y/o Filipino children, including specific roles and responsibilities of DSWD, DepED and ECCDC Secretariat.	DFAT-PO
6. Finalization and adoption of the ECCD Communication Plan/Strategy	Agree	Monitor the adoption of the ECCD Communication Strategy.	DFAT-PO
7. The clarification on the use of mother tongue (MT) policy for kindergartens and DCCs	Agree	Monitor the development of training modules/session guides re use of MT in day care sessions initiated (for use in local training/mentoring of DCW/SNP workers	DFAT-PO
8. Policies need to be strengthened and more carefully implemented to ensure inclusion of all young children in ECCD programs	Agree	Monitor the progress of the documentation of modelling of link between ECCD and Primary Education in focus areas.	DFAT-PO
9. Mechanisms to ensure consistency in the content and implementation of tools being used for child assessment (ECCD Checklist and SReYa)	Agree	<p>Monitor the adoption of policy on the hand-over of ECCD Checklist from DCWs/SNP workers to Kinder teachers</p> <p>Monitor the progress of the Documentation of modelling of link between ECCD and Primary Education in focus areas initiated. This will include the process of handing-over the ECCD checklist from DCW/SNP worker to Kinder teachers.</p>	DFAT-PO

Recommendation	Response	Actions	Responsibility
<p>10. ECCD Coordination Mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the national level - establishment of a TWG on ECCD with clear roles and functions on how it relates to the Board and the ECCD Council Secretariat At the local level – setting up/strengthening of the ECCD Sub-Committee under the LCPC (ECCDC in close partnership with the DILG) 	Agree	<p>Monitor the creation of ECCD Technical Working Group by participating in at least one meeting.</p> <p>Monitor the development and approval a Resolution that establishes the implementation mechanisms for creating ECCD Committees that will serve as venue for planning and monitoring ECCD activities at the municipal level.</p> <p>Monitor the implementation of the communications plan which provides the strategy for national and local level advocacy for increased investment in ECCD at local government level and the development of national policies supportive of the implementation of quality ECCD services.</p>	DFAT-PO
<p>11. Actions need to be taken to ensure that ongoing activities in regard to the production and provision of teaching-learning materials and resources, pre-service and in-service training, and personnel services are sustainable both financially and politically</p>		<p>Monitor the implementation of the ECCD Communications Plan geared towards advocating for an increased investment for ECCD by the local government units covered by the Project.</p> <p>Monitor UNICEFs implementation of local mechanisms that will allow continuous training of ECCD workers and teachers using the training modules/ session guides and prototype training materials developed by the Project and partner agencies.</p>	DFAT-PO