



3rd Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education

5-6 June 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal

Co-organized by

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Nepal
UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO)
UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA)
Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)

Concept Note

Theme: Taking SDG 4.2 from Policy to Action

BACKGROUND

In July 2016, the second Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) adopted the Putrajaya Declaration¹ that encompasses strategies to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.2 – “By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.” Recognizing that ECCE lays the foundation for children’s long-term learning, development and well-being, the Putrajaya declaration reaffirms governments’ critical role in setting and monitoring ECCE legislative and regulatory frameworks, quality standards and curricular guidelines as well as in allocating and distributing resources to ensure equity and quality.

There are well-established theories and research evidence highlighting the critical importance of ECCE, yet there are 250 million children (43%)² younger than 5 years of age in low-income and middle-income countries who are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential due to

¹ The Putrajaya Declaration http://bangkok.unesco.org/sites/default/files/assets/ECCE/Asia-Pacific%20Regional%20Policy%20Forum%20on%20ECCE%2010-12%20September%202013/Putrajaya_Declaration_-_Final.pdf

² Lancet 2017; 389: 77–90 Advancing Early Childhood Development: from Science to Scale 1 - Early childhood development coming of age: science through the life course



stunting, poverty and disadvantage. This calls for urgent action to increase multisectoral coverage of quality ECCE programmes that incorporate health, nutrition, security and safety, responsive caregiving, and early learning.

Since 2013, the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, UNICEF and ARNEC, with other key partners, have been organizing the Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on ECCE to provide a platform for high-level policy-makers of Asia-Pacific countries to share knowledge and discuss strategies to expand access to, and improve the quality of, comprehensive, integrated, and holistic ECCE. Specifically, the first forum looked at increasing investments in ECCE, and the second forum discussed innovative strategies to improve the equity and quality of ECCE within the region. Following the two regional policy forums, a series of major regional events, such as the annual ARNEC ECD conference and the Pacific ECD conference, took place to further create momentum for increasing access to, and the quality of, ECCE programmes in the region.

UNESCO Bangkok is taking advantage of this momentum by bringing together ECCE/ECD policy makers in the region to the 3rd Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on ECCE 2018 to discuss possible ways to collaborate across all sectors and reach high-level agreement on sub-regional strategies to expand high-quality ECCE to facilitate the achievement of SDG 4.2.

This year's forum will be convened jointly with the 2018 Asia-Pacific Regional ECD Conference organised by ARNEC. Under the theme "Towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: what is a successful multi-sectoral approach to ECD?", the conference will analyse, assess, and provide case studies on comprehensive, multi-sectoral, and good quality ECD services leading to the holistic development of young children. The Government of Nepal will host the Third Regional Policy Forum on ECCE and the Regional ECD Conference in order to continue the sharing and exchange of knowledge and experiences among countries and discuss innovative strategies to improve the equity and quality of ECCE within the region.

SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY ON MONITORING SDG 4.2

The SDG 4.2 is a collective commitment of all countries regardless of their level of development. The holistic development approach to ECCE requires going beyond a 'silo approach'. It calls for close cooperation, partnerships, and coordination among stakeholders within and across different sectors. This call for the multi-sectoral approach is particularly important for monitoring SDG 4.2 indicators as many data sources are often scattered across multiple sectors. Moreover, the lack of holistic data collection systems in the ECCE sector and challenges in some phases of the data production cycle may hamper Member States from generating the necessary data.



The indicators are as follow:

	Indicator	Type
4.2.1	Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex	Global
4.2.2	Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex	Global
4.2.3	Percentage of children under 5 years experiencing positive and stimulating home learning environments	Thematic
4.2.4	Gross early childhood education enrolment ratio in (a) pre-primary education and (b) and early childhood educational development	Thematic
4.2.5	Number of years of (a) free and (b) compulsory pre-primary education guaranteed in legal frameworks	Thematic

Among these five SDG 4.2 indicators (two global and three thematic indicators), there are two indicators which require further development – 4.2.3 and 4.2.1. The global indicator 4.2.1 will require the adoption of new measurements and new tools to monitor and address equity and to holistically measure child learning and development outcomes.

In view of the preparation of the 2019 global monitoring of SDG 4, the policy forum will be an important opportunity for education policymakers to deliberate and endorse the sub-regional strategies on operationalizing and monitoring SDG 4.2, taking into account regional education priorities vis-à-vis recent research developments and diverse contextual realities among Member States. The sub-regional strategies tentatively targets the next five years, with a 15-year long-term vision in mind. These strategies will be inclusive, innovative, and multi-sectoral to acknowledge varying levels of development and capacity across the region.

OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY FORUM

The objective of the 3rd Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on ECCE is to provide a platform for high-level policy-makers of Asia-Pacific countries to share experiences and lessons learnt in developing and implementing ECCE policies and discuss innovative multi-sectoral approaches to improve the equity and quality of ECCE within the region.



Specific objectives are to:

1. Review the progress of localizing and implementing SDG 4.2 since the Putrajaya Declaration of 2016.
2. Showcase innovative multi-sectoral ECCE initiatives for disadvantaged groups that are cost-effective, scalable and sustainable.
3. Develop draft sub-regional strategies on the operationalization and monitoring of SDG target 4.2.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE POLICY FORUM

- Policy-makers equipped with the latest research evidence and knowledge of innovative multi-sectoral approaches to expanding and improving the quality of ECCE
- Priority areas and mechanisms for collaboration identified in the areas of capacity development for monitoring, coordination and partnerships, and resource mobilization
- Sub-regional strategies drafted to operationalize and monitor SDG target 4.2.

THEMES OF THE FORUM

1. Integrated and multi-sectoral approaches to implementing ECCE:
 - Promising multi-sectoral approaches to serve the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups
2. Multi-sectoral approaches to monitoring SDG 4.2:
 - Innovative multi-sectoral approaches to monitor SDG 4.2 indicators

FORMAT OF THE FORUM

The 3rd Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on ECCE will be concurrently convened with the regional Early Childhood Development (ECD) Conference organized by the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC). The proceedings of the conference will feed into the policy discussion.

The Forum will be inaugurated by an opening ceremony on the morning of 5 June 2018 followed by a keynote presentation. The first day of the Forum will be devoted to updating policy makers with the latest research findings on ECD and their policy implications. The morning plenary



sessions will be followed by a ministerial roundtable to review and discuss the overall progress of localizing and implementing SDG 4.2 and a breakout session to discuss and develop sub-regional action plans on the operationalization and monitoring of SDG target 4.2. The sub-regional breakout sessions will engage Member State delegations from each of the five sub-regions to further concretize the action points specified in the Putrajaya Declaration.

The second day of the Forum will focus on finalization of sub-regional action plans. Delegations will report back the sub-regional action plans which include agreed activities that Member States, sub-regional bodies, UNESCO, and other relevant organizations can collaborate on within the 2018-2023 timeframe. The final outcomes will be presented during the Day 3 of the regional ECD Conference.

COUNTRY PREPARATORY WORK

To prepare for the forum, UNESCO Bangkok will send a pre-forum survey to all Member States to gather information on the status of SDG 4.2 implementation and monitoring at the national level. Member States will be requested to submit the completed survey to the 3rd Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum Secretariat by **11 May 2018**. The information received will serve as baseline information for the discussion during the forum.

PARTICIPANTS

The Forum brings together high-level governmental representatives of Asia and Pacific countries. It is expected that the Minister of Education heads the country delegation of up to four members, including high officials from the following entities:

- the focal ministry or coordination body for ECCE or early childhood development (ECD),
- the ministry responsible for the monitoring of SDG 4.2 indicators,
- the ministry responsible for finance or economic planning,
- the ministry responsible for health, protection and social welfare.

Among four members, only the head of the country delegation and one technical officer will be invited to attend the Forum. Representatives of UN agencies, inter-governmental organizations and major donors engaged in ECCE will participate as observers, while eminent experts in ECCE will be invited as resource persons. The participation is by invitation only.

DATES



5-6 June 2018

VENUE

Yak and Yeti Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal

LANGUAGE

The working languages of the Regional Policy Forum will be English and Russian.

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