Capacity Building for Early Childhood Education in Africa

Guest Editors: Alan R. Pence & Kofi Marfo

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Kathryn M. Borman
University of South Florida
Editor, International Journal of Educational Policy, Research, and Practice

This special issue of the *International Journal of Educational Policy, Research, and Practice* is devoted exclusively to a bold and exciting initiative to advance early childhood development (ECD) policies, research, and programs in Africa. Under the distinguished and dedicated leadership of Professor Alan R. Pence of the University of Victoria, Canada, the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) program has committed itself to ECD leadership development and capacity-building activities in a number of sub-Sahara African countries, with new initiatives in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Editorial Board member Professor Kofi Marfo, who proposed the special issue and serves as Co-Guest Editor with Professor Pence, has appropriately characterized the ECDVU initiative as a significant paradigm shift in the way institutions of higher education in the economically resource-rich nations of the world approach graduate education and other forms of advanced personnel preparation for professionals in Africa and other parts of the non-Western world. In making a commitment to serve as a member of ECDVU's international faculty, Professor Marfo was particularly mindful of the unique advantages of the ECDVU model:

1. Making it possible—through distance education technology and the delivery of selected courses within locations in Africa— for professionals at various stages of their career to receive

advanced education and leadership preparation without having to leave their home countries;

2. Wrapping the professional development process around the real-world roles, responsibilities, and experiences of program candidates in a way that raises the relevancy of training profoundly beyond what can be expected of even the best of study-abroad programs;

3. Identifying and involving expertise from local universities, colleges, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide and facilitate continuity of advising and mentoring within the local context; and

4. Forging an ethos of within-country and cross-national networking among program candidates to ensure that program cohorts become the ultimate agents of change and capacity building well after the program has formally ended.

The Editorial Board is pleased that this journal was selected as the very first forum for the faculty and students of this remarkable experiment in international education to share their emerging work on ECD policy, research, and practice on the African continent. The Co-Guest Editors' introduction provides a detailed historical overview of the ECDVU program and its mission, while the set of five thematically organized articles synthesizing the research and project activities of the program's first graduate cohort underscores the impact of the initiative.

The International Journal of Educational Policy, Research and Practice applauds both the mentorship model reflected in the preparation of this issue and the exemplary nature of the international collaboration epitomized by the issue: faculty researchers from Canada, the United States, Europe, and Africa working with protégés in Africa to advance the knowledge base and emerging policies on early childhood development.

Capacity Building for ECD in Africa:
Introduction to Special Issue

Alan R. Pence
University of Victoria
Kofi Marfo
University of South Florida

This special issue of the *International Journal of Educational Policy, Research and Practice* provides a look inside an unusual initiative designed to support early childhood care and development (ECD)[1] policy, research, and practice in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) brought together early childhood professionals from 10 African countries[2] to address child well-being through ECD capacity building, leadership development, and enhanced networking within and across countries. Over the space of three years (August 2001 through August 2004) the first ECDVU cohort of learners had the opportunity to engage with each other and with African and international ECD specialists to learn together and to address a wide range of ECD challenges at the local, country, and continental levels.

The culminating work of this unique cohort is featured in this special issue. Of the 30 students who commenced the program in 2001, 27 completed in 2004—a completion rate of 90%, with less than 7% leaving their country of origin . Each of these 27 participants who completed the full set of courses produced a major project (n=25) or a thesis (n=2) under the supervision of a three- to four-member international faculty committee, including at least one in-country advisor/member.[3] Each student also

benefited from a project support team at the ECDVU central office in Victoria, B. C., Canada.

These projects typically took from nine to 12 months to complete, and some built on earlier or ongoing areas of interest. Each was designed to bring together individual interests with local or country-level development needs. All the candidates presented and defended their final work in a formal, audio-taped session. The topics addressed include developing ECD policies, designing programs, initiating training activities, collecting and analyzing original data and promoting community development across rural and urban settings. The full texts of all thesis and project write-ups are available at http://www.ecdvu.org/

The proposal to publish a synthesized set of papers from this historical body of work in a special issue of an international journal was driven by several considerations and objectives. First, the relative absence of a well-developed and current ECD literature base in Africa was one of the needs addressed through the ECDVU initiative. The thesis and project requirements of the program and the approach to preparing and guiding the students through the processes of developing, implementing, and writing up their projects were part of a deliberate effort to meet the need for relevant literature to inform ECD policy and practice on the continent. The successful attainment of the program's knowledge production objective makes it imperative that the rich insights emerging from the students' work regarding ECD capacity building be shared widely within Africa and with the rest of the international community. Second, the work provides a unique opportunity to stimulate international dialogue about the central role that indigenously produced and contextually relevant knowledge plays in the advancement of ECD and other programs in the Majority World.[4] Finally, the dissemination of this body of work appropriately positions the ECDVU's pioneering initiative to serve as both a catalyst and a model for the capacity building momentum it is possible to attain through appropriate resource mobilization and focused programming for leadership development.

As editors, we believe that the work synthesized in this special issue provides a unique insight into the challenges, advances, disappointments, and successes being experienced by those with a central concern for children's well-being across a wide cross-section of contemporary Anglophone Africa. For a continent that much of the Minority World knows only through troubling headlines highlighting wars, famine, disease, and political instability, this collection presents a different view, one based on the experiences of professionals working daily, in situ, to improve life conditions for children and families. The images presented are not always positive—there are troubles as well as triumphs. How-

ever, we believe that what emerges is a more balanced and more broadly representative view of Africa's realities and prospects for the 21st century—a view that highlights childhood in Africa and the professionals who are committed to enhancing those young lives.

Background to the African ECD Leadership and Capacity Building Initiative

In certain respects the origins of the ECDVU are not in Africa, but in Aboriginal communities in Canada. In 1989 a large Tribal Council of nine Cree and Dene communities in northern Saskatchewan asked the lead editor to support their efforts to develop a culturally responsive and community supportive education program to train members of their communities to create and staff early childhood education and care programs. The result was a culturally supportive approach to training pedagogy that came to be called the 'generative curriculum model' (Pence, Kuehne, Greenwood-Church, & Opekokew, 1993; Pence & McCallum, 1994).

The generative curriculum is based, in part, on a co-constructed approach to education wherein Western and local sources of knowledge interact; through that respectful interaction new perspectives, ideas, and possibilities are *generated* which are contextually situated. Evaluations of the generative approach (Ball, 1999; Jette, 1993; Riggan, 1994) indicate significantly higher post-secondary completion rates than other Aboriginal two-year diploma programs (76% vs. less than 40%, as reported nationally), virtually no 'brain drain' away from the communities, and high employment and supplemental education activities following completion of the program. Those knowledgeable regarding Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada found the results remarkable.

Successes with the generative approach in communities, and a second initiative underway at the time involving two- to three-week 'summer institutes' (residential seminars held at the University of Victoria since 1988) designed to stimulate and reenergize mid-career ECD professionals, attracted the attention of UNICEF. In 1995 UNICEF supported the first of a series of two- and three-week international seminars specifically designed to promote ECD as a key component of social and economic development. Over time the seminars focused primarily on Africa.

African participants in the ECD seminar series found the seminars stimulating and useful. They also felt that more was required to adequately address network building in the region in support of country-level capacity

building for ECD advancement. Participants asked if such an extended program might carry graduate-level university accreditation.

The request by participants was developed as a draft proposal for discussion with UNICEF, the World Bank, and other potential donors active in Africa. In September of 1999, at the First African International ECD Conference (held in Kampala, Uganda), the World Bank representative indicated his support for program development costs to be covered by the World Bank, with participation of other donors to be sought for the delivery. His voice of support marked the beginning of the ECDVU.

ECDVU

The announcement that the World Bank would support the development of the ECDVU arrived in time at the 1999 Conference to enable a quick survey of how many attendees would be interested in registering in such a program. Out of approximately 80 participants from Uganda attending the Conference, over 40 indicated that they would like to apply. It was clear that while the program would face many challenges in becoming a reality, attracting participant interest would not be among them.

As serious planning commenced, a strategic approach began to take form. It was clear that one educational program with an enrollment of 30 participants and focused solely on individual student advancement would have little impact at a country, let alone a continental, level. However, significant impacts that would go well beyond individual learning and personal academic advancement were deemed possible if countries were to:

1. develop strategic, prioritized objectives based on their history and current situation;

2. determine the intersectoral and multiorganizational dynamics that could help move that agenda forward;

3. identify key experienced and respected individuals within those diverse sectors and organizations who embodied the ideals sought; and

4. propose participating individuals who would be willing to work together to ensure that cascading and ripple effects would flow broadly into the country through their participation.

Further, it was anticipated that advances transcending country-wide impact to include continental gains could become imaginable if these

country-nominated individuals were situated in a cohort of like-minded and similarly capable individuals from across the continent with access to the leading specialists in Africa and around the world through Web and face-to-face interactions.

From the early stages of its development the ECDVU program focused on a broad, multifaceted vision of ECD capacity building, leadership promotion, and network enhancement within and across participating countries and extending, ultimately, continent-wide. While the numbers of participants would be small, the envisioned impact was large. The key was to incorporate structures and processes that pressed for outputs far beyond the program or the participants themselves. The program would not be deemed successful unless those 'ripple effects' were realized.

Development of the program commenced in early 2000, with a meeting of international ECD specialists in April. Visits to specific countries in Africa and meetings with in-country committees followed in May and August of 2000. Decisions regarding Web platforms, course structures, computer hardware and software requirements, content specialists and instructors took place from the base in Victoria, while country committees developed their goals and commenced candidate identification and selection processes.

Requests were made to nominees' employers seeking their support in the form of computer access, computer support, and travel and accommodation for seminars; in some cases employing organizations were able to assist and in others, they were not. Strong on commitments while weak on actual funds received, financing to support the core costs of program delivery through a 'consortium' of donors was an ongoing challenge throughout 2000 and for the first six months of 2001. A decision was made in June 2001 that the launch could not be further postponed, and a delivery start date was set for mid-August 2001.

The launch could more accurately be described as a 'leap of faith'—faith in technology not fully tested, faith in commitments made but funds not yet received, faith in a recently developed curriculum, and faith in the ability of a small group of 'virtual students,' and those who would support them, to make a difference across an immense and challenging geography.

For all of the students and most of the professors, learning on-line was a new experience. By the time the first seminar took place in late November 2001 in Johannesburg, both students and professors had begun to break through their 'virtual barriers' and interaction time and space were growing. The Johannesburg seminar was the first time students encountered each other—and the first time they met their

professors. Expressions of wonderment and surprise greeted each person as she or he transformed from a virtual to a physical presence.

Over time the program grew and strengthened. On-line interaction broadened and deepened. An ECDVU 'family' formed and was further strengthened at the second seminar in Tanzania and the third in Ghana. By the end of the program's second year, students began to focus on their final work: a major project or a thesis. Throughout the program the emphasis had been on application of learning; the final projects and theses were no different. Each project flows from the commitments and the communities that guide the ongoing work of this remarkable group of learners. It is this work, the final projects, that forms the primary substance of this special issue.

Organization of Content

The projects have been organized for this special issue around five broad themes, with the preparation of each thematic paper led by an ECDVU-affiliated scholar working with related reports prepared by the graduates, who serve as co-authors:

◆ ECD Policy Development and Implementation (Alan Pence)

◆ Children, Families, Communities and Professionals: Preparation for Competence and Collaboration in ECD Programs (Kofi Marfo)

◆ Exploring and Promoting the Value of Indigenous Knowledge in ECD (Jessica Schafer)

◆ ECD and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic (Lynette Jackson & Chloe O'Gara)

◆ Capacity Building in ECD (Judith Evans)

Each paper provides an initial overview of related literature and activities. Given the diversity of students' work within themes, the central body of each paper is handled in different ways. For example, in the policy paper the central organizing structure focuses on country profiles and activities within countries. For indigenous knowledge, the work of individual students serves as the structure, while the paper on capacity building is organized around facets of and processes involved in addressing that complex term. In the paper on children, families, communities and professionals, tabular summaries and prose descriptions of the students' provide the backdrop for analytic discussions of central issues emerging from the projects. It is our hope that the partial

or summarized information on the individual projects contained in each paper will serve as a useful guide for those who wish to access the full reports online at http://www.ecdvu.org/

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1] Various acronyms are used to refer to the holistic intent embraced by early childhood care, education and development. Other terms include: Early Childhood Care and Education/ECCE (UNESCO), Early Childhood Education and Care/ECEC (OECD), Early Childhood Care for Development/ECCD (Consultative Group), and Early Childhood Development/ECD (World Bank).

[2] Eritrea, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

[3] 22 of the participants had recognized Bachelor's degrees and completed ECDVU course work towards a Master's; five of the participants had more than four years of post-secondary education but did not have a recognized Bachelor's and this course work contributed towards completion of their Bachelor's degrees.

[4] This term is used to replace 'developing countries' in recognition of the potential for widely differing definitions of development and in acknowledgement that these countries contain the majority of the world's population.

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ECD Policy Development and Implementation in Africa

Alan R. Pence
University of Victoria
Margaret Amponsah
Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, Ghana
Francis Chalamanda
Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare, and Community Services, Malawi
Abeba Habtom
Ministry of Education, Eritrea
George Kameka
Ministry of Labour, Youth Development, and Sports, Tanzania
Hilda Nankunda
Makarere Institute of Social Research, Uganda

Abstract: ECD policies are influenced by the contexts in which they develop. Those contexts include historical, cultural, social, economic and diverse conceptual dimensions operating at international, regional, country and local levels. These forces impact on policy development as well as on policy implementation. This article briefly situates ECD policy directions in global and regional contexts before exploring dynamics that are operational at African country levels as seen through the eyes and activities of ECDVU participants. Four of the five participants are employed by a national government, one is with an NGO. Each project explores a different facet of policy development and implementation; collectively they speak to the complexity inherent within policy work.

Address all correspondence to: Alan R. Pence, ECDVU, School of Child & Youth Care, University of Victoria, Box 1700, STN CSC, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 2Y2. E-mail: apence@uvic.ca

Early childhood care, education and development (ECD) is a topic whose time has arrived, both around the world and in Africa. That 'arrival' has been driven by a number of factors, many of which are international in scope, but the particular ways in which ECD moves forward varies from region to region and country to country. This article will provide: 1) a brief initial context regarding international development activities that have supported greater attention to ECD policy development for children from birth through school entry age; and 2) an overview of key ECD events and activities in Africa; before 3) focusing more specifically on work undertaken by a number of the ECDVU participants in various African countries that represents particular aspects of policy development and implementation in those countries.

ECD in an International Context

The period around 1990 marked significant changes for children and for ECD internationally. On November 20, 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was formally adopted by the UN General Assembly; signing commenced on January 26, 1990, with 61 countries signing the document that day. By September 1990, 20 countries had ratified the Convention, bringing it into international law. It had been "ratified more quickly and by more countries than any previous human rights instrument" (UNICEF, *We the Children*, September 2001, p. 1).

In March 1990 the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) was held in Jomtien, Thailand, and at that conference the importance of early childhood development was underscored as a crucial part of basic education. The first four words under Article 5 provided ECD with a place at the table: "Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education" (*World Declaration on Education for All*, 1990). For many years ECD had been the 'invisible child' hidden behind the family, disconnected from the recognition that its 'older siblings,' like primary, secondary and tertiary education, had received as key components in international development. Through ECD recognition at Jomtien, the rapid ratification of the CRC, and through the World Summit for Children held in New York City on September 28 and 29, 1990, the early years began to move out of the shadows to a place of recognition in its own right on the international stage.

Robert Myers' (1992) publication of *The Twelve Who Survive* refocused international attention from issues of child survival to a more encompassing understanding of what the increasing percentage of children who survive require in order to thrive. Myers' seminal volume was an advocacy as well as a policy and programming tool.

In 1994 the Carnegie Institute's Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children opened another key front in efforts to better understand the needs and challenges of early development. With their report *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children* (1994)*,* the importance of the early years as a key period of brain development began a movement towards the center stage of childhood discussions. The World Bank was quick to pick up the implications of the Carnegie Report for international development: healthy child development as key to broader social and economic development. In 1996 Mary Eming Young of the World Bank published *Early Child Development: Investing in the Future*, with the importance of brain development as the lead discussion. At approximately the same time, the first of what would become a rapidly growing set of loans for ECD development in various parts of the world were approved by the World Bank.

By the late 1990s, UNICEF was moving towards placing Integrated ECD at the center of its activities as well, incorporating the CRC as an overarching context for all of its work. In less than 10 years, ECD had moved from the periphery of concern for all but a few international donors, such as the Bernard van Leer Foundation and a few others who had made significant contributions to ECD as early as the 1970s, to become a major topic on a significant number of donors' and international organizations' lists of priority issues.

An Education for All follow-up conference to Jomtien took place in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. At the Dakar World Education Forum the profile of ECD was further enhanced as the delegates committed themselves to a number of goals, the first of which was "expanding and improving early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children" (*Dakar Framework for Action,* 2000, p. 8).

A ten-year follow-up to the World Summit for Children was scheduled for New York in 2001, but was postponed as a result of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center towers. The General Assembly's Special Session on Children took place instead in May 2002, with the related publication of *We the Children* (UNICEF, 2001) and *A World Fit for Children* (UNICEF, 2002a). The latter contains a copy of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Special Session on Children documents, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). *We the Children* summarizes much of the international work that had taken place during the intervening decade regarding children's developmental statistics. Sadly, it also notes the increasing challenges to achieving child well-being in many parts of Africa due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, civil unrest and wars, refugee situations, world trade imbalances and other challenges.

ECD in the Context of Africa

African leaders played key roles in a number of the international events described above. The President of Mali, Mussa Traore, co-hosted the 1990 World Summit for Children (with Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada). Senegal's President Abdou Diouf and Traore had played key roles in facilitating approval when they supported a resolution at the Francophone summit to hold the World Summit for Children (Black, 1996, p. 27). African heads of state were amongst the earliest and most enthusiastic supporters of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 1993 the Donors for African Education (now the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, ADEA) organized a Working Group on Early Childhood Development (ADEA-WGECD), which continues to play a key role in African ECD development. In 1994 the first of several African ECD networks was formed, the Early Childhood Development Network in Africa (ECDNA). This was followed by a Francophone network in 1996, Reseau Africain Francophone Prime Enfance (Early Childhood Francophone African Network).

Through support primarily from UNICEF, the ECDNA was able to hold initial meetings in 1994 and 1995 which led, among other activities, to planning for an Africa-wide, three-week leadership seminar to take place in 1996 in Namibia, co-hosted by the University of Victoria and the University of Namibia. Timing for that seminar proved problematic and it was postponed to 1997. Dr. Barnabas Otaala (based in Namibia) and Mrs. Margaret Kabiru (Kenya), leaders of the ECDNA, played key roles (other workshop leaders were Drs. Tuntufye Mwamwenda, Judith Evans and Alan Pence). Dr. Otaala of the University of Namibia served as co-organizer with Dr. Alan Pence of the University of Victoria and Dr. Cyril Dalais of UNICEF. The Namibian seminar led, in turn, to a two-week seminar hosted in The Gambia in 1998, which was followed by World Bank-led support for hosting the First African International ECD Conference in Kampala, Uganda in September 1999 (followed by a second conference in Asmara, Eritrea in 2002 and a third in the series planned for Accra, Ghana in May/June 2005).

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has been an important donor supporting ECD in Africa since the early 1970s. The first two countries to benefit from such support were Kenya and South Africa. In Kenya, the Bernard van Leer Foundation partnered with the Kenyan Ministry of Education to launch the Preschool Education Project through the Kenya Institute of Education, becoming in the 1970s and 1980s one of the best-known ECD projects in Africa and providing Kenya with ECD leaders through to the present. In South Africa, Bernard van Leer supported the

Educare project through support to NGOs—another well-known program from that period of time. While much of the Bernard van Leer Foundation support has gone to initiatives in specific countries, in the early 1990s a Training of Trainers initiative brought together ECD trainers from several African countries (Torkington with Landers, 1995).

In 1997 the World Bank published a survey of African countries regarding the percentage of the education budget allocated to ECD; of the 25 countries responding, only four had any official allocation to ECD and those were for very small amounts (Colletta & Reinhold, 1997). In 1998 the 7th Conference of Ministers of Education of African member states (ADEA-MINEDAF VII) accepted recommendations noting "that clear policies be formulated to promote early childhood education and development" (ADEA-MINEDAF VII, April 1998, *Report of the VII Conference*). This growing level of support for ECD within the African Ministries of Education was followed by the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000 which, as was noted earlier, came forward with ECD as the first goal. Furthermore, the "Dakar EFA goals are intended as an 'education wing' of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations, also adopted in 2000" (NEPAD, February 2004, *Education Sector Framework* working draft, p. 9).

Building on activities associated with ten-year anniversaries of the World Summit for Children, signing of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, the Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration, and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (all in 1990), leaders of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held a Pan-African Forum in May 2001 in Cairo that led to an African common position in a declaration and plan of action called *Africa Fit For Children* (Pan-African Forum for Children, 2001). The document notes that the Plan of Action "prioritizes children and youth," and it goes on to note as the first action: "National planning and international development cooperation should reflect the prioritization of early childhood and youth" (Pan-African Forum for Children, *Africa Fit For Children,* p. 12).

The growing, broadening support for early childhood seen in Africa and in the broader context of international development places an emphasis on countries developing ECD-supportive polices. The ADEA-WGECD, in response to these growing interests, undertook two sequential, policy-related studies. In 1999, "against a backdrop of renewed international commitment to ECD as an important part of Basic Education" (ADEA-WGECD handout at Arusha, Tanzania meeting, MINEDAF VIII, December 2002), the ADEA-WGECD initiated a two-pronged Policy Studies Project consisting of: (1) case studies led by knowledgeable ECD

specialists in Ghana, Namibia and Mauritania describing activities that had led each of the countries to develop an ECD specific policy in the 1990s and events associated with efforts to approve the policy (Ghana) or implement provisions of the policy (Namibia and Mauritius); and (2) a "survey of the 'state of the art' of ECD throughout Africa" (ADEA-WGECD handout, 2002, p. 2) to provide a broader context for the case studies (the first project took place in 2000/2001).

The survey was of a general nature, including questions designed to determine the presence of a specific and holistic ECD policy, ages of children considered to be within the scope of ECD, funding availability, types of programs available, local and regional government responsibilities, HIV/AIDS and ECD, and the presence of monitoring and evaluation. Weaknesses identified through the survey were "shared by most of the countries" (33 of 49 surveys were returned) and included:

◆ Inadequate financial resources with very limited government funding.
◆ Lack of integrated and comprehensive coordinating mechanisms.
◆ Lack of a specific ECD policy and no Ministry taking the lead in ECD.
◆ ECD policy structures exist but Ministries still continue to work sectorally.
◆ Lack of trained personnel in ECD from management level through to grassroots level. (Torkington, 2001, p. 30)

The three case studies were of uneven depth and comprehensiveness. The most critical and, in many ways, the most helpful, study was of Namibia. The Namibian case points out the tremendous gap that can exist between policy statement and policy implementation. While the Namibian policy statement, approved by Cabinet in 1996, is exemplary, far-sighted and flexible, its 'vision' began to unravel by 1998, apparently precipitated by a transfer of the unit responsible for implementing the policy from one Ministry to a newly created other Ministry. The Namibian case points out the fragility of policies and their implementation, and it also underscores the tension that often exists between Ministries regarding 'who will do what, how and with what resources' when it comes to young children. A similar inter-Ministerial dynamic appears to have been a key factor in the very long delay between initial ECD policy development (approximately 1993/94) and government approval (2004) that transpired in Ghana.

The second policy project undertaken by the ADEA-WGECD emerged from a consultation to discuss the results of the first study. In December of 2001, at a consultative meeting held in The Hague, the discussions "led to expressions of interest for support to draft IECD Policies on the part of three Francophone countries: Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Senegal" (Vargas-Baron, February 29, 2004, p. 5). That project commenced in June

2002 and concluded in November 2003. Six complex sets of challenges were identified by the project consultant. These challenges are not unlike those facing many other African countries:

◆ institutional challenges
◆ environmental challenges
◆ health, nutrition and sanitation challenges
◆ education challenges
◆ conflict challenges
◆ prevalent special challenges for children. (Vargas-Baron, 2004, pp. 6-7)

The two sets of ADEA-WGECD studies have been considered in somewhat more detail than other ECD policy-related events that have taken place in Africa as those two studies, and the work of the ECDVU participants discussed below, represent a relatively rare set of multi-country documents. ECD policy-related studies have only occasionally been undertaken in Africa and typically focus on only one country; some of those that have been undertaken have been on a contract basis and are sometimes not available to a more general readership. Both the ADEA-WGECD studies and the ECDVU participants' projects and theses are available on or through public Websites (see http://www.adeanet.org/ and http://www.ecdvu.org/). Both organizations, realizing the scarcity of such resources, felt that the publications were an important part of the capacity and literature development needed in Africa to better promote ECD work.

Having now provided a brief international and African context for the increasing profile enjoyed by ECD throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, the following section will focus on ECD policy-related work undertaken by members of the inaugural ECDVU program in Africa. As noted in the introduction to this special issue, participants were encour-aged to undertake major projects or theses that were of significant national, as well as personal and professional, interest. Four major projects directly address policy development or implementation issues, while a fifth provides additional information of value, particularly for policy implementation. These works will be described in the next section.

ECDVU and ECD Policy Development and Implementation

Policy development and implementation was an important theme throughout the ECDVU program. An initial course assignment for each country 'team' was to develop a comprehensive report on the current status of ECD in their country. Additional assignments addressed indi-viduals' specific interests and/or employment-related activities regarding advancing ECD, and each participant completed a final major project or

thesis under the supervision of a committee with in- and out-of-country members. These works by the 27 participants who completed the full three-year program (as noted earlier, 30 individuals commenced the program in 2001) provide an additional database for a study of ECD policies in Africa. Of particular interest for this report are the several major projects that focused most specifically on policy-related issues.

These studies provide the opportunity for a closer examination of particular aspects of policy development and implementation dynamics than can be found in the earlier noted studies. Information from the following projects will be considered in this section: George Kameka, Tanzania, *Improving Multisectoral Cooperation and Coordination in Support of ECD Programs in Tanzania;* Hilda Nankunda, Uganda, *Policies and Programs in Support of Child Care for Working Families: A Case Study of Data Sets and Current Activities in Uganda*; Margaret Amponsah, Ghana, *The Status of Coordination and Supervision of Early Childhood Education in Ghana*; Francis Chalamanda, Malawi, *Coordinating the Development and Implementation of the 2003-2013 National Plan of Action (NPA) for Survival, Protection and Development of Children in Malawi*. In addition there will be some reference to the work of Abeba Habtom, Eritrea, *Improving the Quality of Childcare Through Parenting Enrichment and Training of Trainers: The Eritrean Model*.

The first four projects (Kameka in Tanzania, Nankunda in Uganda, Amponsah in Ghana, and Chalamanda in Malawi) address key aspects of policy development and/or implementation. Insofar as each of these projects took at least one year to complete (and some were a focus throughout the full three years of participants' involvement in the ECDVU program), they illustrate the amount of time and energy that is required to move forward even fairly discrete elements of policy development and implementation processes.

Tanzania

George Kameka, Commissioner for Social Welfare in the Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sports, focused his major project on the challenges one faces in attempting to achieve a higher degree of intersectoral cooperation and coordination across diverse Ministries, each with 'a piece' of ECD (Kameka, 2004). At the same time as Kameka was addressing this topic he, his ECDVU colleagues, and a key NGO, AMANI (led by founder Chanel Croker), were also involved in promoting the development of an ECD Network in Tanzania. To a certain degree, Kameka's project and development of an ECD Network were complementary activities; each involved information sharing, consultation and

networking, one with a primary focus within government, and the other, the ECD Network, looking at government as one of the key ECD stakeholders. Both issues—networking across key stakeholders in a country and working within government to promote inter-sectoral cooperation, coordination and communication—were identified as critical in the ADEA-WGECD Case Studies Project and the Francophone Policy Planning Project.

The idea for a Tanzanian ECD Network grew out of ECDVU's request to AMANI to organize an inter-sectoral, multiorganizational ECD committee to consider whether Tanzania wished to become involved in the ECDVU program. Approximately 18 individuals from 11 organizations attended the first meeting in August 2000, and subsequent meetings led to completion of a proposal to join and the nomination of four individuals to participate: one from government (Kameka, Commissioner for Social Welfare) and three from INGOs (Leoncia Salakana with Plan International, Asha Mohammed Ahmed with the Aga Khan Madrasa programs, and Benedict Missani, initially with Save the Children but completing with the NGO Basic Needs UK).

The ECD Committee felt that the exercise of coming together several times to identify country goals for ECD, to solicit applications and to nominate participants had provided a suitable base from which a continuing, country-wide network could be developed. Between August 2000 and 2004 the Tanzanian Network became a reality. Its first Annual General Meeting in March 2004 was attended by 71 participants representing 10 districts; officers were elected and goals and objectives for the further development of ECD in Tanzania were confirmed. The key learning from this particular story is that while a call for such a network takes only seconds to utter or write, achieving a sustainable, dynamic network is a complex process which typically takes years.

Achieving greater coordination, cooperation, and communication across Ministries responsible for various aspects of ECD is no less time-consuming and complex. Kameka chose to focus his project largely on information-sharing activities, based in part on his own experience as a senior government official whose own orientation towards the importance of intersectoral cooperation had been modified as he came to understand more fully the holistic purpose and intent of ECD. Through approaching other senior officers in other Ministries with 'ECD sensitization' materials, Kameka not only served as a conduit for information sharing but also served as a role model for cooperative work across sectors, placing the interests of the child ahead of sector foci. How successful such sensitization activities will be in increasing inter-sectoral cooperation remains, in Kameka's words, "to be seen," as the time for

implementation was relatively short (approximately seven months at the time of report drafting).

Uganda

Hilda Nankunda's major project work in Uganda represents another important facet in establishing a foundation for policy work in a given country (Nankunda, 2004). Nankunda's focus was on reviewing not only overarching governmental policies (and extra-governmental policies such as structural adjustment programs—SAPs) that had a bearing on ECD and, more specifically, on child care as a support to employed parents, but also accessing and reviewing other public and private employment policies, labour and trade union agreements, and other workers' associations documents. Such studies are often found in Euro-western countries, but have thus far largely been absent from the African ECD literature. As many parts of Africa continue the transition from largely rural to urban and from unskilled to skilled and professional employment, and as international laws and agreements increasingly impact African governments, the need for and the number of studies such as Nankunda's will increase.

Nankunda's work highlights not only the invisibility of young children in policy documents in Uganda but, in many cases, the invisibility of women and mothers in the labour force. Few documents from governmental, employer or union sources adequately profile the role of women in the in-home and out-of-home labour forces. Women typically carry a disproportionate share of family support on their shoulders, but their roles as primary caregiver or in contributing to the economy of the country are too seldom noted in influential or official documents.

In addition to accessing and reviewing documents, Nankunda also undertook a number of interviews to determine the awareness of such policies, or the need for policies, amongst employers, human resource managers, union and workers' associations, and employees. As anticipated, policies associated with 'family friendly,' 'mother friendly' or 'child friendly' practices are very much in their infancy in Uganda; while in some cases such terms have been heard, little is moving them towards an operational reality. Nankunda's findings support that "existing policies and programs are inadequate to support working families with quality child care, [and] there is limited awareness of international and national provisions in support of working families" (Nankunda, 2004, p. ii).

Nankunda's work represents an additional aspect of the foundation that must be built for ECD to move forward effectively across the multitude of fronts implied by holistic, integrated ECD.

Ghana

Margaret Amponsah is the National Coordinator for ECCD within the Basic Education Division, Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. While Kameka, from his more senior position, focused primarily on reaching across Ministries and sectors, Amponsah focused on her own Ministry and the degree to which ECCD was understood amongst her own division heads and down the line to service delivery (Amponsah, 2004). Her work highlights additional key impediments to realizing quality ECD care and education in an African context. As with Kameka, staff exposure to well-conceptualized IECD information is part of the problem, but the governmental system dynamics themselves pose additional problems, both within and across Ministries.

Amponsah's research highlights important gaps in her Ministry's handling of ECD, including "the absence of policy statements regarding the coordination and supervision of ECCD programs" (p. 60). In addition, division head familiarity with ECD generally, with the need for coordination of planning and services, and with provisions in the draft policy is weak As a result, in the districts surveyed, "there is the absence of a comprehensive operational plan and a systematic training program for ECD coordinators, head teachers and teachers of preschools" (p. 60). As Amponsah notes: "Because ECD was relegated to the background some years back, most of the regional coordinators were withdrawn and reassigned to handle other schedules, which has also impeded the smooth running of the program within the public sector" (p. 61). The picture that emerges is that of a program that has been marginalized within the system, lacking visibility, priority, and coordination from more senior levels (Divisions within the Ministry) through to the delivery of services on the ground. In addition, basic data regarding enrolment numbers were difficult to collect, further impeding future planning efforts.

The very recent (August 2004) approval of the long-awaited Ghana policy on ECD may provide the impetus for reformation of the ECD systems in the country. But Amponsah's study of ECD in one Ministry indicates how fundamental and systemic those challenges will be.

Malawi

Francis Chalamanda, National Coordinator for ECD based in the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services (formerly the Ministry of Gender and Community Services), entered the ECDVU program at a time that the government of Malawi was considering

enacting a National Policy on Early Childhood Development. Chalamanda, together with the other ECDVU Malawi team members, assisted the completion of the ECD policy, as well as a policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Both policies were approved by Cabinet in February 2003 and officially launched March 1, 2004. The focus of Chalamanda's major project was supporting the development, coordination and implementation of a *National Action Plan (NAP) for the survival, protection and development of children in Malawi from 2003 to 2013* (Chalamanda, 2004).

Chalamanda's work focuses on an essential key to forward movement in ECD in African countries: not only must policies be developed, but action plans must be developed, coordinated, monitored, and updated as needed for the intent of the policies to be realized.

Malawi's 2004 NAP is the second in its history. The first was developed in 1992 for the period 1992-2002 *(National Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection of Children in the 1990s)*. Progress on the implementation of that plan was reported to the UN General Assembly in 2002, and the nine main challenges to its implementation formed the background for the 2004 NAP, along with a UNICEF 2002 Situation Analysis to assess the implementation of the 1997-2001 Program for Children and Women (Chalamanda, p. 9).

Chalamanda saw the NAP as central to the future of ECD in Malawi and chose it as the focus of his major project in order to:

◆ identify strategies that facilitate implementation of the ECD and OVC policies and other sectoral strategic plans;
◆ outline mechanisms, processes, and strategies for coordinating the development and implementation of the NAP; and
◆ outline operational linkages and networks between the two policies and other existing child care policies, sectoral strategic plans, and institutions. (Chalamanda, p. 3)

Towards the completion of his major project, Chalamanda flagged the following as some of the significant challenges he faced in his coordination work:

◆ Limited number of committed partners taking part in the development of the NAP
◆ Limited capacity of some partners to follow systematically the agreed-upon framework
◆ Achieving synergy across the 12 thematic areas of the NAP is challenging
◆ Some partners are challenged by the role of children and caregivers in the process of developing the NAP
◆ Inadequate resources in terms of funds, transport, books, stationary, and computers to be used by the partners in their work

The challenges noted in Malawi have a familiar ring: a small nucleus of concerned, committed, and informed individuals; bureaucratic challenges to working across sectors; inadequate resources of various forms; inadequate knowledge in the public domain regarding the importance of ECD; and marginalized importance of ECD within government. At the same time, there is progress: developing a critical mass in Tanzania across organizations and sectors; approving ECD policies in Ghana and Malawi; achieving the potential for greater resources for ECD in some jurisdictions; successful efforts to link and coordinate ECD with related movements, for example, with OVC in Malawi; and promoting heightened awareness of international and African literature linking ECD with social and economic development, with the Millennium Development Goals, and with Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans. While the challenges are great, there are indications of progress.

The work of one other ECDVU participant feeds and supports these inter-related policy-associated advances.

Eritrea

Abeba Habtom is the Section Head for Early Childhood Development and Special Needs in the Ministry of Education in Eritrea. Habtom's major project is discussed in greater detail in one of the other articles in this special issue (see Marfo et al.); however, her work is also very relevant to this paper insofar as Habtom has been unusually successful in addressing one of the most significant challenges facing many Africa countries, that of achieving impacts at regional and local levels.

Habtom's work has been part of a larger set of ECD initiatives called the Integrated Early Childhood Development Project, supported in part through World Bank loan agreements. An exemplary aspect of the Project has been its multisectoral and multifaceted approach to promoting child well-being. A paramount concern has been the importance of reaching the child and the family at the local level. Habtom's project has a particular focus on that issue: "This project is notable for its attempt to develop an Eritrean Parenting Enrichment strategy using a participatory process . . . with parents and grassroots communities at the forefront" (Habtom, 2004, p. ii). Further, the project was developed with a very high level of sensitivity to cultural and ethnic differences regarding what constitutes desirable parenting behaviour within the broader Eritrean context. The approach taken was decidedly not a top-down model.

Under Habtom's leadership, the last three years have seen the finalization of a curriculum for both formal and non-formal community-based children's programs, linked with an outreach services model

reaching all Zobas (districts) in the country (the curriculum has been translated into eight official languages). In addition, she has sought to address long-term community capacity building through the implementation of a multimedia Parenting Enrichment Strategy utilizing a Training of Trainers model.

Habtom's work in Eritrea also provides useful insights into ways in which within- and between-Ministry dynamics can become more supportive of integrated ECD activities and, through such support, have greater impacts at regional and local levels. The parenting enrichment strategy is designed to enhance local-level awareness of the importance of the early years, providing at the same time a stronger and more informed 'social will' supportive of ECD issues.

Conclusion

The preceding excerpts from ECDVU major projects and theses provides a very brief look inside the complex dynamics that influence various aspects of ECD policy development and implementation in some African countries. A theme that reverberates across all of the accounts is the 'thinness' of knowledge about and informed support for the complex, holistic nature of ECD. To the degree that there is an ECD strength in various countries, it is sectoral in nature; for example, health and immunizations, worming clinics, or food supplement activities. Such programs have, in many cases, a relatively long history and staff who have come to know and understand that particular facet of ECD. Attempting to link health clinics with broader parent information and support initiatives or with informal care programs or in any number of ways seeking to extend, integrate, or move to a more holistic early childhood model can, and often does, create tensions and resistance from those who feel competent and clear about their particular activities but may not be ready or feel sufficiently informed to expand beyond that area of expertise and service. In addition, programs too often feel that they are in a position of competition with other programs for a share of scarce resources.

All five of the policy-related projects discussed in this section acknowledge the enormity of these inter-sectoral, inter-organizational, inter-Ministerial, and even intra-Ministerial, challenges. Limited access to information, to resources, and to meaningful motivators hampers coordination and cooperation. Each of these projects has worked to address knowledge deficits through leadership in developing new materials and new training and in instituting new lines of communication.

Most of the work reported here is early in its development; much remains to be done before one can determine exactly what longer-term

impacts may accrue as part of these activities. Nevertheless, even given the early nature of the work, a number of concrete advances have been made, for example:

◆ Tanzania is well on its way to developing a country-wide, inter-sectoral network capable of lobbying government to more adequately support and coordinate integrated ECD;

◆ Malawi and Ghana have recently approved national ECD policies evidencing growing government support for ECD and for promoting the foundation upon which action plans and funding priorities can be developed;

◆ Uganda has advanced in understanding its data needs to support ECD and, through dialogue sessions envisioned in the report, will be in a position to better address gaps in policies; and

◆ Eritrea has developed an effective system to promote ECD in rural and remote areas and while it emanates from one Ministry (Education), that Ministry has effectively coordinated activities with other Ministries, including the Ministry responsible for local and regional governments.

Each of these advances is incremental in nature; each step provides the base for the next. They are steps taken by individuals who are leaders within-country, individuals familiar with ECD and its particular dynamics in their home country, individuals with contacts, with history, and with a deep understanding of context. ECD policy in Africa cannot be built from the outside; indeed, policy formulation may well not be the first priority if one is to more effectively address child well-being. Policy must move in concert with other forces—with programs, training, and enhanced practices. Each must inform the other, each must reach out to other approaches and seek to bridge, understand, and support. The focus must be on addressing the holistic needs of the child and on achieving an integrated approach to meeting those needs. The work described in this paper must interact with initiatives described in the other articles of this special issue. From the strengths described in these articles and from those programs, policies, research, and practices yet to be described across the region, advances in child well-being in Africa can be achieved.

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Children, Families, Communities, and Professionals:
Preparation for Competence and Collaboration in ECD Programs

Kofi Marfo
University of South Florida
Felix Kwasi Agorsah
Ghana Education Service
Wunesh Woldeselassie Bairu
Women & Infants' Hospital of Rhode Island
Abeba Habtom
Ministry of Education, Eritea
Celestina Amauchechukwo Ibetoh
State Primary Education Board, Imo State, Nigeria
Monica R. Muheirwe
Kyambogo University, Uganda
Samuel Ngaruiya
Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Kenya
Edith M. Sebatane
Ministry of Education, Lesotho

Abstract: Under the broad banner of education, training, and collaboration across systems, this paper examines, through analysis of seven individual projects, issues and insights associated with three central themes: (1) the link between ECD programs and children's school readiness; (2) the promotion of parenting enrichment programs as a childcare quality enhance-

Address all correspondence to: Kofi Marfo, Center for Research on Children's Development & Learning, College of Education, HMS413, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620 USA. E-mail: marfo@coedu.usf.edu

ment strategy and the fostering of parent-school collaborations; and (3) curricular design for personnel training and strategies for (a) increasing societal awareness of ECD issues and (b) nurturing professional networking and partnership building across key stakeholder groups. The primary works discussed in the paper include one empirical study testing specific hypotheses with a large data set, one international comparative case study of school-community collaboration, and several program development projects employing multiple methodologies to gather various forms of data as input into the program development process. The paper emphasizes the discussion of intriguing and critical issues connected to the main thematic sections, in the hope that the issues raised would inform future research, policy formulation, program development, and program-level practice.

The African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" has been popularized in North America during the course of the past decade through former United States First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's book *It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us* (Clinton, 1996). An important book published recently in the United States by some of the leading contributors to scholarship on early childhood development and education in Africa today (Swadener, Kabiru, & Njenga, 2000) appropriately employs this same proverb in its analytic and incisive examination of the changing nature of child-rearing and early childhood education in Kenya. There is more than symbolic importance to opening this article with these words of wisdom which can, in some ways, be said to have become an African philosophical contribution to the near-elusive search for greater collective social responsibility in child development policy, even in a nation as resource-rich as the United States of America. These eight powerful words capture some of the core developmental, educational, moral-ethical, and economic arguments frequently made in the scholarly literature worldwide in support of increased societal investments in the early childhood years (see McCain & Mustard, 1999; Mustard, 2002; Myers, 2002; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; and Young, 2002 for examples of specific arguments).

What is not readily apparent from a cursory invocation of this proverb is the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the child and the village that is so pervasive in both African philosophical thought and ordinary day-to-day life. A careful search of African proverbial language will surely yield many wise sayings reflecting the child's expected contributions to the preservation of the "village." A moving experiential account from Maya Angelou's *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*

(Angelou, 1986) provides a vivid historiographic illustration of this point. Angelou's recounting of her last days in Africa during the 1960s—a period during which the fledgling Pan-African movement held the best hope of reconnecting Black Americans with their roots in Africa—climaxes around a visit to Keta, an Ewe town in the southeastern Volta Region of Ghana. During this visit, her profound physical resemblance to the local women and the surprising discovery by these women that she is an "American Negro" triggers memories, handed down generations of descendants, of the devastation brought to the village of Keta in the era of the slave trade. These memories convince the local women that Angelou is a descendant of the stolen mothers and fathers of Keta, sparking an intense mourning that perplexes Angelou until her subdued friend and linguistic guide provides her the following explanation of the day's events:

> During the slavery period, Keta was a good sized village. It was hit very hard by the slave trade. Very hard. In fact, at one point every inhabitant was either killed or taken. The only escapees were children who ran away and hid in the bush. Many of them watched from their hiding places as their parents were beaten and put into chains. . . . *The children were taken in by the nearby villagers and grew to maturity. They married and had children and rebuilt Keta* (our emphasis). They told the tale to their offspring. (p. 206)

Within this episode from a sad chapter in the history of human civilization are at least three powerful messages: (1) the power of a communitarian ethic in building and restoring hope through shared responsibility for the care and well-being of other people's children; (2) the resilient nature of children, especially in the context of supportive and caring communities; and (3) the well-being of children as the foundation for the survival and future vitality of the community itself, as illustrated by the rebuilding and restoration of the village of Keta by its once dislocated and traumatized children.

The health and well-being of 'the village' are crucial to its ability to raise a child. Indeed, when Hillary Clinton invoked the African proverb, she did so, in her own words, as "a timeless reminder that children will thrive only if their families thrive and if the whole of society cares enough for them" (Clinton, 2002, p. 12). Through systems and ecological theories (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Cochran & Brassard, 1979), contemporary developmental psychology affirms and extends these age-old fundamental values and principles about children and their developmental contexts. An observation made by Nicholas Hobbs and his associates at a time when the ecological movement was beginning to manifest itself in applied work in North America captures quite aptly the interdependencies among children's developmental needs, family capacity, and community support:

Human development, properly understood, focuses not only on individuals and their personal developmental potentials but also on the *contexts* in which individual development occurs. The most influential of these is the family, and the family, of course, is set within its own developmental context, the community. If we fail to take account of these pervasive influences on the course of human development, we fail to understand human development itself. We believe the strengthening of families within supportive and caring communities is a desirable goal in itself . . . . (Hobbs, Dokecki, Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1984, p. 2)

One clear implication of this ecological perspective is that at the macro levels of national development planning and social policy formulation, the approach to ECD must be an integrated systems-oriented process that places as much emphasis on strengthening communities and improving the quality of life within them as it does on child-centered curricula activities designed to promote optimal development in young children directly. All over the Majority World there has been a noticeable and assuring shift toward recognition of how critically important the 'community base' is to the successful implementation of all kinds of human services programs. After years of presenting the Majority World with 'transport models' of service delivery grounded in the institution-based paradigm that had been the hallmark of service delivery in the industrialized world (Marfo, 1998), international governmental and non-governmental aid agencies began, in the 1980s, to emphasize community-based approaches (see Helander, Mendis, & Nelson, 1980; Marfo, 1983, 1986). From the primary health care (PHC) and disability rehabilitation 'revolutions' of the 1980s to the early childhood care and development revolution of contemporary times (see Kirpal, 2002; Pence, 1999), the *community-based* approach has become the dominant paradigm for thinking about transformational programs and services.

For many Majority World nations, the community-based approach is both culturally compatible and sociopolitically realistic. Paradoxically, many of the 'community development' initiatives that were a signature feature of national development efforts in the immediate post-independence eras in many parts of the Majority World gave way, a long time ago, to models of nation building that jettisoned the community development emphasis out of national development planning. Because the viability of community-based programs depends as much on the vitality and resourcefulness of communities as it does on the nature and quality of the programs themselves, it is absolutely important that ECD policies and programs be accompanied by concerted efforts to build strong and resourceful communities.

At the micro levels of program development and implementation, the

foregoing principle translates into a need for close attention to be paid to strategies and mechanisms that enhance the quality of children's early developmental experiences (in home as well as in formal care and education settings) and maximize the participation of families and communities in the pursuit and attainment of this goal. This paper explores a broad range of issues related to the specific mechanisms by which the values and ideals that inform ECD policies are translated into practice in the real world.

Under the broad banner of education, training, and collaboration across systems, the issues examined in this paper are based on reflective analysis and synthesis of topics explored by seven members of the first ECDVU cohort in their required thesis or major project research. The topics include the link between ECD programs and children's school readiness, the promotion of parenting enrichment programs as a childcare quality enhancement strategy, the fostering of parent-school collaborations, the design and delivery of personnel training programs, and the design of communication tools to develop broader societal awareness of ECD issues and nurture professional networking and partnership building across key stakeholder groups.

The individual research projects are summarized in Tables 1 to 7, using an organizational framework that permits a quick gleaning by the reader of the central features of each project (foci and objectives, questions and/or procedures, and key insights or highlights from the findings). The tabular summaries, in turn, provide the backdrop for an integrative discussion of insights and critical questions arising from the projects. The discussion of substantive issues emerging from the projects is organized under the following three sections: (1) school readiness; (2) parenting enrichment and parent-school-community relationships; and (3) personnel training and professional networking/advocacy.

School Readiness

Children's ability to enter the school environment ready to learn the formal academic skills deemed necessary for future success as productive members of society has been a central concern in many societies for ages. Even in transitional societies where formal schooling has a relatively recent history—one that coincides with the era of Western colonization—we can identify varying conceptions of school readiness in the way families, communities, and national governments have responded to both the advent and importance of schooling throughout the years. In the African context we can even find rudimentary measures of school readiness that were tied not just to informal judgments about linguistic

and/or social-cognitive competence, but to a "demonstrable measure" of physical maturation. For example, in the 1950s it was not uncommon, in rural Ghanaian communities, to see children denied or offered admission into Primary Class One based on their ability to reach over the head with one hand to touch the tip of the ear on the opposite side of the body. In communities where this was the norm, families came to rely on this measure in determining if they should attempt to enroll a child at the beginning of a given school year.

The school readiness movement most likely has multiple historical roots. In the industrialized world, particularly North America, the history of 'interventions' to promote school readiness can be traced as far back as the infant school movement, which began in Scotland around 1816 and spread to (and fizzled out in) the United States and Canada between 1825 and 1835 (see Pence, 1986). However, the early intervention movement touched off in the United States by the Economic Opportunities Act of 1964, the legislation that led to the launching of Project Head Start in 1965, is seen largely as the foundation for the modern school readiness movement (Marfo, 2002, 2004). The history of Head Start shows clearly that the program's design was informed by a much more laudably comprehensive perspective on child development than is noticeable through the manner in which the program has been evaluated in the past (see Zigler & Muenchow, 1992; Zigler & Styfco, 1993, 2004). However, notwithstanding its much broader mission and emphasis on the role of early education, health, nutrition, parent education, and community involvement in children's development, Head Start has in recent years come to be associated predominantly with the preparation of poor children in the academic skills necessary for success in school.

The 1990s marked an unprecedented globalization of the early childhood development (ECD) movement, with a much broader emphasis on the holistic development of the child. As Pence et al. (in this issue) have indicated, the Jomtien Declaration emerging from the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) was a significant catalyst for the ECD movement. Article 5 of the Jomtien Declaration, quoted in part below, directly links holistic ECD to school readiness:

> The learning capacity and value orientations of children are largely determined by the time the child reaches the age of formal schooling. . . . Well conceived quality early education programs help meet the diverse needs of young children during the crucial early years of life, enhance their readiness for schooling, have a positive and permanent influence on later schooling achievement, and are a major point of entry for family education programs. (UNESCO, 1995)

Given the close intertwining of ECD programs and school readiness, it is significant that one of the most extensive research studies to be conducted by the first cohort of ECDVU graduates focused on school readiness. Samuel Ngaruiya (2004) used an experimental design to examine the potential differential impact of the following variables on school readiness outcomes: (1) type of preschool (private versus public); (2) community-level socioeconomic status; and (3) the degree of developmental appropriateness within programs. The key findings from this study are summarized in Table 1 and will not be repeated here. Instead, we devote the space to a discussion of the significance and implications of selected issues and several of the key findings.

On the Appropriate Use of a School Readiness Assessment Instrument

Sensitivity to cultural appropriateness and strong regard for the place of indigenous knowledge are major issues of concern in the design, delivery, and monitoring or evaluation of ECD programs in Africa (see Schafer et al., this issue). Ngaruiya's work deals with the critical issue of assessment, in this case the assessment of children's readiness for school at age 6. The School Readiness Assessment Instrument (SRAI) used in this work is an adaptation of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) developed by Canadian researchers Dan Offord and Magdalena Janus and normed recently on 16,000 children by researchers in the province of British Columbia (Hertzman, McLean, Kohen, Dunn, & Evans, 2002). Ngaruiya recognizes and addresses the cultural relevance issue by devoting the first phase of his project to extensive revision of the original tool, followed by piloting of the adapted version in schools with characteristics similar to those sampled for his actual study. Key elements of the adaptation process included simplification of the language to suit the level of the teachers, replacement of information deemed irrelevant to the local context, and inclusion of items to assess the functional level of children's gross motor development and the presence of functional impairments. This level of attention to cultural relevance and appropriateness is absolutely necessary in all efforts to adapt foreign instruments for use in the African ECD context. And it is especially important to monitor the use of such instruments to ensure that they are not used for classification or selection and placement purposes.

On the Dangers of Focusing Exclusively on the Child

Ngaruiya appropriately raises concerns about the use of the SRAI. In the North American context, the assessment of school readiness is now a hotly debated issue. Two specific concerns that are central to this debate (e.g., Marfo, 2001) are particularly worth mentioning here. The first is the

Table 1: School Readiness Project Summary (*Ngaruiya*)

Project Identifiers	Focus & Objectives	Questions and/or Procedures	Selected Highlights, Insights, Lessons
Author: Samuel Ngaruiya *Country:* Kenya *Title:* Assessing the Influence of Different Early Childhood Development Models on Pre-School Children's School Readiness in Kenya	Empirical study of 207 children from 27 centers examining disparities in the nature and quality of preschool programs and assessing school readiness outcomes in relation to program type (public versus private), locality SES, and developmental appropriateness of practices within programs. The 4 program models examined in study were Public, Private, Montessori, Madrasa. 3 SES neighborhoods: Low, Middle, and High.	Adapted Early Development Instrument from Canada into the School Readiness Assessment Instrument. Developed observation and interview protocols to measure developmental appropriateness of program settings. *Research issues addressed:* 1. The relative differential impact of private and public preschool programs on readiness outcomes. 2. The relative differential impact of SES on readiness outcomes. 3. The link between developmental appropriateness of program setting and readiness outcomes (observations/interviews to measure developmental appropriateness of settings were conducted by DIECE trainers over a one-week period)	*Notable disparities:* 1. Entry age for children in private preschools tended to be 3; it was 5 for those in public preschools. 2. Children from middle and higher SES communities were more likely to enter preschool at age 3; low SES children tended to enter at 5. 3. Educational backgrounds were strongest for teachers in high SES communities and lowest in low SES communities. 4. Teachers were better paid in private preschool than in public ones. *Notable child outcomes:* 1. About one-fifth of the children studied scored below the 25th percentile and were considered *not ready* for school (18% for socio-emotional; 21% for language and cognition; 22% for physical development and well-being). 2. Children considered least ready for school on measures of language/cognition and physical development were more likely to live in low SES communities. 3. On socio-emotional development, children from low SES areas outperformed the other groups of children. 4. Programs in high and middle SES areas were rated higher on developmental appropriateness. 5. Children in private preschools had better school readiness outcomes than those in public preschools.

concern that an emphasis on child assessment has the tendency to reinforce a view of school readiness problems as shortcomings or challenges that are mostly inherent in the child. The second is that assessment tends to emphasize placement at the expense of prevention and intervention. Ngaruiya addresses the first of these concerns by emphasizing in his conceptual review the importance of approaching school readiness from an interactionist perspective. This perspective considers school readiness as entailing both the development of relevant competencies on the part of the child and the readiness or capacity of schools to meet the individual needs of children. In discussing his findings, Ngaruiya addresses the second concern by stressing the intervention function of the SRAI, noting that the assessment should not be used for placement but rather for providing a linkage between preschool and primary school. He views the purpose of assessment as providing information on school readiness to teachers so that they can provide appropriate instruction to help those children who are at a lower school readiness level to catch up with the rest.

It is extremely important for the emerging ECD field in Africa to avoid some of the manifest and potential pitfalls in approaches to school readiness that have occurred in the United States especially. Generally speaking, the developmental principles driving the school readiness movement in the United States acknowledge both the foundational importance of the first three years of life and the centrality of a holistic approach to child development. However, the pervasive preoccupation with academic underachievement and failure in the school years is resulting in a disproportionate investment of policy attention and fiscal resources into the two years immediately preceding formal school entry. The growing rhetoric about the importance of the earliest years of life has not been matched with commensurate investment of resources into promoting optimal, holistic development and general quality of life in the first three years (Marfo, 2001, 2002, 2004). It is significant, therefore, that Ngaruiya also underscores "the need to address the inequalities in school readiness before children start formal schooling" (p. 118).

An Interesting Finding Regarding Socioemotional Outcomes

A countertrend of significant note in Ngaruiya's data is the finding that while children from low SES neighborhoods had significantly weaker school readiness outcomes in physical development/well-being and in language and cognition, they had better socioemotional outcomes than children from relatively better SES conditions. Ngaruiya offered several speculative explanations for this finding, the most plausible and intriguing of which was the resilience explanation. It is very likely that the conditions under which poor children develop expose them to experi-

ences, roles, and responsibilities that, while potentially burdensome for young children, could be enhancing their socioemotional maturity and functioning. Hopefully neither this nor the author's original explanations will be the final word on this issue. In the context of the practical realities that young children face in their earliest years of development on the continent, a potentially fruitful area of further research is one that thoroughly explores varying types of developmental outcomes in relation to the home and community experiences of children across different socioeconomic and sub-cultural contexts.

Parenting Enrichment and Community-School Collaboration

Ecological and contextualist theories consider the developmental environment of the child as consisting of "a complex system of physical, social, cultural, and historical factors that interact with each other and with the developing individual" (Bolger, Caspi, Downey, & Moorehouse, 1988). Within this complex system of interactive forces, parenting and family processes are seen as crucial proximal factors with direct influences on children's development of competence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In contemporary society, children's immediate caretaking environments transcend the family setting to include institutions and programs providing formal care, developmental enrichment, and education to children. Children's developmental outcomes and overall well-being are seen, therefore, to depend not only on the richness of the individual caretaking settings but also on the quality of the interactions that occur across settings.

This view of the interconnectedness of settings assumes paramount importance in the context of ECD programs. In addition to their direct influences on children's development, parents and families exert indirect influences through their contributions to the quality of ECD programs. Properly conceived ECD programs, in turn, contribute to the parenting capacity of families through their delivery of family and community education programs. It is for this reason that ECD specialists have come to increasingly see family and community involvement as an indispensable ingredient in effective and successful programming (Evans, 1998; Landers, 1992).

Parenting and parent/community-school collaborations are central themes in the projects undertaken by several of the ECDVU graduates. Abeba Habtom's (2004) work focused on programming for parenting enrichment as a national strategy for promoting the holistic development of Eritrean children in the earliest years of life. Using a broad-based participatory approach, she developed a parenting enrichment program,

an accompanying manual, and a facilitators' guide for the training of trainers (see Table 2 for project details).

Wunesh Woldeselassie Bairu (2004) took good advantage of her relocation to the United States to conduct a case study of community-school collaboration within the School District of Bristol County in the state of Rhode Island. Her goal was to identify practices, policies, and general lessons that could be applied meaningfully to the promotion of community-school collaborations in Eritrea and other countries on the Horn of Africa (see Table 3 for project details).

Starting with a multi-method case study of two Nigerian communities, in which parental involvement in local schools was analyzed, Celestina A. Ibetoh (2004) developed a guide aimed at promoting effective parent-school partnerships. Like Habtom's project, Ibetoh's is an excellent example of the participatory approach to program development. The insights leading to the development of the guide were based not only on her own expertise but on extensive input received from key stakeholder groups who were assembled to discuss the outcomes of a needs assessment study (see Table 4 for details). While the thematic issues identified for discussion in the following sections are based on analytic discussions of these three projects, additional insights are drawn from a fourth project that was designed primarily to promote information dissemination and professional networking through the creation of a national ECD newsletter (Muheirwe, 2004, see Table 7 for project details).

Sensitivity to Local Contexts in Programming for Parenting Enhancement in ECD

Across all cultures, families are acknowledged as the child's first and foremost developmental environment and parents are seen as the very first teachers children encounter on their developmental journey. Habtom's work underscores this universally held view of the family as the first prime social ecology for development. Drawing on scholarship from around the world, she shows how the conception of the family as the foundation for children's growth and development has been translated into parent education programs. The Chinese experience is particularly instructive here. The China National Institute of Educational Research and Family Education, according to Baolan and Xiaoping (1995, in Habtom, 2004), underscores the pivotal power of families to both enhance the good effects of schooling and offset the negative socialization influences within school and society at large. Consequently, "China perceives family education as a public matter affecting both the attainment of the global target of basic *education for all* and the improvement of the cultural quality of the Chinese nation" (Habtom, 2004, p. 8). Parents' schools, as

Table 2: Parenting Enrichment and Parent-School Collaboration Project Summaries (*Habtom*)

Project Identifiers	Focus & Objectives	Questions and/or Procedures	Selected Highlights, Insights, Lessons
Author: Abeba Habtom *Country:* Eritrea *Title:* Improving the Quality of Childcare Through Parenting Enrichment and Training of Trainers: The Eritrea Model	Development of a parenting enrichment program, an accompanying manual, and a facilitators' guide for a "train the trainers" implementation strategy. Training of regional trainers to provide training at the local level in implementation of the Parenting Enrichment Intervention.	Used a participatory process (involving, especially, parents and other grassroots stakeholders in communities) to develop program content. Used consensus-building workshops to obtain guidance and affirmation of both program content and training methodology. Presented workshops to prepare 35 Zoba Trainers of Trainers with varying roles and backgrounds: 6 ECD Coordinators, 6 ECCE Supervisors, 6 ECD Communicators; 6 Health Promoters, 6 Agricultural or Food/Nutrition Promoters, and 6 Kindergarten Directors and Teachers.	Making the enrichment of parenting a priority requires clear recognition and acknowledgment of parents' wishes and values regarding childcare and development. Participatory planning and implementation should involve parents, communities, and grassroots partners. Building family and community capacity should be a top priority in planning and training efforts. Pre-packaged models of parenting support/education may create more self-doubt than improve parenting abilities. The best interventions are those that allow for local creativity, respond to realities within the local context, and are given time to develop gradually before large-scale mass implementation. New initiatives should, as much as possible, build on existing efforts and systems. It is important for existing cadres of trainers to seen as legitimate stakeholders, even while new and creative directions are pursued in ways that produce better results than traditional systems.

Table 3: Parenting Enrichment and Parent-School Collaboration Project Summaries *(Ibetoh)*

Project Identifiers	Focus & Objectives	Questions and/or Procedures	Selected Highlights, Insights, Lessons
Author: Celestina Ibetoh *Country:* Nigeria *Title:* A Guide for Effective Collaboration Between Schools and Parents: A Cooperative Development and Delivery Approach	Sought input from key stakeholders in order to develop a manual to facilitate effective parent-school collaboration. Research focused on assessing understandings about effective collaboration between schools and parents.	Used extensive interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and record review. A purposive sample of 30 participants of school personnel, parents, community leaders from *two communities* were involved in the interviews and focus group discussions. Held a three-day seminar to discuss outcomes of needs assessment and to obtain input and recommendations to guide the development of the manual on effective parent-school collaboration.	*Some Key Findings/Observations* 1. In one community, the PTA minutes book revealed regular meetings, with a minimum of 20 parents and 15 teachers attending each monthly meeting. Detailed records were kept of decisions taken and the implementation of projects/activities approved at meetings. There was evidence of parity between teachers and parents at meetings, and visits by parents to tell stories to children were a common occurrence. 2. In the other community, only 4 meetings were held over a 2-year period, with attendance never exceeding 8 parents and 4 teachers. There was little documentation of proceedings and actions taken at meetings, and parents hardly visited the school to tell stories to children. *Some General Recommendations* 1. Collaborations can be more effective when opportunities are created for parents and teachers to collectively articulate, discuss, and reflect on their beliefs and practices. 2. To facilitate effective collaboration, strategies for freeing up parents' time must be adopted, including the provision of micro credit facilities and parent education. 3. Effective collaboration thrives on mutual respect for all parties involved in the collaborative process.

Table 4: Parenting Enrichment and Parent-School Collaboration Project Summaries (*Bairu*)

Project Identifiers	Focus & Objectives	Questions and/or Procedures	Selected Highlights, Insights, Lessons
Author: Wunesh Woldeselassie Bairu *Country:* Eritrea/USA *Title:* Curriculum Development Using Community Resources	Used a case study of an American school district—Bristol County in the State of Rhode Island — to identify lessons on school community relations for Eritrea.	*Questions:* 1. How do community-school partnerships work to enhance children's learning? 2. How are community resources used to support the curriculum of pre-primary and elementary schools? 3. What can countries on the horn of Africa, particularly Eritrea, learn from this case study? *Methods:* 1. Textual analysis of documents on school-community relations in the East Bay area of Rhode Island. 2. Collected interview and questionnaire data from 10 informants who were actively involved in school management and Parent-Teacher Organizations	1. Schools regard the communities as essential partners in their efforts to achieve excellence and parents regard community involvement in schools as important. 2. Every school has an autonomous Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) through which parents and school staff work together to support the school. 3. In addition to promoting the involvement of parents in their children's education, PTOs support curricular and extra-curricular activities through fund-raising, volunteering in classrooms and field trips, and organizing social events. 4. PTOs have an active representation on School Improvement Teams (SITs) charged with the responsibility of developing and implementing plans for improving all spheres of a school's functioning. 5. Parent-teacher contact data in the State of Rhode Island for the years 1997 to 2000 showed greatest contact at the K-3, followed by the Grades 4 to 5, middle school, and high school, respectively. 6. Parental attendance of parent-teacher conferences for the same period showed attendance to be highest at the elementary level and lowest at the high school level. 7. There is broad support for finding ways to use community resources more efficiently to provide learning experiences for children, but there is also agreement that this ideal is yet to be achieved.

Chinese parent education programs are called, are therefore organized in a great variety of forms with sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of all parents regardless of place of residence or professional and subcultural backgrounds.

The parenting enrichment program developed by Habtom is informed by insights and principles drawn from global examples like the Chinese experience. While the ultimate goal is to implement a program that is accessible to Eritrean families nationally, Habtom is careful to eschew a "one size fits all" approach to program delivery. Flexibility and local adaptation are key guiding concepts for the program. The program allows each community to prioritize its needs according to local conditions and realities, including sociocultural and socioeconomic differences. The underlying principle is clearly articulated in the following position statement: "Insofar as it is not possible for any 'centralized' program to know all such differences, it is important that any program devised [for a diverse population] provide what Pence and McCallum (1994) refer to as an 'open architecture'—a structure that allows for the words, priorities, values and beliefs of local contexts to enter into the curriculum of a training program" (Habtom, 2004, pp. 37-38).

The attainment of this desirable ideal in ECD work in Africa will require not just the preparation of more ECD personnel to work directly with children and families but also the training of a cadre of mid-level professional support staff who bring this context-sensitive orientation to in-service training and technical assistance. The roles of this cadre of professionals will need to be defined in ways that place them in a position to provide hands-on support to front-line caregivers in the development and adaptation of materials and methods in response to local circumstances. Features of Habtom's parenting enrichment program that illustrate the importance of these roles include the *parenting enrichment flip charts and posters,* the *parenting enrichment readers,* and the *parenting enrichment interactive radio program.* These mid-level professionals must, in turn, be supported through regional and national infrastructures for information exchange and networking that facilitate easy accessibility to, and sharing of, creative and innovative practices emerging from any part of the ECD world. Monica Muheirwe's effort to establish a national ECD newsletter in Uganda is a timely example of one aspect of this needed infrastructural support (see Table 7 for project details).

Combining Innovation and Creativity
with Wise Use of Existing Structures and Resources

An important theme worth highlighting that receives attention, particularly in Habtom's work, is the issue of aligning new and old systems

or structures in an era of program proliferation. As the new era of ECD programming unfolds and our infatuation with exciting new ideas and service delivery models is heightened, sight must not be lost of the potential for (1) ill-conceived superimposition of new structures over existing ones or (2) the sidelining and marginalization of existing expertise.

The reality of resource limitations and the indirect personnel costs associated with demoralization of the workforce both require prudence in the way we transition to the ECD programs and services of tomorrow. In developing and implementing the parenting enrichment program, Habtom found herself needing, at times, to develop a completely new team to lead the innovative training efforts, bypassing existing structures for training that were found to be rigid and slow in effecting change. Nevertheless, even as she encourages us to dare to be innovative and creative, she reminds us that it is more cost-efficient to build new programs and related training regimes on existing efforts and systems:

> Those currently offering training opportunities and institutions that have always offered training should continue to be seen as legitimate stakeholders and be included in program planning. This approach can help to minimize the negative attitudes that are often associated with fear of change within systems. (p. 56-57)

One of the benefits of heeding this advice is that the recommended approach offers opportunities to transform key stakeholders in directions that increase the viability and effectiveness of new program initiatives. There are promising indications that Habtom's approach will be instrumental both in attaining broad support across communities and in shaping existing approaches to training in desirable directions nationally.

Ownership and Power in School-Community Collaborations

In discussing how her case study of an American school district can inform schools in the Horn of Africa, Woldeselassie Bairu underscores the importance of according community members "a substantial say" in the operation of schools. She implores education authorities to convey the message that educating children is a major responsibility that should be shared by educators, families, and communities. Bairu sees a need for policy makers, private financiers, and educational practitioners to work together to strengthen and sustain school-community partnerships.

In comparing Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) in the case study district with Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) in Eritrea, Bairu notes the highly restrictive nature of Eritrean PTAs. Whereas membership in PTOs in Bristol County is open widely to entire communities, not just the families of enrolled students, PTAs in Eritrea are restricted to a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 22 persons. It is not uncommon for PTAs

to be dominated by teachers, especially because parents have limited capacity and time to participate substantially. Bairu sees exceptions in privately owned schools in the capital city where parents are relatively more active, a reality that underscores the universal interconnectedness of poverty, education, and power. Consequently, while she recommends the formation of more inclusive PTAs with a greater sense of parental ownership (perhaps through the introduction of nominal membership fees), Bairu recognizes that broader participation and true ownership come with improved parental education and enhanced economic development within communities. Policies aimed at improving parental and community involvement in schools must, therefore, be pursued hand in hand with community development and family education programs.

These themes are reinforced in Celestina Ibetoh's work in Nigeria, which has been informed by the "recognition that ECD programs in Nigeria, particularly in Imo State, tend to ignore parents' roles and responsibilities in providing instruction and activities aimed at the holistic development of the child" (p. 4). Citing Arnold (1998), Ibetoh underscores the reality that all around the world, parent education programs have tended to disregard the knowledge and achievements of parents and caregivers. The deficit orientation that underpins parent education programs often precludes serious consideration of the many substantive contributions parents can make to the education of their children. In a study preceding her ECDVU project, Ibetoh (2002) examined community-school partnership by analyzing participation in PTA activities in 200 schools in Imo State, Nigeria. She found that only one in every 20 schools had a functional PTA.

Ibetoh's use of focus group discussions, interviews, and observations in her ECDVU project revealed intriguing contrasting as well as converging perspectives from teachers and parents. Teachers were generally of the view that parents could do more to contribute to the effectiveness of collaboration by attending meetings and having more time for their children's education and welfare. They saw a critical role for parents in the development of materials and provision of in-kind contributions other than cash—for example, providing labour for school and community projects, farmers contributing food from their farms to support school meal programs, community members visiting schools to tell stories to children, and parents with professional backgrounds providing services based on their expertise.

Parents, on the other hand, asked for more opportunities to participate in decision-making and wanted to see greater transparency and accountability within the parent-school collaboration. They essentially demanded better treatment, respect, and understanding from teachers.

They identified time and money as the biggest constraints to their participation. Parents saw one avenue for improving community involvement as taking better advantage of the respect and power that traditional rulers and leaders command in the community to build collaboration around these leaders.

The minimal levels of parent-school collaboration and the divergent perspectives held by parents and teachers both underscore the importance of deliberate efforts at building and supporting partnerships. Now that Ibetoh has developed a practical guide to forge this important collaboration between parents and schools, the obvious next step for her research will be a follow-up examination of the level of collaboration and the changes in perspectives that potential improvements in parent-school collaboration may be forging in parents and teachers alike.

The Parental Power Paradox

In the context of both Ibetoh's findings and the general inclination on the part of educators to complain about lack of parental involvement, an intriguing but not unusual paradox regarding power relations within the context of parent-school collaborations is worth discussing in the closing portion of this section. In examining teachers' reports of the challenges they faced in their efforts to promote ECD programs, Muheirwe (2004, see Table 7) found that the three top challenges, among a list of seven, were all associated with the role of parents. That is, the teachers considered it a challenge that parents exerted pressures and influences on (1) the content of instruction; (2) the methods of instruction; and (3) the assessment of progress. These parent-related issues were seen as representing greater challenges than inadequate information sharing with teachers from other schools, inadequacy of teaching materials, difficulties in individualizing instruction due to enrollment numbers, and inadequate storage facilities for the few available teaching and learning materials.

The challenges associated with the role of parents were deemed particularly problematic because of the fear that failure on the part of teachers to adhere to the wishes of parents would result in parents withdrawing their children and enrolling them in competing schools. These are profoundly insightful findings that tell us a great deal about the uphill task of promoting functional and effective parent-school collaborations. They are illustrative of the observation by Arnold (1998, in Ibetoh, 2004) that parental knowledge and expertise tend to be disregarded by education professionals. To the extent that teachers perceive these "parental pressures" as getting in the way of developmentally appropriate curricular and instructional practices, parents become a threat to the professional role and knowledge authority of teachers.

Viewed differently, however, these teacher perceptions suggest that there is an appreciable level of parental interest and involvement in what goes on in their children's classrooms. If these perceived "pressures" were seen not as challenges to be overcome by getting parents to back off but as evidence or affirmation of the untapped knowledge and resourcefulness that parents bring to the school-parent collaborative process, they could form the basis for forging win-win partnerships. Ultimately, however, what seems to be at stake is whether education professionals who lament that parents are not sufficiently involved in their children's programs would be able to rise beyond their traditional stereotypic conceptions of the role of parents as fund-raisers, classroom volunteers, and field trip chaperones. Certainly parents differ markedly in their backgrounds, competencies, and credentials, but if teachers could welcome them as partners capable, collectively, of making substantive contributions to a program's curriculum and management, the parity and mutuality of respect reflected in such a shift should go a long way to foster effective parent-professional collaborations.

Personnel Training Curricula and Professional Networking/Advocacy

Professional development issues will continue to be an area of significant challenge for the emerging ECD field for a variety of reasons. As an evolving field, there is not yet clear consensus on the exact parameters of its focus. This is in part because ECD programs embrace services relating to multiple dimensions of children's care and development that, bureaucratically, tend to be administered under the fiscal and policy aegis of multiple governmental agencies: health, social services/ welfare, education, children and families, etc. In a recent policy brief, UNESCO's Section Chief for Early Childhood and Inclusive Education (Choi, 2002) tackled this issue through examination of the variety of labels that exists to reflect the different emphases in early childhood programs and services—for example, Early Childhood Care (ECC), Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECED), Early Childhood Development (ECD), and Educare.

This state of affairs has implications for determining what kinds of professional training are appropriate, at what level they should be provided, and by which governmental departments or ministries they should be funded. Determining the content of program curricula is made equally complicated by the different conceptions of ECD inherent in the multiple disciplines and fields that inform policies and practices.

The growing emphasis on an integrated and holistic perspective on ECD offers hope for a truly interdisciplinary approach to program conceptualization and development. Paradoxically, many existing programs for training early childhood personnel developed out of a history of disciplinary insulation and fragmentation and, as a result, are ill-prepared to provide the expertise and orientations necessary to offer comprehensive professional preparation for future ECD professionals that draws on knowledge bases from multiple disciplines and attends equally to priorities associated with different service delivery domains.

Beyond these broader conceptual and professional issues, there is also the practical challenge of attracting a stable base of ECD personnel who will find ECD work inherently attractive enough to make a career out of it. In many societies, including even the most resource-rich nations, people who work with young children are the least valued and the most poorly paid. In African countries and other majority nations, funding for ECD programs that are not officially part of the education sector may be left completely in the hands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community non-profit agencies, or international donor organizations. Continuity of operations, in such circumstances, becomes necessarily tied to the fiscal health and/or continued dedication of the leadership of these organizations.

This final section of the paper explores some of the challenging issues in personnel preparation, with particular emphasis on curriculum development, the role of existing training institutions, the missing advocacy voice from professional organizations, and the challenges of recruiting and training community volunteers for ECD work. Edith Sebatane's (2004) work was motivated by the concern that the preparation of ECD staff in Lesotho has predominantly tended to take the form of non-standardized in-service workshops of questionable quality offered by multiple organizations. Her goal, then, was to collaborate with the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) to institute a distance education program for preparing teachers with ECD competencies (see Table 5 for project details).

Felix Agorsah (2004) focused on the training of informal child minders and community volunteers for an extremely high-risk area of the Ghanaian capital city of Accra (see Table 6 for project details). Taking advantage of existing baseline data collected by the UNICEF office in the country, Agorsah conducted a needs assessment and used input from interviews and observations in childcare settings to identify appropriate content for a model training program that was then piloted in two 3-day sessions.

Finally, Monica Muheirwe (2004) focused on a slightly different problem – that of finding a way to mobilize ECD professionals nationwide,

Table 5: Personnel Training & Professional Networking Project Summaries (*Sebatane*)

Project Identifiers	Focus & Objectives	Questions and/or Procedures	Selected Highlights, Insights, Lessons
Author: Edith M. Sebatane	Curriculum development for a college-level Distance Teacher Training Program.	Analyzed country-specific consultancy reports about existing ECCED training activities.	Teachers and in-service trainers at all levels considered skills in identifying and working with children with special needs as a major gap competency gap.
Country: Lesotho	Goal was to move the preparation of ECD teachers and caregivers beyond the tradition of non-standardized in-service workshops with questionable quality by multiple organizations.	Generated input from 26 critical stakeholders (ECCD teachers, Area Resource Teachers, District Teacher Trainers, and National Teacher Trainers) through interviews and discussions.	Trainers also identified a need for further professional development in such areas as psychosocial care/support, health and nutrition, childhood illnesses and diseases and HIV-AIDS.
Title: Developing ECCD Teacher Training Curriculum in Lesotho as Part of a College of Education Program		Worked with Lesotho College of Education (LCE) to develop content and explore how best to integrate ECCE training into the existing program in the Early Primary Education Specialization area.	The program planning process with LCE lecturers revealed a significant challenge: offering a certification program in ECCD in a context where ECD programs could not afford to hire the program's graduates.
		Held discussions with officials of international organizations and the Lesotho Coalition of NGOs to obtain input into program content.	

Table 6: Personnel Training & Professional Networking Project Summaries (*Agorsah*)

Project Identifiers	Focus & Objectives	Questions and/or Procedures	Selected Highlights, Insights, Lessons
Author: Felix Agorsah	Developed and piloted a training model for preparing informal child minders and community volunteers to work with children receiving care in a unique urban setting – the Konkomba Market Area of the capital city of Accra.	Conducted a needs assessment (using existing UNICEF base-line data), interviewed 10 ECD supervisors and workers, and made direct observations of childcare settings.	Project underscores significant threats to the impact of training on the quality of care: poor environmental hygiene a the community level; loss of equipment and supplies due to pilfering by staff; uncertainties regarding continuity of support and supervision by key agencies; the illusiveness of "community" because of the commuter nature of the beneficiaries of childcare services.
Country: Ghana			
Title: An Integrated Early Childhood Development Model Training Program for Informal Child Minders and Community Volunteers in a Ghanaian Urban Setting		Used insights and input from the above activities to formulate the content for a model training program. Implemented two pilot training sessions, each lasting 3 days.	

Table 7: Personnel Training & Professional Networking Project Summaries (*Muheirwe*)

Project Identifiers	Focus & Objectives	Questions and/or Procedures	Selected Highlights, Insights, Lessons
Author: Monica R. Muheirwe *Country:* Uganda *Title:* Professional Associations in Support of Child Well-Being in Uganda: Establishment of ECD Newsletter Series	Focused on the design of a newsletter, Uganda Early Childhood Development Link, to accomplish the following objectives: 1. To promote exchange and dissemination of information; 2. To enhance professional linkages and networking; 3. To facilitate the coordination of ECD activities and lessons from different parts of the country.	Conducted workshops in all five regions of the country to sensitize citizens to ECD issues. Participants included children (ages 3 to 18 years), caregivers in programs for children birth to age 8 years, parents, and teachers. Used the workshop forum to recruit 310 participants with interest in contributing articles to the newsletter: 80 teachers, 80 parents, 120 children, 20 college tutors, 5 ECD trainers, 4 policy makers from Education Ministry, & 1 ECD specialist from National Curriculum Development Center. Among other things, interviews, focus groups discussions, and interviews were used to obtain (1) teachers' perceptions of challenges in promoting ECD and (2) teacher trainers' perceptions of the challenges facing ECD.	*The Status of Professional Associations* 1. Study revealed that of the 3 professional associations in Uganda, one was no longer functional. A second one has its operations largely concentrated in and around the Kampala City area. 2. The absence of strong professional associations capable of giving able advice on ECD policies to the government appeared to account, at least in part, for the lack of integrated ECD policies in the nation. 3. The newsletter emerging from this project could serve to provide the linkages needed to mobilize professionals to build a national umbrella organization to raise the profile of ECD. *Teachers and Teacher Trainer Perceptions of ECD Challenges* 1. Fifty-two percent of 136 teacher statements on the challenges of promoting ECD focused on perceived pressures from parents regarding (1) what teaching methods should be used, and (3) how children's progress should be assessed. 2. Teacher trainers saw the inadequate involvement of the government in the training of ECD personnel and the criteria for selecting trainees as major challenges.

through a national ECD newsletter, to promote networking, facilitate information dissemination, and create a potentially forceful base for ECD professionals to play a major advocacy role in the promotion of ECD programs in Uganda (see Table 7 for project details). While this emphasis was certainly different from the direct focus on staff training curricula by Sebatane and Agorsah, there was a little bit of a cross-current between the two sets of foci in the sense that Muheirwe's surveys of teachers and teacher trainers produced insights with implications for professional training. In the remaining sections that follow, we identify for discussion several critical issues with important insights and lessons for the future of ECD personnel training and professional networking.

Governmental Commitment to Personnel Development and Challenges in Candidate Selection

It was noted at the beginning of this section that personnel training could constitute a challenge for many years to come. Muheirwe's analysis of statements made by trainers clearly reveals concerns about the inadequacy of governmental involvement in the training of ECD personnel in Uganda. A second major challenge identified by trainers pertained to the selection of trainees. The criteria for selecting trainees were seen as leaving out significant numbers of interested and capable individuals who just cannot afford the high costs of becoming trained. Ironically, significant numbers of those who are selected, because they can afford the cost of training, are not necessarily committed to ECD work.

Regarding candidate selection, a slightly different variation of the concern emerges in Sebatane's analysis of the situation in Lesotho, where the use of existing diploma programs to select and prepare ECD staff is generating some practical challenges. LCE's upgrading of its training from the certificate to the diploma level necessitated a change in entry-level qualifications for admission. This seems to have had the threat of excluding individuals with potential interest in ECD careers who now do not have the requisite entry qualifications. This is a challenge worth addressing because, while the diploma level may be consistent with a nation's desire to have the highest level of professional training for its schools and other programs, conditions that are currently unique to the realities of ECD may require that alternative pathways for personnel development, including credentialing at lower levels of certification, be considered.

The New "Brain Drain"

Providing ECD training in the context of upgraded diploma programs has the potential to lead the Africa ECD movement down a path that is currently deemed to be problematic even in the Unites States. During the

course of the last decade there has been a significant infusion of U.S. federal government funding into university-based baccalaureate preparation of professionals for community-based early childhood education programs when, in fact, the salary structures in these settings serving children under five years of age effectively ensure that the personnel trained through these specialized funding initiatives would end up not in preschool and early care settings but in classroom and/or school-based administrative settings where professionals are relatively better paid.

Consider for a moment the approach that LCE proposes to take as a matter of getting around some practical realities. Realizing that many ECD programs are not attached to schools and do not pay competitive salaries, like the Ministry of Education, LCE is creatively linking ECD training with the Early Primary Education Specialization certification area:

> The intention was to provide specialization modules in early childhood care and development so that aspiring ECCD teachers would, over and above the EPES modules they studied, also select the ECCD specialization modules within the EPES unit. At this point, both ECCD Unit and LCE members were in agreement that adopting such practice would enable the qualified ECCD teachers to get employment in the primary schools and teach in the early primary classes, particularly in situations where ECCD centers would not be able to offer paid employment to qualified ECCD teachers. (Sebatane, p. 36)

This appears to be an inadvertently built-in formula for institutional brain drain or migration of expertise. With all the funding and the efforts invested into recruitment of appropriate candidates, the reality is that the graduates of these programs are absolutely less likely to end up in ECCD settings because of the low levels of remuneration in those settings. The intention is pure—equipping ECCD teachers with competencies that would enable them to function in multiple instructional settings. Unfortunately there are no equal opportunities to choose to teach in a regular school or in an ECCD program. The certainty of migration to the school sector is thus very much a foregone conclusion. The situation calls for critical assessment and rethinking. The solution to the personnel training challenge is not simply one of setting up training programs; it is one of creating training programs at the most appropriate levels to fill the personnel needs of ECD programs in a more reliable and sustained way.

On the Critical Advantages of Inter-Sectoral Coordination and Collaboration

Agorsah's project on the training of informal minders and community volunteers illustrates the importance of an integrated, inter-sectoral approach to ECD practice. The training program he has developed and

piloted to prepare infant minders and community volunteers to meet the care and developmental needs of children in this "market community" is essential to the improvement of quality. Yet the success of the training depends, to a large extent, on forces outside the program settings. As an example, trainees may become educated and skilled in environmental hygiene and cleanliness (a major objective of the training program), but unless city authorities provide toilet facilities and clear garbage and drainage systems on a regular basis, such education will make very little difference in the quality of care for children.

From Agorsah's account, it is not likely that the necessary infrastructure of utilities will ever be provided within the target community. He notes, indeed, that "community members are unwilling to put up permanent structures for the children for fear that the city authorities, who have constantly warned or threatened them with demolition, will destroy such unauthorized structures" (p. 56). It is clear from this account that the provision of ECD services in this area is integrally tied to urban policies on squatter populations and, unless these policies change, there is hope only for temporary and superficial success.

Certainly, no society can wait for these fundamental problems to be resolved before putting in place strategies and programs to meet the developmental and care needs of its most needy children. The lesson from this case study, however, is that ECD policies at the national, regional, or local level must be pursued in consonance with much broader transformative policies that recognize the interrelated nature of problems and programs typically handled through different sectors of governmental bureaucracy.

Attaining Professional Networking, Advocacy, Information Dissemination

Professional organizations play a central role not only in policy advocacy, networking, and information dissemination but also in advancing the linkages between inquiry and practice. The Africa ECD field is certainly still in its infancy and it is thus a bit too early to expect the proliferation of professional organizations. Nevertheless, deliberate planning to forge the emergence of such organizations is one of the surest ways to raise the political profile of ECD programs in Africa and to begin to lay the foundations for the continuous improvement of practice through the networking and information sharing that comes naturally with the growth of these organizations. Muheirwe's ECD newsletter project presents one mechanism for beginning to mobilize ECD personnel, a mechanism that can also become an important tool for making sure that successful initiatives and innovations occurring in one part of the nation become easily accessible to professionals in other regions. Hope-

fully the success of this one effort will energize others to follow Muheirwe's lead in other African countries. If these beginning efforts, especially in tandem with the African Conference Series that has now become one of the ECDVU's legacies, culminate in the emergence of regional organizations within the continent or, better still, a continental organization, ECD in Africa would have taken a giant step toward vibrancy and longevity.

Conclusion

As ECD programs take root in Africa and begin to gain widespread support from governmental and non-governmental organizations, the need for home-grown research and development programs as well as professionally responsible standards of practice will become an imperative. It is only through contextually relevant and sensitive inquiry that we can hope to expect ECD programs to make a meaningful impact on the lives of young children today and thus assure the vitality of tomorrow's society.

One of the profound contributions that the ECDVU program has made to the African ECD arena is a leadership capacity-building process that has already borne concrete fruit in the range and quality of the research and project activities completed by the first cohort of students. In this paper, we have analyzed seven of these projects under three composite themes. In each of these thematic areas, we have noted positive developments as well as areas requiring further examination and attention. We have sounded cautionary notes regarding issues and areas in which we must avoid duplicating the experiences of the industrialized world, even while we draw useful insights on other issues. Our hope is that the discussions in this and other papers in this special issue will serve to galvanize an ethos of active knowledge creation and professional networking, with African institutions of higher education responding proactively by entering into partnerships with the field to support appropriate documentation, storage, and dissemination of the resulting knowledge bases.

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Exploring and Promoting the Value of Indigenous Knowledge in Early Childhood Development in Africa

Jessica Schafer
University of Victoria
Mgbechikwere Ezirim
UNICEF Nigeria
Anne Gamurorwa
Communication for Development Foundation, Uganda
Phaello Ntsonyane
Maseru English Medium Preparatory School, Lesotho
Mary Phiri
Chirunga Early Childhood Development Center, Malawi
Jenieri Sagnia
UNICEF Banjul, The Gambia
Leoncia Salakana
Plan International, Tanzania
Wunesh Woldeselassie Bairu
Infant Development Center, Women & Infants' Hospital of Rhode Island

Abstract: There is currently a renaissance of interest in indigenous knowledges, after a long period of neglect and disdain by Western scientific and academic establishments. However, educational institutions have not made some of the more fundamental changes required to successfully integrate indigenous

Address all correspondence to: Jessica Schafer, ECDVU, School of Child & Youth Care, University of Victoria, Box 1700, SDTN CSC, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 2Y2. E-mail: schaferj@uvic.ca

knowledges. Interventions and programs in ECD similarly tend to be based on an accepted body of knowledge built on Western experience and practice. The ECDVU takes a very different approach to capacity building. Its curriculum is built around the idea of co-construction of knowledge, requiring the participation of all in the creation and dissemination of content. The initial results of this process of generating curriculum within concrete cultural contexts are encouraging. The participants in the ECDVU program recognize the value of indigenous knowledges and are actively pursuing the documentation and incorporation of these knowledges into their research and program activities in the field of ECD. This article presents arguments in favour of incorporating indigenous knowledge into the ECD field and highlights the work of a number of ECDVU participants contributing to this area.

The Paradigm Shift

After decades of development research and practice in the Majority World[1] based primarily on the Western scientific canon, a paradigm shift has begun that looks towards 'indigenous knowledge' to supplement, integrate with and, at times, even supplant the previous approach. In practice, the collection and documentation of local practices and knowledges by 'outsiders' has taken place for as long as people have been travelling the globe and recording their observations. However, despite being built upon a long history of the exchange of local knowledges, by the middle of the 20th century the Western scientific paradigm had developed an approach that was relatively insular, universalizing, and exclusionary. Although there continued to be an interest in local practices and cultures, primarily in the field of anthropology, both scientific and policy-oriented research in development appeared to lose respect for indigenous knowledge and advocate the wholesale adoption of Western scientific models as the best solution to development problems.

By the mid-1980s, the socioeconomic situation of Africa had not responded to the modernist development approach in the ways envisioned by the proponents of modernization theory (Leys, 1996). In academic and policy circles, there arose several divergent new approaches to 'solving the African crisis.' At the two extreme poles were neo-liberal economics and post-structuralist analysis. Despite great differences between the paradigms, the majority of scholarship on Africa shared a renewed interest in participatory development and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge into development practice.

The most commonly cited definition of 'indigenous knowledge' is that of Louise Grenier (1998): "the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area." Arguments in favour of recognizing the importance of indigenous knowledge range from those based on philosophical principles to those derived from more utilitarian, pragmatic rationales.

On the side of principles, there is recognition of the intrinsic value of cultural diversity and tolerance—or celebration—of different worldviews and philosophical systems. Some see indigenous knowledges as providing an alternative to the capitalist, individualist moral system of the North/West that has been blamed for damaging the planet and compromising the survival and quality of life of future generations (Obomsawin, 1993). Pragmatic reasons for valuing indigenous knowledge are many. Indigenous knowledge is perceived as having developed over time as a dynamic response to the challenges of survival and development in a specific context. It is place-based knowledge, which fits with current paradigms of ecosystem research that link elements of a system within micro-units in space and time (Lewontin, 1991). Indigenous knowledge is integrated within culturally mediated worldviews and tends to be holistic in nature (NUFFIC/UNESCO, 1999). The holism of indigenous knowledge is in contrast with the Cartesian mechanistic rationalist philosophy that dominated Western science for centuries (Okolie, 2003). Cartesian thought has been challenged by more recent scientific theories, such as relativity and quantum theory (Morgan, 2003, p. 39), and ecosystem or ecological theories advocate a more holistic approach that is coherent with many indigenous philosophies.

Scientists, development practitioners, conservationists, political advocates, and profit-seekers have different motivations for pursuing indigenous knowledge, although they may often overlap in their methods. Within the development paradigm, which is of primary interest for the present discussion, incorporation of indigenous knowledge is seen as a more effective way of attaining development goals given past failures of technical and technological fixes rooted in Western society. Evans and Myers (1994) argue that knowledge of child-rearing practices and beliefs in the field of early childhood care and development (ECCD) is important to:

◆ understand, support, and improve the child-rearing process
◆ respond to diversity
◆ respect cultural values
◆ provide continuity during times of rapid change. (pp. 2-3)

Hyde and Kabiru (2003) and Pence and McCallum (1994) argue that interventions are more successful when built on local knowledge. Many development agencies are now articulating the importance of understanding local knowledge and practices and, consequently, of designing culturally appropriate interventions. In the field of ECCD, we can cite amongst others UNICEF's recent Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) studies (see http://www.unicef.org/) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation's 'Growing Up in Indigenous Societies' initiative (see http://www.bernardvanleer.org/). The World Bank's Indigenous Knowledge Program includes components touching on ECD (e.g., looking at indigenous knowledge to reduce maternal mortality; see http://www.worldbank.org/afr/IK/), as does the UNESCO/MOST and NUFFIC collaboration. There is also recognition within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of the importance of the child's right to cultural identity.

The Gap Between Knowledge and Practice

The movement to collect, document, and analyze indigenous knowledge began in the fields of agriculture and natural resources (see, inter alia, Agrawal, 1995; Chambers, 1983; de Boef, Amanor, Wellard, & Bebbington, 1993; Librando, 1994; Scoones & Thompson, 1994). Botanical and medicinal knowledges remain the dominant fields of investigation on indigenous knowledge world-wide,[2] but the approach has been gradually spreading to include other fields, amongst which is community development, linked with infant, child, and youth development.

Despite the existence of a great wealth of knowledge on local cultural practices in the fields of child rearing, education, and socialization, this knowledge is not yet being sufficiently or systematically integrated into the programming of development interventions in the field (Evans & Myers, 1994). A lack of progress in this respect is also evident in the case of agricultural and ethno-botanical indigenous knowledges (Mathias, 1995).

A variety of reasons exist for the failure globally to translate a respect for indigenous knowledge into practical applications within the development realm. In Africa, we can suggest a number of possible explanations, amongst which are the "narrowly didactic" education system inherited from colonial regimes (Lelliott, Pendlebury, & Enslin, 2000, p. 50) and the consequent Westernization of the approach of African decision makers and policy implementers (Okolie, 2003, p. 240); social changes resulting in the loss of, or irreversible transformations in, indigenous knowledge (Hollos, 2002; Hyde & Kabiru, 2003); the pressures of globalization in the realms of culture and technology; the lack of contemporary research on

indigenous knowledge; conceptual frameworks that remain Western in their foundation and hence are not able to adequately incorporate indigenous knowledges and 'ways of knowing' (Morgan, 2003; Okolie, 2003); and poor training for ECCD teachers and practitioners (Hyde & Kabiru, 2003, p. 18). Both Okolie and Morgan, an African and an Australian indigenous scholar respectively, level criticisms directly at the primary institutions involved in the 'knowledge industry'—universities and research centers—for their failure to recognize multiple ways of knowing and the consequent tendency for indigenous knowledge to remain unincorporated in current curriculum and theories.

This paper argues that the case for integrating indigenous knowledge in higher education is not hopeless, notwithstanding previous performance. The authors propose the generative curriculum model (Ball & Pence, 1999, 2001) as an effective means of integrating indigenous knowledge, without requiring the Westernization of this knowledge or the privileging of one paradigm over another. This article presents the case of the ECDVU as an example of an effective way of transforming tertiary educational approaches to accommodate and advance the integration of indigenous knowledge within appropriate epistemologies as well as apply this knowledge in the promotion of development. The following sections illustrate this approach and document its outcomes to date.

Promotion of the Use of Indigenous Knowledge in Early Childhood Development Within the ECDVU Program

The ECDVU program places indigenous knowledge, local culture, and contextual learning at the heart of its curriculum. Both the generative approach to learning and the content of the ECDVU curriculum promote respect for indigenous knowledge—although not unquestioningly, just as there is neither *a priori* acceptance nor rejection of the tenets of the Western scientific canon. The generative curriculum model does not privilege one epistemology or 'way of knowing' above others, but encourages a range of discourses to emerge and be debated.

One of the obstacles to the use of indigenous knowledge in early childhood policy making, programming, and implementation in Africa is the lack of contemporary research and documentation of local child-rearing practices, traditions, norms, and beliefs. Participants in the ECDVU program gained access to existing literature on these topics (e.g., Evans, 1994; Marfo, 1999; Mwamwenda, 1995; Nsamenang, 1992; Swadener, Kabiru, & Njenga, 2000), and were inspired to carry out their own projects for researching and documenting indigenous knowledge.

For many participants in the program, the realization that there was value in local knowledges, traditions, and practice was relatively new and transformative. A number of the learners have taken up the idea of indigenous knowledge enthusiastically in their research and programming. One approach that was used by ECDVU participants in Malawi, Lesotho, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanzania was the collection of indigenous stories and carrying out research exploring the traditions and beliefs linked with the transmission of oral history through the generations.

The learners justify their attention to indigenous storytelling and oral traditions through reference to both the preservation of valuable cultural practices and their potential contribution to ECD goals, such as psychosocial and cognitive development. They also focus on the potential linkages with ECD programs and are drawing out the connections with implementation.

Several of the learners involved in the documentation of indigenous knowledge are taking the next step in planning and programming the incorporation of this knowledge into ECD practice in their countries. The predominant approach to this incorporation is through the development of curriculum activities for ECD programs that are built upon and utilize the indigenous knowledge collected during documentation.

The following sections summarize and profile the work of participants in the field of documentation of indigenous knowledge and incorporation of indigenous knowledge into programming.

Malawi

In Malawi, participant Mary Phiri undertook the collection of indigenous stories for children as the focus of her major project. Phiri is Director of the Chirunga Early Childhood Center, and is therefore in a good position to evaluate the importance of stories in childhood development as well as to implement programs incorporating indigenous stories. She justified her project on the basis that many of the stories were not being preserved in written form, and the oral tradition was not strong enough to preserve the stories in the minds of the people "because our traditional fora where grandparents use folklore to educate children are gradually disappearing, largely due to the impact of urbanization on the traditional extended family system" (Phiri, 2004, p. 1). After collecting a number of indigenous stories, Phiri created a sample curriculum and lesson plans to incorporate the stories into ECD activities in centers as well as households. Phiri (2004) described the context of her project in the following way:

> Most educated families no longer live in villages and so their children don't have ongoing opportunities to listen to stories related by their grandparents. While parents themselves might have listened to folktales as young children, they now have very little if any time to sit with their children themselves to pass on the wisdom of the elders, because they are tied up with office work or business ventures. (pp. 1-2)

Furthermore, Phiri noted that Malawian children were being exposed primarily to cultural influences originating outside their own cultural traditions. They were thus denied access to local wisdom and lore that could be relevant to their own lives. Locally relevant stories have been demonstrated to aid in children's learning of language, their social development, their development of a sense of identity and formation of character appropriate to their environment and context.

Phiri's work included songs as well as stories, in recognition of the added value songs bring for children.

> In addition to the innate appeal that songs hold for children, and the opportunities they create for children to improve their language, pitch, and rhythm skills, songs can be used to communicate certain mathematical concepts, hygienic habits and gross motor activities to preschoolers; as children grow up these sung concepts are translated into applied understanding. (Phiri, 2004, p. 4)

Lesotho

In Lesotho, Phaello Ntšonyane investigated the current status of indigenous stories amongst Basotho people. Ntšonyane is a teacher in a school in Lesotho that has close links with a community center and preschool. His participation in the ECDVU program increased his awareness of the importance of ECD for children's later success at school, and he began to work on ways of translating this knowledge into practice within the context of the Leseli Community Center and preschool.

Ntšonyane started from the premise that more information was needed on the meaning and values attached to the stories in contemporary local Basotho culture. The first phase of his project, therefore, consisted of bringing together Basotho elders in focus groups to discuss their views on the importance and value of culturally based stories. The second phase of the project was to determine the potential for the incorporation of such traditional knowledge in early childhood programming. The third phase was for caregivers at the ECD center to pilot their strategy for incorporating the stories into the curriculum. At the end of the piloting phase, Ntšonyane held another focus group meeting with the caregivers to determine their sense of the feasibility of this approach and

its potential for future use. Through the piloting, he was able to take his plans a step further in the process of implementation.

Ntšonyane (2004) set the background for his study, describing the way in which "the establishment of ECCD programs in Lesotho was, to a great extent, a response to the disintegration of traditional institutions and family structures that were responsible for child care" (p. 6). Ntšonyane (2004) used material from earlier courses in the ECDVU program to argue that "the research evidence to date shows that cognitive development that is embedded in the socio-eco-cultural relationships and practices and participation of children in local cultural activities would be more effective in ensuring that children develop to their full potential" (p. 9). Hence one projected contribution of the study Ntšonyane expects is the realization by the Basotho of the "potential inherent in their cultural childrearing practices towards child development" (Ntšonyane, 2004, p. 8).

In the first phase, two focus groups of elders were convened. One group was comprised of elders from the various regions of Lesotho; the other was comprised of elders who were professionals. The first group was convened prior to the piloting to help determine the planning of the intervention. The second group was convened after the piloting. The first group included three males and seven females; the second group was composed of four people, two male and two female, all in the teaching profession.

Caregivers and elders identified many advantages which they felt accrued from the use of traditional stories (litšomo) with young children. For example, they mentioned memory development, pre-mathematical skills, moral and social development, language development, and the propagation of culture. Caregivers and elders both advocated the use of litšomo in the ECD centers, but the former advocated for story books, while the latter felt that elderly women should be brought in to do the storytelling. The problem was raised, however, that if children were not being exposed to litšomo and other aspects of Basotho traditional culture in the home, there would be a lack of congruence between that which is learned at home and in the school.

After the pilot period for the increased incorporation of litšomo in the ECD curriculum of the Leseli center, caregivers felt that this was a successful approach. The children showed interest in the stories and enjoyed being told them frequently. The caregivers felt the children responded positively because the stories were told in their own language rather than English, as was the standard for storytelling previously, and because the messages were familiar to them and easy to comprehend. The children liked the repetition in the stories and the rhymes. Furthermore, the children showed higher participation in discussions following these stories compared with the English stories from outside Lesotho.

Uganda

In Uganda, the participants placed the utilization of indigenous knowledge high on their agenda for ECD as part of the ECDVU course "The Past, Present and Future of ECD: Understanding Children, Families and Communities Over Time and Across Cultures." Following that prioritization, one of the Ugandan participants, Anne Gamurorwa, focused her work in the ECDVU program on indigenous knowledge and its use in early childhood.

Gamurorwa worked as a communication expert for the World Bank-funded project, the Nutrition and Early Childhood Development Program (NECDP), also known as Community and Home Initiatives for Long-term Development (CHILD). She perceived the need to collect indigenous stories to provide input for the development of curriculum in early childhood, which was being undertaken by the government at the time. For her coursework, she began to document indigenous stories in Uganda through the innovative means of a competition at district level. For her major project, she followed up the collection of the stories with research to analyze the themes that were raised and how these reflect local ideas of early childhood education, social history, transmission of moral beliefs and cultural education across generations. She further pursued this approach by gathering the views of opinion leaders— including early childhood educators and elders—about storytelling and ways of using these stories in early childhood education (ECE).

Gamurorwa found in her research that the culture of storytelling has been dwindling in Uganda with the rise of urbanization and the shift from extended to nuclear family living arrangements, modern cultural influences, the demands of formal education, and family struggles for economic survival. Her work aimed not only to document existing storytelling, therefore, but also to revive interest among the current generation of parents, caregivers and children, creating "awareness among parents and caregivers about the rich indigenous knowledge that can be tapped in promoting holistic development of children, morally, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally" (Gamurorwa, 2004, p. 5).

In Gamurorwa's findings, various themes were identified through the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, and also through selected story content analysis. The key themes were problem identification and solving, resilience, bravery, greed and corruption, cleverness and intelligence, care for others, family life, obedience to elders, hard work, good and evil. Most of the themes were aimed at character moulding (90.9%) and child education. Elders, teachers, parents, and opinion leaders recognized the value of indigenous stories for children's

social and cultural development, but suggested that changes would be needed to adapt such stories to the current circumstances of children's lives; for example, children were more likely to encounter thieves or rapists than dangerous animals on their way home from school.

One intention behind Gamurorwa's research, and the Ugandan team's proposals, is to assist in creating programming for ECD activities that incorporates the indigenous knowledge captured in the stories. Gamurorwa's list of potential future activities in this field includes the following:

◆ Popularization of the use of storytelling with indigenous stories using mass media
◆ Documentation in print media using various local languages
◆ Production of animated cartoon videos
◆ Use of radio for storytelling
◆ Capacity building among early childhood educators to use indigenous stories
◆ Creation of a Website for children's stories, to be used in local school programs.

Nigeria

Mgbechikwere Ezirim's project was undertaken to identify and document indigenous stories in the Umuchigbo community in Enugu State, Nigeria. Ezirim aimed to integrate indigenous stories into ECD services by encouraging parents to come to the center to tell stories. She also worked on developing strategies for reintroducing storytelling into annual festivals. A final aspect of the project was to disseminate the outcome to ECD practitioners in the ten states covered by the UNICEF field office in which she works.

Ezirim's major project presented a convincing argument for the importance of collecting and preserving indigenous stories. She writes: "Confirming the effectiveness of proverbs in story telling and child rearing in Igbo land, Achebe (1996) noted that proverb is the palm oil Ibos use in eating yams" (Ezirim, 2004, p. 3).[3]

Ezirim (2004) noted that in Igbo tradition in the past, fictional and true narrative stories "were also used to develop the child's imaginative, thinking and learning skills especially when the histories of the communities or biographies of founding fathers of the villages are narrated" (p. 3). She observed that as in the other African countries mentioned above, the changes underway in Nigerian society related to urbanization and modernization are having an impact on local culture and, in many cases, storytelling traditions are not being maintained.

In carrying out her major project, Ezirim assembled a number of focus groups. The sample included seven parents, seven caregivers, and seven elderly members of the community. The group of 21 was divided into three mixed groups, and a focus group interview was done with each group. Stories were submitted and analyzed by the whole community in a participatory activity, which had an added indirect benefit of helping to train ECD caregivers in participatory methodology for group work. Ezirim found in her interviews that stories generally had strong morals to them, and that story themes were different depending on the gender of the storyteller and the audience (e.g., men typically tell stories of bravery while women tell stories of love and care).

Ezirim's major project included a programming aspect subsequent to the collection of indigenous knowledge on child rearing. Members of the community and caregivers in the ECD centers were encouraged to identify ways in which children could participate in the storytelling, such that they become more than passive listeners and develop other skills in the process. In her conclusion, Ezirim made recommendations for agencies involved in ECD work to identify ways in which they can help to promote the use of indigenous stories through their own programs and funding.

Tanzania

In a variation on the storytelling theme, Leoncia Salakana's major project involved collecting proverbs of relevance to ECD and child-rearing practices. Salakana developed this theme into program action within the NGO Plan International in several of the districts within which Plan International works.

Salakana's project area included three regions: Ilala municipality in Dar es Salaam region; Kibaha and Kisarawe districts in Coast region; and, Kilombero district in Morogoro region and Nyamagana and Geita districts in Mwanza region. These were all districts in which PLAN works, but were geographically different and hypothesized to present different cultural traditions for study. Data collection involved conducting focus group interviews with male and female adults (approximately 40) in each of three communities selected and several key informant interviews with elders. There was a community meeting to present initial findings and gather feedback to incorporate into the final report, as well as to obtain consent for the use of the proverbs by the researcher in specified ways.

In the next phase of the project, learning activities were prepared by the researcher and presented to nursery and preschool teachers, who were asked to plan lessons based on these materials. Feedback was sought on these activities. Validation of the learning activities was also

sought by presenting them to in-service preschool teacher trainees at a training college.

Salakana quotes a 1999 study by the NGO Kuleana regarding their observations of the Sukuma culture in relation to proverbs and storytelling traditions:

> Whether we like it or not, it is always there, culture carved out of nature, carried over the past, placed in the middle of people's lives. Hundreds of year-rings of learning passed through its roots. Layer on layer of survival embedded in its trunk. It is further added that tradition is a log magogo and the elders bagogo sitting on it. (Salakana, 2004, p. 39)

An example of a proverb with social utility is given: *Uluwikala na mamila ukwingwilwa na magino*. If you do not regularly clean your nose, insects will enter through your nostrils (i.e., an emphasis on cleanliness).

During the project research, Salakana collected a total of 86 proverbs, of which she identified 25 as having relevance for young children. The general themes identified from the proverbs collected were warning, reconciliation, obedience, cooperation, charity, respect, dependence, wisdom, self-reliance, advice, forgiveness, hospitality, patience, appreciation, persistence, solidarity, struggle, and imitation/modelling. Other findings were that only one of the three cultural groups had strong preservation of indigenous proverbs, and that people over 45 were more conversant with proverbs than the younger generation. In relation to gender, women were more conversant with proverbs in two of the regions, and men in the third.

Salakana (2004) wrote:

> The most important feature of this project was to show how the different learning activities that are designed to meet the needs of preschool children can be linked to ordinary activities that are familiar to the children themselves, their families and caregivers. The added value of this approach to fostering effective learning for preschoolers is that the learning experiences can even occur in the home environment assuming that a complementary program on parenting education is put in place. This project intends to see that such a program is put in place in the project areas. (p. 62)

The learning activities designed as part of the major project were validated by a group of teacher trainees from Bituma Teacher Training College and a number of preschool teachers in the PLAN project areas. The teacher trainee group felt that the materials were appropriate to the level of the learners and that they would provide motivation for them as teacher trainees to become more innovative and sensitive to the cultures around them. The responses from the preschool teachers who attempted

to implement the learning activities were encouraging. The general observation was that some of these teachers have been teaching children on the selected themes, but the major difference was that they had done it out of cultural contexts. They were of the opinion that the proposed approach could be useful.

In terms of future activities, Salakana plans to use the proverb collection and learning activities to develop a Caregivers' Handbook to distribute to preschools and other interested ECD stakeholders. She recommends further collection of indigenous knowledge and support for its use in child rearing in both informal and formal contexts.

The Gambia

Another initiative of the learners in the ECDVU program has been to look at local child-rearing practices and cultural knowledge in other areas of child development. Jenieri Sagnia of The Gambia explored local practices and beliefs around play and psychosocial stimulation of children to better understand local perceptions of play. Psychosocial care was understood in the study as activities parents and families do to promote the cognitive, social, moral, spiritual, and emotional development of their children (Sagnia, 2004, p. 3).

> In terms of ECD, little is known in The Gambia about what parents and caregivers know and practise in promoting psychosocial development of their children. Identifying indigenous knowledge and practices supports government and other interested stakeholders' efforts to develop suitable programs that would assist communities to address the holistic development of children more meaningfully. (Sagnia, 2004, p. 6)

Sagnia is an education project officer for UNICEF in Banjul, The Gambia. His interest in local psychosocial care practices stemmed from the fact that little was known about this issue in The Gambia, and because he felt that it would assist greatly in UNICEF's approach to Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD). One objective of Sagnia's major project work was therefore to provide recommendations for UNICEF on the programming implications of this research.

Sagnia (2004) was critical in his literature review of approaches to ECD that use a 'deficit model' that focuses on what parents and communities need to learn rather than on what they already know and do. From his reading in the ECDVU course, Sagnia was able to present evidence that ECD programs which devalue indigenous knowledge are less effective than those that use and build upon it. Sagnia (2004) raised the important issue of how indigenous knowledge and practices relate to

gender issues and how this enhances or impedes the psychosocial development of children, especially girls (p. 15). He also brought attention to the potential conflicts and tensions that might exist between what we term 'traditional' and 'modern' practices, and the danger of romanticizing indigenous knowledge given the fact that families and communities everywhere are stressed by poverty, unemployment, dislocation, and other challenges.

Sagnia used both qualitative and quantitative methodology in his major project study. He carried out a semi-structured survey questionnaire, supplemented by in-depth interviews with key informants. His research covered three ethnic communities: Mandingka, Fulla, and Wollof, in the proportions of 50%, 30% and 20% respectively. Sixty percent of interviewees were female, and 80 percent were under the age of 49. Focus group discussions were held in each community, with ten men and ten women per group, one group of each per community. Observation, during visits to the communities, was used to supplement questionnaire and interview data.

Sagnia's findings include the fact that men and women in all three ethnic groups studied believe that large periods of time spent in play harms children's chances of success in their future lives, making them lose their sense of seriousness, responsibility and foresight, making them idle and lazy. While a majority of respondents felt the children should be given some opportunity to play, they felt this should be limited. There was, however, awareness of play's contribution to children's development. For example, play was believed to help children develop listening and attention skills, to keep them occupied while parents were busy with other things, and to help them learn to express themselves. Observing whether a child would play or not was also used as a means to discover whether they were physically unwell.

Through observation, Sagnia (2004) found that children in the three cultural environments were "constantly stimulated in the environment" (p. 56), despite the facts that many parents felt that play should not form a large component of a child's education and that parents had little understanding of the developmental impacts of much of their interaction with their children. Storytelling was an exception in that communities were aware of the benefits of storytelling with children and felt it was an important contributor to their development, in the social, cognitive and moral realms. There were gaps in parental knowledge about the impact of toys on children's development, but there were also locally made toys available for most ages apart from the youngest infants. One of the greatest limitations found was the lack of time that parents were able to devote to playing with their children because of the demands of work. In

addition, fathers were less likely to play with their young children because of the gendered division of labour that assigns the care of the youngest children to women only. Finally, Sagnia found pronounced differences in the treatment of girls and boys in relation to play and psychosocial care more generally. This can be seen as facilitating their future gender roles in society, but it also plays a role in denying girls, in particular, some of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In conclusion, Sagnia (2004) wrote:

> The findings of the study indicate that many good practices in promoting psychosocial development of children do exist in these communities. These include: the importance attached to play, children being highly valued, understanding relevance of toys in promoting children's play, storytelling by grandmothers, children playing together, carrying infants on the backs of females, and the extended family system and high community spirit and commitment to children's welfare. It has also identified a number of gaps, which needed to be addressed to positively influence attitudes to introduce the IECD approach at community level. These gaps include: fathers not playing sufficiently with their children, children not given opportunity to play with water, sand and mud, limited variety of toys, and limited toys for infants. Other issues include: limited skills for toy development and production, lack of space for children's play, gender discrimination in play and promoting cognitive and social development, and overly perceived notion that childcare is the exclusive responsibility of women. Significant also to mention was the lack of adequate time for parents to interact with their children and talking to their infants and the heavy domestic workload of children, which limit their time for play. (Sagnia, 2004, p. 74)

Sagnia's work on psychosocial care in communities in The Gambia will be used to further enrich the training materials prepared by UNICEF in that country, which aim to promote IECD by working with communities and integrating state of the art knowledge on childhood development with the indigenous knowledge of communities, building on positive practices and helping to fill gaps in knowledge or understanding.

Other project work by Sagnia that was stimulated by his learning in the ECDVU program included the development of a local toy production project using indigenous knowledge and local materials.

Eritrea

Wunesh Woldeselassie Bairu was involved in designing evaluation tools for the Eritrean Integrated Early Childhood Development Project.

As part of her course work for ECDVU, she worked on developing indicators for measuring the effectiveness of the program. One of the goals of the project was to improve the awareness of beneficiaries in relation to ECD components. Although many indicators for such programs are derived from externally developed goals and objectives, Woldeselassie included a crucial activity that suggested a new approach: the incorporation of indigenous knowledge within such didactic programs. The activity was the organization of community-to-community visits for the purpose of sharing indigenous knowledge. The aim was not to derive central benefits from the extraction of indigenous knowledge, but rather to develop contacts between communities and provide space and opportunity for them to learn from each other and strengthen their position in relation to such centrally directed initiatives. Woldeselassie went further to develop this objective into a discrete program component to be evaluated itself, thereby demonstrating both the importance accorded to indigenous knowledge and a new awareness of bringing communities into evaluations and discussions around their own knowledge production and its uses.

Summary and Conclusions

There is currently a renaissance of interest in indigenous knowledges, after a long period of neglect and disdain by Western scientific and academic establishments. Both principled and pragmatic reasons exist for this renewed interest. In the development field, and specifically the field of ECD, proponents advance arguments based on the right to cultural identity alongside arguments that understanding and integrating indigenous knowledges into practice will ultimately result in more successful program interventions. However, universities and other institutions involved in producing and disseminating knowledge have not made some of the more fundamental changes required to successfully integrate indigenous knowledges. Universities continue to approach knowledge from the rationalist scientific perspective that compartmentalizes knowledge. This approach is not easily compatible with the more holistic worldviews within which indigenous knowledges tend to be grounded. Universities also tend to privilege the Western canon and to reproduce this canon for an African audience without consideration for local knowledges, cultural contexts, identities, and histories. Matthew Luhanga, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, stated that "information technology links us to resources that are, for the most part, not developed by Africans" (cited in Useem, 1999).

Interventions and programs in ECD similarly tend to be based on an

accepted body of knowledge built on Western experience and practice, often employing the rhetoric of 'best practice' and the application of 'lessons learned' without sufficient modification for cultural context or attention to and respect for indigenous knowledges and practices.

The ECDVU takes a very different approach to capacity building in the field of ECD in Africa. Its curriculum is built around the idea of co-construction of knowledge, requiring the participation of all in the creation and dissemination of content. Learning is not a one-way but a multidirectional process of interaction and exchange.[4] In this way, the program contributes not only to building the capacity of participants to participate in the academic field, but ensures new and unique contributions to the body of knowledge on African ECD. ECD programs are then built around these culturally grounded bodies of knowledge and themselves generate new knowledges that start from a community base and move up to the national level. The ECDVU approach is not simply a philosophy of learning but a concrete pedagogical model that is applied throughout the program.

The initial results of this process of generating curriculum within concrete cultural contexts are encouraging. The participants in the ECDVU program have embraced the idea of indigenous knowledges and are actively pursuing the documentation and incorporation of these knowledges into their research and program activities in the field of ECD. They are contributing to filling the lacunae in knowledge of local practices and beliefs around child rearing in Africa, which has been identified as an important obstacle to the integration of local knowledges into early childhood programming. They are developing plans for further documentation and dissemination of indigenous knowledges. Equally important, they are drawing the attention of policy makers to these issues, and bringing them onto the ECD agenda.

Despite these advances, much remains to be done to continue to move forward with a culturally sensitive, contextual approach to indigenous knowledge within the field of ECD as in other realms of development. Penn (2002) observes that one of the main funders of ECD programs in Africa, the World Bank, continues to support Western-centric approaches to ECD, despite articulating support for cultural diversity in its rhetoric. The indirect effects of economic policies promoted by the World Bank and other international institutions also reduce the capacity of African institutions to determine the agenda for ECD based on local priorities and cultural contexts. African governments remain highly dependent on external funders for ECD, which often then determine the direction of policy and activity within the country (Torkington, 2001). At the level of individual African countries, the legacy

of the colonial system in the sphere of politics continues to marginalize non-elite knowledges and cultural traditions. Ethnic differences in cultural practices may not be respected, particularly in situations of ethnic tension and political conflict.

Similarly, in the institutions of higher learning, more can and should be done to advance the consideration of, respect for, and inclusion of indigenous knowledges within the academic paradigm. The generative curriculum is one approach that attempts to do so, but it is hampered by the legacies of colonial and rationalist modes of thinking that continue to dominate and promote exclusive approaches to knowledge generation. The generative curriculum approach requires continual self-examination and reflection on the ideology and sources behind accepted assumptions. This is a difficult but a necessary task if we are to take seriously the notion of inclusive, participatory and emancipatory knowledge generation.

Notes

[1] This term is used to replace 'developing countries' in recognition of the potential for widely differing definitions of development and in acknowledgement that these countries contain the majority of the world's population.

[2] For example, the table of contents of the *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor* from its inception in 1993 shows a strong preponderance of articles from those fields.

[3] That is, proverbs are like grease that oils the wheels of society and carry its flavour. They are part of the staple cultural diet, one could say.

[4] In this respect, the approach shares elements of the Freire pedagogical method (see Blackburn, 2000).

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ECD and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in Africa

Lynette Jackson
Global Connect Services, Canada
Chloe O'Gara
Save the Children, United States
Margaret Akinware
UNICEF, Zambia
Olive Akomas
Ministry of Health, Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria
Lydia Nyesigomwe
Action for Children, Uganda
Susan Sabaa
Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child

Abstract: An unprecedented number of young children in Sub-Saharan Africa are being adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, yet programs specifically designed to meet the developmental needs of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) from birth to age 8 are rare. This article summarizes the daunting array of challenges facing young OVC in Sub-Saharan Africa, and profiles research and action projects undertaken by four members of the inaugural graduate-level cohort of the ECDVU to promote high-quality developmentally appropriate ECD care for young OVC in their respective countries. The projects underscore the pressing need for community-based, national and international stakeholders to reach beyond the escalating immediate demands for survival-level support for these children—

Address all correspondence to: Lynette Jackson, ECDVU, School of Child & Youth Care, University of Victoria, Box 1700, STN CSC, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 2Y2. E-mail: jacksonl@uvic.ca

culturally appropriate ECD training and resources for both over-burdened extended family and institution-based caregivers of young OVC must also be promoted as essential priorities. Higher levels of physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being and increased lifetime learning and earning are associated with good early childhood care; timely provision of integrated quality ECD training and care is urgently needed if today's young OVC are to mature into productive and contributing members to Sub-Saharan African society in their adult years.

UNICEF has cited HIV/AIDS as one of the top five concerns currently facing children in developing nations (together with child survival, war, exploitation, and insufficient investment). In the UNICEF New Year 2004 press release, Executive Director Carol Bellamy made special note of the extraordinary number of children in Sub-Saharan Africa negatively impacted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic: "Some 14 million children have been orphaned by AIDS, 11 million of whom reside in Sub-Saharan Africa. By 2010, the number of children in that region who have lost parents to AIDS is expected to have risen to 20 million" (UNICEF, 2003). However, action to meet the needs of orphans—particularly young orphans from birth to age 8—is thus far falling far short of what is needed to ensure a healthy, capable cohort of adults 15 years into the future. Recognizing the gravity of this situation, several ECDVU participants elected to undertake projects relating ECD to HIV/AIDS. This section of this special issue provides an overview of the particular ways that the lives of children in their early childhood years (from birth to age 8) in Sub-Saharan Africa are affected by HIV/AIDS and profiles work undertaken by these ECDVU participants in various African countries to bolster the well-being and holistic development of young children orphaned by the pandemic.

Background

Following his official tour of Ethiopia in May 2004, Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, made the following observations regarding the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on Ethiopia's children:

> I regret to say that Ethiopia is only now beginning to understand the vast extent of the growing orphan crisis. The country is simply unprepared, at this time, to cope with the avalanche of children orphaned by AIDS; it's estimated that there are already a million orphans in Ethiopia. The Prime Minister pointed out to me that there is still some capacity, in the rural areas, to absorb orphans into the community through the extended family system. But he acknowledged that in the urban centers, where the

great majority of orphans are to be found, there was as yet little capacity to respond.

Frankly, unless the country devises an almost instantaneous strategic plan for orphans, backed by massive resources and focused intervention, Ethiopia will soon be reeling from the onslaught of abandoned, rootless, bewildered and despairing kids of all ages. It will feel like a raging torrent of child trauma to which everyone responded too late. Tens of thousands of young lives will be lost and ruined. I cannot put it strongly enough. (Lewis, 2004, para. 10-11)

Sadly, similar crises are mounting in many Sub-Saharan countries at this time.

Terminology in Use in Sub-Saharan Africa: Young Orphaned, Vulnerable, and "AIDS-Affected" Children

Kathy Bartlett and Louise Zimanyi (2002) of the Consultative Group for Early Childhood Care and Development Secretariat identify *AIDS-affected children* as: "those infected with HIV; affected by HIV/AIDS through infection or the illness/loss of one or both parents and/or family members; orphaned due to AIDS; or made vulnerable by the AIDS pandemic" (p. 1). Sabaa (2004, p. 23) reports that a variety of terms are employed in different regions of Sub-Saharan Africa to denote children who are being adversely impacted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, including *children and adolescents affected by AIDS* (CAA), *children affected by AIDS* (CABA), *children in distress* (CINDI), *children in extremely difficult circumstances* (CEDC), and *children in need of special protection* (CNSP); however, the predominant descriptor in the current global literature is *orphans and vulnerable children* (OVC). The term *vulnerable children* is variously applied to describe children who struggle to survive and mature under conditions that do not permit fulfillment of their fundamental rights for optimal development. Its usage includes, but is not limited to, children adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. *Vulnerable children* may also be used to refer to street children; child labourers; children who are sexually exploited, trafficked, neglected or handicapped; children living in child-headed households, foster care or centers for reasons other than loss of parent(s); children in conflict with the law; children living in poverty; refugee and displaced children; infants with their mothers in prison; children of single parents; "unaccompanied" children; and children from Indigenous minorities who live in remote areas.

In this article we use the term *young orphans and vulnerable children* (OVC) to indicate children from birth to 8 years who are orphans and/or vulnerable. We assume that almost all AIDS-affected children are

vulnerable based on the evidence presented here and elsewhere. We have elected to use *young OVC* because it is less stigmatizing, more reliably verifiable, and more inclusive than the designation of *AIDS-affected*.[1]

Challenges Facing Young OVC

There are many specific challenges facing young OVC in Sub-Saharan Africa. Very few reports to date have focused on the specific challenges faced by OVC in the early childhood years, and programs specifically designed to meet the needs of this age group are rare. Some of the high risk challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children from birth to age 8 include (adapted from Lusk & O'Gara, 2002):

1. Survival risks. Approximately 30% of children born to mothers infected with HIV are likely to be infected with HIV in the absence of anti-retroviral therapy for the pregnant mother. Treatment to prevent transmission at birth and reduce the risk of transmission via breast milk is not yet widely available in Sub-Saharan Africa. A secondary survival threat is that young children whose mothers die – for any reason – are at greater risk of morbidity and mortality than children with living mothers.

2. Increased morbidity. Malnutrition, diarrhea, pneumonia, and malaria pose significant risks for children in Sub-Saharan Africa in their early childhood years. AIDS-affected children are bombarded with multiple stressors, are often malnourished, and may be HIV-infected themselves. Households impoverished by AIDS may lack money to provide even basic health care for young children. Ailing parents or foster caregivers may not have adequate resources to transport young children to health facilities, to pay their health service fees, to buy medicine for them, or to follow through on home-based care. Households that are headed by the elderly or by children often lack basic knowledge of the particular health care requirements of infants, toddlers, and preschool children. Immunizations and treatment for basic infections are often missed.

Repeated bouts of illness have long-term effects on children's cognitive and psychosocial development. Malaise impedes action and reduces verbal interaction. A sick child is unlikely to play or explore. Reduction of these activities impoverishes normal development in the early years.

3. Malnutrition. As parents and other adults stricken with HIV/AIDS in the child's family system sicken, the labour force required to produce or buy food is diminished or lost. Adult caregivers of young OVC are predominantly women living in impoverished circumstances with little or no access to property on which to produce food and with scarce employment opportunities to enable them to buy food (USAID, UNICEF, & SIDA, 1999, p. 48). Furthermore, with illness and depression, active

feeding declines or ceases while competition within the household for food resources increases, exacerbating undernutrition of younger children. Once a young child becomes ill or marasmic,[2] the family—and health care providers—may assume HIV infection and view the child as dangerous or likely to die, thus a low priority for time, energy, emotion, and money. Malnutrition in the early years can cause irreversible stunting, impair cognitive and social function, and alter brain development and other foundational aspects of lifelong health and well-being.

4. Psychosocial trauma. As HIV-positive parents pass through phases of the illness, families experience uncertainty, anxiety, and intermittent crises. Children too young to express their feelings verbally are deeply affected by the trauma of witnessing their parents' pain in countries where pain alleviation medicines are unavailable, by adult depression, and by the stigma of HIV/AIDS and associated shame, fear, and isolation. Guilt over their helplessness to save their parents or reduce parental suffering combines with the immense grief, anxiety, and depression of witnessing a parents' descent into illness and death (USAID et al., 1999, p. 48). A family's deteriorating economic position due to mounting costs of "treatments" and funerals, the reduction of income of associated with AIDS, the impending loss of the family home and land, the ongoing uncertainty regarding stability of shelter and care after parents' deaths, and the likelihood of separation from siblings and multiple relocations are heavy burdens for young children to bear.

Once orphaned, children under five may be the least welcome foster children. They can contribute almost nothing to household work or income and require the most intensive care. Young children are more likely than older children to be linked to their parent's death, infected through birth or breastfeeding, or associated with contagion or the curse of witchcraft. Young AIDS-affected children are at high risk of abandonment, neglect, stigma, harsh treatment, and abuse.

Young children deprived of consistent caregivers and interpersonal and environmental stimulation suffer long-term cognitive and psychosocial consequences. This will have long-range, multiple effects on society. Studies show that physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being, as well as increased lifetime learning and earning, are associated with good early childhood care. Children without quality care in the early years are more likely in the future to fail out of school, turn to a life of crime, and perpetuate the cycle of poverty as adults (Deutsch, 1999, in Lusk & O'Gara, 2002, p. 8).

5. Abandonment. Abandonment represents the far end of the spectrum of inadequate care. Some HIV-positive women in Kenya abandon their newborns in the hospital where they delivered, even though such infants may not be HIV-positive. In the public hospitals, where resources for

these abandoned babies are limited, the majority die within a few months (Petito, 1996). Johannesburg, South Africa reported 120 abandoned infants in the first half of 1998, two-thirds of whom were HIV-positive.

6. Delay or lack of entry into formal primary education. Household poverty, isolation, and despair keep children out of school. Recent data assembled by UNICEF (cited in Lusk & O'Gara, 2002, p. 6) shows that the proportion of double-orphaned children in school is lower than that of non-orphans in every country for which data are available, and is markedly below in some countries. In Tanzania, children in households with recent adult deaths delay primary enrolment. In Zambia, one study reported that 32% orphans vs. 25% non-orphans are not attending school in urban areas; in rural areas 68% orphans are out of school compared with 48% of non-orphans.

Child labour. AIDS-affected children often find themselves under great pressure to prematurely assume adult responsibilities, even during early childhood years—to care for ill and dying parents, to care for younger orphans and foster siblings, to contribute to farm and domestic labour, or to add income in other ways to their households. As the death toll of the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to mount, the once extraordinary phenomenon of child-headed households is becoming more and more commonplace in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are now orphaned children as young as 6 or 7 attempting not only to negotiate the challenges of their own survival without adult care or supervision, but also to care for younger siblings, some of whom may be infected with HIV. Children in these circumstances are highly vulnerable to exploitation.

ECDVU Action Research Projects
Related to Care of Young HIV/AIDS Orphan Children
in Uganda, Nigeria, Zambia, and Ghana

The unprecedented numbers of young OVC in Sub-Saharan Africa prompted four members of the inaugural graduate-level cohort of the ECDVU to undertake a final project or thesis exploring aspects of care for young OVC which related to their ongoing professional work in their respective countries. Despite limitations to the scope of their undertakings imposed by financial and time constraints, their work provides insight into the current status of a variety of current care situations for young OVC and underlines the urgent need for ongoing quality ECD training and pragmatic support for both over-burdened extended family caregivers and institutional staff members to ensure that the cognitive and psychosocial as well as the basic survival needs of young OVC in their charge are met.

Community-Based Assistance for Grandparents Caring for Young Orphans

> For decades now, international AIDS efforts have focused mainly on prevention and treatment. Programming for the mitigation of the impact of this disease is just beginning, and has so far been focused primarily on adults and school-aged children. . . . While most HIV/AIDS programs have at least the potential for benefiting children under five, programs specifically designed to meet the needs of this age group are rare. (Nyesigomwe, 2004, pp. 12-17)

Lydia Nyesigomwe is the Director of Action for Children (AFC), an NGO founded in 1998 to rescue children from immediate danger and to advocate for the rights of children. The organization undertakes various community programs for women and children in poverty eradication, children's health and survival, early learning programs, advocating for the rights of children, and supporting orphans. Strategies employed by AFC are intended to have long-term impact on the well-being of children through economic and social empowering of families of young OVC.

Traditional Ugandan societal norms are changing and are gradually undermining the respect, care, and social support of older people in the society. A contributory factor to this change is the onset of the AIDS epidemic, which has also compounded women's challenges. Gender roles and relationships are determinants of the extent of risk which women face in contracting the HIV infection. Experience has shown that male orphans are prone to life on the street, truancy, and delinquency. The girl orphans are more likely to drop out of education, while widows are likely to be disinherited and often lose their property (Anyuru & Anyuru, 1994; Cobb, 2002; Kihinte, 2000; UAC, 2001, all cited in Nyesigomwe, 2004).

Nyesigomwe's final ECDVU report details a one-year pilot project, the Grandparents Action Support (GAS) Project, designed and implemented by AFC to strengthen the capacity of grandparents in providing care to children under the age of 8 and improve the overall welfare of the families taking care of the children. Nyesigomwe notes that the project was formed because, by eroding the fulfillment of the family's cardinal functions of reproduction and socialization, AIDS is resulting in increased infant mortality and morbidity and the disintegration of family structure by leaving the elderly and the very young ones. Before death, HIV/AIDS-infected parents have a tendency to shift the responsibility of caring for their children to the grandparents. Grandparents, who traditionally depended on their children for financial support during old age, are currently faced not only with the lack of this support, but with having to take care of their dead children's children. A needs assessment carried out in 1993 indicated that households headed by grandparents faced more

hardships in looking after orphans than any other household type (Nyesigomwe, 2004). Minker et al. (1997, in Nyesigomwe, 2004) reported high rates of depression, poor self-related health and/or the frequent presence of multiple chronic health problems in several studies of grandparents raising grandchildren.

Supported by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, the three-year project is to target 200 homes but has started with 30 households in Kyanja community, Nakawa Division, Kampala District, Uganda:

> Twenty-two households cared for between two and four children under the age of 8, four households had five or more children, while four had only one child below the age of 8 . . . two grandparents were overwhelmed by the responsibility of taking care of seven and eight children below 8 years respectively, in addition to having more children above the age of 8. (Nyesigomwe, 2004, p. 33)

Nyesigomwe describes the GAS Project as unique in that "the vulnerable care for the vulnerable," meaning that grandparents who are old and frail are supported to provide quality care for orphaned children under the age of 8. The goal of GAS is to work with individual families to ensure that grandparent caregivers reach a level where they can support themselves and the children in their care.

Grandparents are strategically organized in economic and social mutual support groups in which they identify and accept the challenges facing them in caring for very young orphans and work together towards solving them. The groups are also provided training by AFC in optimum ECD practices, including nutrition, sanitation, stimulation, and health care, and understanding the particular psychosocial supports required by young orphans.

At the heart of the project is a strategic approach called Family Preservation and Empowerment (FAP), whereby a development plan is worked out with the head of the household using seven key indicators: food security, housing, health and nutrition, education, household income, family mentorship, and training in meeting emotional needs of both children and grandparents. The household is then monitored over a period of time until it can sustain itself with little or no external support. During the implementation of the FAP project, AFC noted the particular vulnerability of young children under the care of aged grandparents who were no longer strong enough to effectively take part in existing community interventions introduced by AFC, nor to give adequate care to the children. The GAS Project was subsequently initiated to provide additional support to these grandparents to enable them to become effective caregivers.

A needs assessment exercise was held with the full participation of the grandparent caregivers, and the findings were shared. One idea generated by the grandparents themselves was to form Action Support Groups (ASGs):

> Each zone formed a group of six people called 'Bubondo.' They formed committees and elected chairpersons and secretaries who could read and write. The main purpose of these ASGs was to bring grandparents together to share their experience, discuss opportunities, challenges, and possible solutions to their problems. They held meetings weekly to share information about their children's well-being and family projects. Their projects were based on the seven indicators, some of which included: how to prepare food for malnourished children, grow vegetables in their back yard gardens, keep the children free from sickness, make play materials and play with children, to ensure that every home has enough food and that every grandparent has an Income Generating Activity (IGA). Five (5) ASGs were formed and ten (10) committee members trained on leadership skills. The role of zone leaders in the ASGs was to monitor the group activities, attend their weekly meetings, and hold a review meeting at the end of the month to discuss issues that came out of ASGs. Issues not handled or solved in the review meeting would be forwarded to AFC. (Nyesigomwe, 2004, p. 48)

Participants together with AFC trainers grouped the challenges facing grandparent caregivers into three categories: those to be discussed and solved by grandparents (such as preparing nutritious meals for children, keeping homes and children clean, teaching children good morals, digging food gardens, building utensil racks, cleaning toilets and buildings where there were no toilets); those to be handled cooperatively by zone Action Groups (such as holding and attending GAS meetings, making home visits for mutual support, assisting each other to own and tend gardens for food production, assisting each other to take sick children to health centers, ensuring that households have projects that generate income); and those to be shared with the wider community (such as starting community ECD centers, sharing food and garden tools, mentoring each other, sharing ideas and information, planting trees in common areas). To avoid perpetuating a cycle of dependency on external support, AFC sponsored simple competitions to encourage grandparents and Action Groups to work on identified challenges. After one month an assessment was conducted, and AFC awarded "prizes" to all participants according to a list which the grandparents had generated during the needs assessment of equipment that they needed but could not afford to buy (such as plates, cups, bed sheets, blankets, and mosquito nets, with overall winners receiving extra prizes such as hoes and mattresses).

Nyesigomwe's final report includes descriptions of innovative and pragmatic community-based strategies initiated by the ASGs to help themselves. Cooperative income-generating strategies, for example, included rearing goats, chickens, and pigs, selling eggs, making crafts, and making and selling pan cakes. The following passage briefly describes how the grandmothers addressed the pressing issue of food security:

> ASGs agreed to grow food as a group and as individuals. There were those grandparents who did not have land and those who were too old and frail to cultivate. Groups agreed that those with no land get together and find a group member who has land to give them. It could be one of the very old and frail grandparents, then they would grow food and share with her or him. Twenty two (22) personal and 5 group gardens of cassava, potatoes and vegetables were established. (Nyesigomwe, 2004, p. 49)

Nyesigomwe notes that a mid-term evaluation of the GAS Project was conducted to assess progress and performance. While no attempt was made at that time to evaluate the overall impact of the project, as the implementation period of seven months was too short, a review was conducted to assess the project's performance during that period and the achievements and challenges encountered and to recommend improvements. Issues looked at in the mid-term evaluation included care, development, and support for orphans, knowledge and behaviour change related to HIV/AIDS, knowledge and behaviour change related to psychosocial support for children, and income-generating activities. A simple questionnaire was used among grandparents in the ASGs, and a home-visit exercise was carried out in the households. Findings are summarized below:

> The project had registered significant achievements both tangible and qualitative. Overall the project had achieved beyond the targets. While the plan was to support 50 children, 99 children had been reached in less than the planned period of implementation and the effects of the project had gone beyond the targeted 30 homes to involve non-project homes. The project had a multiplier effect in that non-project families are already copying and learning from the GAS homes. Non-project families had started cleaning their homes, making utensil racks and digging rubbish pits. The zone leaders had gained popularity in the community and were now attracting more development projects for their community. (Nyesigomwe, 2004, pp. 53-54)

The report also lists a number of qualitative and indirect achievements, including: better community mobilization and organization; increased ease of entry of development projects into the community; improved income for caregivers (grandparents had some income on reserve for emergencies); availability of a health post, better access to

health care, and improved health of the children; and increased food security.

In the conclusions of her report, Nyesigomwe notes that young OVC in the care of grandparents are not targeted by most HIV/AIDS mitigation or care and support projects because the grandparents cannot enroll in projects that emphasize financial sustainability. The GAS Project demonstrates that significant positive change can take place in a short period of time by involving the larger community in addressing the issue of quality care for OVC in their early childhood years.

Nyesigomwe has received funds to extend the approach to other communities in Uganda

Assessing Caring Practices and Developing/Delivering a Nutrition Training Program to Staff of Motherless Babies' Homes in Nigeria

Olive Erinma Uzoamaka Akomas is a Deputy Director in the Department of Public Health/Primary Health Care, Ministry of Health, Umuahia, Nigeria. In addition to her studies with ECDVU, Akomas holds a B.Sc. (Nutrition and Dietetics) from the University of Nigeria, a M.Sc. (Foods and Nutrition) from the University of Manitoba, Canada, and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Rural Extension and Women from the University of Reading, Berkshire, UK. Akomas' main objective is the reduction of infant and under-five morbidity and mortality through proper nutrition and adequate care.

The Nigerian federal government in collaboration with UNICEF is actively endorsing an integrated health, nutrition, and psychosocial stimulation program addressing children's holistic development. While mothers and caregivers at home and in early childhood centers are targeted to receive training, caregivers in orphanages have been missed. Akomas therefore chose, as her final report for ECDVU, to assess the caring practices in two motherless babies' homes (orphanages for infants and toddlers) in Abia State, Nigeria by comparing her evaluation with selected key practices identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF to be of the utmost importance in providing good care for children to ensure survival, reduce illness, and promote healthy growth and development.

> The survival, growth and development of children are greatly affected by the care that they receive in their immediate environment. Children in orphanages (motherless babies' homes) in Nigeria constitute a vulnerable group that needs better care. The aspects of care, which tend to receive attention at the moment, are feeding and disease treatment/prevention. The psychosocial aspect of care is, however, inadequate. (Akomas, 2004, p. 1)

Practices assessed included quality of complementary foods; micronutrient supplementation and dietary diversification to ensure adequate micronutrient intake; feces disposal and general hygiene; immunization schedule; protection against malaria, child stimulation vis-à-vis interaction with caregivers; nutrition care of sick children; care for HIV/AIDS-infected orphan infants and actions against further HIV infection; protection against injury; prevention of child abuse and neglect; fathers' involvement in childcare (if fathers of some institutionalized children are alive); treatments given to the child for infection; ability of caregivers to recognize when sick children need treatment outside the home, and ability of caregivers to follow health workers' advice on treatment and to follow up on advice and referrals. This study is certainly one of the pioneer works, and perhaps the first research, on caring practices in orphanages in Nigeria.

Akomas began from a strengths-based perspective by approaching the assessment with the specific objectives of listing all the caring practices in the participating motherless babies' homes that enhance child development and building capacity of the caregivers so that they would be able to offer adequate care to the orphaned infants. Akomas reports that, since her approach to the institutions began with a letter of introduction by the Executive Secretary of the State Planning Commission (who is also the Chairman of the State Committee on Food and Nutrition), the staff believed that government involvement in the project would lead to some positive outcomes for the institutions.

Two data collection methods were used: (1) questionnaires based on the key practices identified by UNICEF/WHO and (2) observations of behaviours and activities of caregivers and children, including: child stimulation interaction and activities; child to child interactions; food preparation techniques to determine the level of hygiene in food preparation and whether the methods ensure maximum retention of nutrients; sanitary conditions of kitchen and toilet areas; and sleeping areas, especially with regard to malaria prevention. The authorities of the home permitted visits at her convenience. A detailed summary of findings is included in Akomas' final report *Assessment of the Caring Practices in Two Motherless Babies' Homes in Abia State, Nigeria and Developing and Delivery of a Nutrition Training Program to the Staff of these Homes to Improve Nutrition of Children in Their Care*.

Positive practices were noted (commencing complementary feeding after 6 months, proper feces disposal, immunization during National Immunization Days, giving home treatment for infections, and recognizing when sick children need treatment outside the home and taking them for care from appropriate providers) as well as those areas needing

improvement for optimal development (e.g., about half of the caregivers did not know the causes of malaria; children were not monitored for growth; bright colours, toys and other simple forms of mental stimulation were in short supply; and, while caregivers usually wash their hands with soap and water after using the toilet, this is not practiced after diaper change for infants and toddlers). The assessment determined that in the two homes, attention was more focused on the health aspects of care than on the nutritional or psychosocial aspects – in fact, the psychosocial and mental stimulation aspects of care necessary for optimal development were almost absent.

The second component of the ECDVU project was the development of a training manual and delivery of training to the caregivers. The findings of the assessment helped inform the base of the manual. Other points that were considered in its development include: nutritional aspects of preparation of adequate complementary foods and meeting the micronutrient needs of infants; methods of food preparation to ensure that nutrients are retained; other food-related aspects such as hand washing during food preparation; the promotion of mental and social development of infants and toddlers by responding to their needs for care and through talking, playing, and providing a stimulating environment via the responsiveness of the caregiver feeding the child; and regular growth monitoring.

The report concludes with Akomas' recommendations to enhance the caring capacity of caregivers and thus improve the care of young children:

> 1. More support should come from government, especially with regard to the payment of caregivers and provision of water and materials for indoor and outdoor games for the children.

> 2. Government should employ more nutritionists whose job it is to give dietary advice.

> 3. Soya bean flour should be used to enrich children's complementary foods.

> 4. Routine immunization and growth monitoring should be encouraged until the child is six years old. Administration of vitamin A routinely would further help to strengthen the immune system of the children and protect them from constant coughs and fevers.

> 5. Children should be provided with more toys that would stimulate them mentally.

> 6. Hand washing (by caregivers) after the change of diapers should be encouraged.

> 7. Fathers should be educated on the importance of their interactions with their children when they visit, especially to encourage bonding.

8. The caregivers should be trained not only on nutrition but also on health and psychosocial aspects of the development of the children.

9. Since government has shown interest in this study, the work could be carried out in all the Motherless Babies Homes (orphanages) in the state and should be sponsored by government.

10. Finally, government should take over the running of the private orphanages, instead of leaving them to be run by donations from the public. (Akomas, 2004, pp. 71-72)

Adapting and Piloting an Established Measure to Assess the Quality of Orphanage Child Services

As noted in the policy section of this special edition, Margaret Akinware is well-recognized in African ECD, having worked for many years with UNICEF in her home country of Nigeria. Akinware chose as the focus for her ECDVU thesis research the assessment of quality of care for OVC. Her topic directly relates to the type of decisions she makes on a regular basis in her current role as a Project Officer in the Education Section in collaboration with the Child Protection Section, UNICEF Zambia, where she is frequently asked to assess the quality of care provided by orphanages seeking UNICEF assistance. To be able to do this professionally, she determined that UNICEF Zambia needed to know what constitutes quality basic care, have a usable and acceptable assessment tool, and know the most appropriate way to measure elements of quality care in a home setting in ways appropriate to the cultural context of Zambia. The research was undertaken within the context of an IECD initiative which aims to provide a good start to life within a nurturing family and community environment in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which the Government of the Republic of Zambia and UNICEF are both signatories.

While the vast majority of orphans in Zambia are still being absorbed by the extended family network, the ever-increasing number of AIDS-affected children in Zambia has resulted in a growing demand for alternative care options. Akinware describes the current struggle in Zambia, as in other Sub-Saharan countries, to come to terms with the seemingly inevitable transition to ever larger numbers of young children requiring institutionalized care as the extended family system becomes taxed beyond its coping capacity.

The assumption among social scientists and development workers was that orphans who were taken care of by members of the extended family network received better care and affection than their counterparts in orphanages or in such residential facilities. This assumption, according to

Orphans and Vulnerable Children—A Situation Analysis (USAID, UNICEF, & SIDA, 1999), was based on the cohesiveness of the extended family and the fact that families and communities were in the front line coping with the problems of orphans in Zambia. McKerrow (1996, in USAID et al., 1999, p. 94) revealed that rural households were better able to feed their members, including orphans, while a higher proportion of urban orphans were able to attend school. On the other hand, scholars like Kelly (2002) posited that orphans in Zambia who were living with grandparents, especially elderly grandmothers, were particularly vulnerable because of the inability of elderly grandparents to provide for the material, social, and psychological needs of another generation of children (p. 2). Furthermore, because of the HIV/AIDS situation, there were more orphans than grandparents; therefore, even if orphanages were 'second best,' they were an inevitable reality in the current context (Akinware, 2004, p. 3).

To better understand the nature and quality of care provided by orphanages and the attendant child development implications, Akinware adapted and conducted a pilot study of an established qualitative assessment instrument, the Inclusive Quality Assessment (IQA) tool, in a selected orphanage in Zambia. The purpose of her study was twofold: (1) to contribute to the scientific knowledge about the quality of care provided to children in a Zambian orphanage and (2) to pilot an adaptation of the IQA tool to determine its suitability for Zambia. Originating as the Inside Quality Assurance tool of the University of North London Centre for Environmental and Social Studies in Aging and subsequently adapted for use in British Columbia, Canada (1998), IQA involves the participation of orphans and caregivers in identifying their needs and workable strategies to fulfill those needs, as well as the involvement of frontline managers in planning and improving the quality and assurance of care to orphans in the institution:

> As stated by Anglin and Dolan (1988), 'Inclusive Quality Assurance is a client-centred quality assurance review process that helps people in service settings focus on what they hold to be important and what kind of environment they want to create' (p. 1). It is a specific technique for undertaking a client-centred review of the quality of life experienced by clients receiving services within a residential program. . . . IQA is concerned with everyday events by looking through the eyes of participants and those who work within the setting. It emphasizes the residents of the program and includes their perspectives, experiences and interest as a key component of the process (Akinware, 2004, pp. 3-5). . . . With the IQA, the assessment of quality relates directly to children's needs as voiced by the children—which is in contrast to other approaches for quality assessment that do not respect children's rights as strongly by putting their needs in the center. (Akinware, 2004, p. 12)

The researcher selected an orphanage located in the center of Lusaka City, Zambia, whose Founder was known to be amenable to suggestions that add value to the quality of life of residents. Three levels of orphanage care were examined: senior management, comprising the Founder and one selected care provider; all the children in the selected orphanage; and a group created during the process, called the Quality Assessment Group, consisting of 3 representatives of the children in the orphanage (two- 21 year old orphans and one caregiver), outside interest represented by a member of the ECCD NGO, the Founder of the orphanage who was deeply involved with the care of the children in this particular orphanage, a post-graduate student in Psychology (Child Assessment) from the University of Zambia, and the researcher.

The research study combined qualitative and quantitative designs, including:

1. IQA Observational Guidelines. How do children in this care model interact with caregivers and services? In other words, what is going on in this caregiving arrangement? The Quality Assessment Group developed a set of observational procedures to obtain objective information on daily interactions in the orphanage based on issues relating to children's best interests (Anglin, 2002). A general observation sheet was developed and utilized during researcher interaction in the orphanage.

2. Interview. What type of care and services are provided in the orphanage? The Quality Assessment Group developed an interview guide that was used for structured interviewing of the children in the orphanage and to conduct the focus group discussion. The interview guide included questions based on safety, respect, hygiene, freedom of choice, interpersonal relationships among the children, equality of opportunity, and food. Akinware notes that interviews were conducted at the orphanage with no adult caregivers present; the children were not rushed, and the interviewers built a rapport with them to encourage free expression.

3. Questionnaires. What type of care and services are provided in the orphanages? What is the impact of this arrangement on children's experience of care? An open-ended questionnaire was administered to a sample group of caregivers on issues relating to physical care, safety and health care, decision making in the orphanage, freedom of expression and participation, linkages with life outside the orphanage, promotion of family life, relationship between the staff and the children and among the children themselves. The caregivers were assisted to complete the questionnaires due to low literacy level. A second questionnaire was administered to the founder of the orphanage by the Quality Assessment Group.

The combination of observations, interview guides, and questionnaires helped the researcher to ascertain the consistency of the tool.

The orphanage founder was well-informed about IQA; the researcher notes that she was careful not to raise unfulfilled and unrealistic expectations in seeking permission and explaining the goals and objectives of the review. Response from participants indicates that the IQA tool allowed for both flexibility and modification. Participants understood the concept of IQA and had no difficulty developing questions based on the values outlined in the IQA process (Anglin & Dolan, 1988, p. 4).

IQA provided the opportunity for self-assessment by the frontline managers, and the Founder was delighted with the appraisal of her efforts as seen through the eyes of outsiders. Participants had the opportunity to take part in the refinement of the interview schedules and observational indicators and in piloting the instruments. The IQA drew heavily on the experience of the frontline officers, the children themselves, and ECD practitioners as well as the researcher: residents participated in an action research in the true sense of the word, as they were involved in analyzing and evaluating their experiences and operations. Participants concluded that the IQA is an innovative, experiential, and rewarding—albeit time-consuming—assessment tool, relevant for investigating the quality of care within the context of the study.

The qualitative research approach yielded much useful information about the orphanage. It was both inclusive and innovative in that hearing the voices of children as beneficiaries and users of services was a critical concern. Children had the opportunity to identify issues of importance to their situation. The Quality Assessment Group found the children to be friendly and talkative; the children enjoyed being asked questions, and reported feeling "very important" as a lot of attention was focused on them. The Founder and the caregivers felt satisfied that the IQA tool brought to the fore their contribution to childcare, which could be replicated by other orphanages.

IQA provided the opportunity for the orphanage Founder, caregivers, and children in care to develop a Plan of Action that was doable and result-based to improve and increase services rendered in the best interest of the children and from their perspectives. The plan looked at what should be done for the preschool-aged children as part of a comprehensive development and learning preparedness for school, including training of caregivers who would manage the ECCD facility with a multisectoral approach, with emphasis on cognitive, psychosocial, and physical development as well as on health and nutrition. The voices of children were captured and taken into consideration in deciding the way forward; for example, the plan includes provision of recreational facilities to satisfy a variety of the physical, emotional, and psychosocial developmental needs of the children, who had generated a long list of desired play materials and

games in the course of the study. Akinware notes that the "big surprise" for the orphanage Founder that emerged from her work was the demand on the part of the children for a more readily accessible surrogate father.

Akinware concludes that:

> This was a pioneering study as the IQA was being introduced for the first time in a non-Western culture, typically African . . . the IQA tool is quite interesting and relevant to the culture in Zambia; it is not regarded as meddling . . . this research has highlighted the dire need for the government to evaluate on a regular basis the quality of care being provided to its young children. It is envisaged that this will become the norm rather than the exception in the future. The IQA has proved to be a culturally appropriate, innovative and inclusive tool that may be used to ensure quality care for orphans in Zambia. (Akinware, 2004 p. 111-117)

Development of an Alternative Orphan and Vulnerable Care Model in Ghana

Susan Sabaa has been directly involved with child development issues in Ghana since 1996. In her current position as National Coordinator of the Ghanaian NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child, Sabaa promotes a rights-based approach to child development, trains and educates stakeholders in basic child rights, advocates for effective implementation of child rights via national policies and increased public awareness of pertinent issues affecting children at national and local levels, provides technical assistance for community-level ECD programming and especially for OVC care, and documents early childhood development programs in Ghana.

Sabaa's project first profiles the care of young OVC in three Ghanaian orphanages according to the yardstick of holistic and integrated ECD as defined by Evans, Myers, and Ilfeld (2000), whereby child development involves both a gradual unfolding of biologically determined characteristics and traits that arise as the child learns from experiences; health, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical development, socialization, and attainment of culture all interact and are interrelated in a young child's life.

Key recommendations arising from this comparative study include a strong call to empower caregivers through training in appropriate concepts and practices to meet the cognitive and psychosocial needs of young OVC and to strengthen the protection and care of young OVC within their extended families, thereby making institutional care a last resort. The need to ensure that young OVC have the opportunity to bond with consistent caregivers is particularly highlighted.

Sabaa strongly advocates for ECD/OVC-focused provisions that address the special needs of young OVC in legal and policy frameworks,

including ongoing monitoring and evaluation of OVC care programs, and for a close linkage of program content and process principles. She encourages program planners to pay attention to relevant contextual, social, and technical aspects so that programs and services meet the contextual developmental needs of young OVC. Noting that current ECD program planning and packaging in Ghana are mostly being carried out by churches and community-based organizations, central and decentralized government departments and agencies, benevolent individuals and development partners, usually in collaboration with beneficiaries who may not necessarily know much about ECD, Sabaa emphasizes the need to provide a framework of principles based on early childhood developmental needs to guide the content of such packages, as well as programming principles to direct any programming process for OVC care at any level, whether family, community or national.

Second, Sabaa presents feedback from a focus group discussion she facilitated with key national stakeholders responsible for meeting the needs of young OVC. Key points that arose in this timely discussion include stakeholders' concerns regarding low awareness of ECD/OVC issues in-country, the need for serious networking and integration of efforts, the need to promote intersectoral reviews on policy on OVC care to reflect the special needs of ECD/OVC, and strong concerns about lack of monitoring, coordination, and evaluation of programs. Discussants expressed a particular desire for increased public awareness and education regarding the intricacies of infant brain development.

Third, Sabaa proposes an alternative care model for young OVC, emphasizing that programs responding to ECD/OVC should empower families and communities and minimize institutionalization as much as possible. This alternative care model is based on the principles of honoring the fundamental rights of children, promoting training and education in quality integrated early childhood development practices, encouraging community involvement in holistic ECD programming, strengthening economic coping capacities of extended families and communities, and promoting smooth integration of OVC into society. Within these parameters, communities are encouraged to establish and maintain flexible care approaches that can be regularly adapted to meet current needs: program interventions should support children's psychosocial well-being, respect cultural context, take political and social realities and children's rights into consideration, and mobilize a community care network around children.

Sabaa's concluding recommendations focus on establishing appropriate policies and laws regarding the provision of quality OVC care nationwide, including maintaining effective implementation and service

monitoring mechanisms, building effective data for OVC identification, and promoting effective networking and partnering. She emphasizes that the most cost-effective, child-friendly response to ECD/OVC care in Ghana is the home- or community-based one, with a community, family, or church-based development and support partner. Households must be supported to deliver care services for young OVC in their care.

A key challenge identified by Sabaa is the effective monitoring of home- and/or family-based care centers. It is difficult to know what takes place on a daily basis in individual homes and families. This situation calls for effective interactive supervision by the programmer or service provider in ways that bring them into close contact with the child without unduly interfering or escalating tensions in the daily life of the family. The direct duty bearer within the family must also be given adequate economic and psychological support.

Sabaa highlights the need for an effective legal framework in Ghana to strengthen the environment for OVC care and extend monitoring responsibility to include the larger community of stakeholders. She notes that vigorous advocacy and awareness programs, as well as strong provisions for legal protection of the right of young OVC to inheritance, are urgently needed.

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Conclusion:
Ensuring a Healthy, Capable Cohort
of Adults 15 years into the Future

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Support systems that aim at helping the young child to thrive must of necessity address the many facets of the child's development as well as the contexts in which they live (Evans et al., 2000). Is it possible, then, to provide adequate quality care for the numbers of young children being orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa at an almost incomprehensible rate? This unprecedented challenge must be met with as many immediate and diverse strategies as can be mobilized now; these children cannot wait for a "grand plan" to be put into motion at some future time.

Stephen Lewis (2004), UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, reports that the number of medical treatment sites for the prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) is abysmally low; as a result, only a miniscule fraction of HIV-positive pregnant women receive the drug nevirapine. Lewis (2004) supports a concerted focus on women as the priority entry point for treatment; this will require an urgent roll-out of PMTCT facilities to reduce the number of HIV-positive infants and then

an equally urgent roll-out to ensure that women actually get full course antiretroviral treatment (para. 7). With appropriate treatment, the lives of millions of HIV-infected parents could be prolonged, allowing many of them to care for their children at least during the early childhood years. International funders must honour their financial commitments and provide the treatment funds they have pledged. The governments of Sub-Saharan countries must commit to directing treatment funds first to the provision of full course, low-cost anti-retroviral treatment with fixed-dose combination, generic anti-retroviral drugs, pre-approved for first-line use by the World Health Organization, coordinated by the national public health systems of Sub-Saharan countries (Lewis, 2004, para. 5). Profiteering from the human misery generated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic – for example, through forcing the sale in Africa of brand-name anti-retroviral drugs that cost three to four times as much as the WHO-approved generic drugs[3]—must be curbed.

The work of Nyesigomwe, Akomas, Akinware, and Sabaa emphasizes the critical urgency of providing quality holistic care for young OVC in Sub-Saharan Africa. Each of the four ECDVU researchers has undertaken a project that highlights specific aspects of the multifaceted challenges inherent in providing quality care for young OVC impacted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Nyesigomwe's work with grandmothers caring for young OVC provides a hopeful glimpse into how much can be accomplished with meager material resources when community interest, involvement, and training is mobilized to assist aged extended family caregivers to support themselves and each other as well as the young children in their charge. Akomas' assessment of the care provided in motherless babies' homes in Nigeria and the resultant staff training program to promote positive nutritional and psychosocial care of orphaned infants speaks to the need for quality training and monitoring of all caregivers, whether in extended family or institutionalized care settings. Akinware, while piloting a quality assessment tool that emphasizes both child participation and institutional self-reflection in the creation of a proactive action plan to improve overall quality of care, concludes that the IQA could indeed be applied as an appropriate tool to monitor the quality of OVC care throughout Zambia. Finally, Sabaa proposes a flexible alternative care model emphasizing child rights and the need for national policies to implement training and ongoing monitoring of ECD/OVC care and advocates for pragmatic support for the overburdened extended family system of care for young OVC, so that institutionalization becomes the "last resort" choice.

These modest projects underscore both the unique growth potentials of the early childhood years and the pressing need for community-based,

national and international stakeholders to reach beyond the undeniably difficult challenges of providing survival-level support for these children. Good early childhood care is associated with higher levels of physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being and increased lifetime learning and earning; timely provision of integrated quality ECD training and care is urgently needed if today's young OVC are to mature into productive and contributing members of Sub-Saharan African society in their adult years. Ignoring their needs will result in a tragedy of truly global proportions—and the opportunity to respond in time is fast slipping away. Every effort must be made now to increase awareness of the particular vulnerabilities of young OVC, and to mobilize national and global responses commensurate with their needs.

Governments of Sub-Saharan nations must move swiftly to adopt and implement national policies that provide culturally appropriate ECD training and resources for both over-burdened extended family and institution-based caregivers of young OVC. Mechanisms to monitor the delivery of quality ECD care must be put into place and maintained. Issues of food security, housing, health and nutrition, education, house-hold income, family mentorship, and training in meeting emotional needs of both children and caregivers must be adequately addressed. International monetary aid must be increased, efforts of donor organiza-tions must be coordinated, and a global resolution that ends the crippling national debt payments by Sub-Saharan nations must be put into effect. The adult world must not fail these millions of vulnerable children in their time of greatest need.

Notes

[1] It is still the case that approximately half of the orphans in Africa were orphaned by causes other than AIDS, although AIDS will soon surpass all other causes combined.

[2] Marasmus is one of three forms of serious protein-energy malnutrition (PEM); the other two are kwashiorkor (KW) and marasmic KW. These forms of serious PEM represent a group of pathologic conditions associated with a nutritional and energy deficit occurring mainly in young children at the time of weaning (Gehri, 2004). PEM is frequently associated with infections, mainly of the gastrointestinal tract. WHO estimates that 49% of the 10.4 million deaths occurring in children younger than 5 years in developing countries are associated with PEM (Gehri, 2004).

[3] See *The Price of Life: Hazel Tau and Others vs. GlaxoSmithKline and Boehringer Ingelheim: A Report on the Excessive Pricing Complaint to South Africa's Competition Commission* (2003). Complainants, including people livingly openly with HIV/AIDS, health care workers treating people with HIV/AIDS, and others,

allege that GlaxoSmithKline and Boehringer Ingelheim are acting in violation of competition law by charging excessive prices for their anti-retrovirals to the detriment of consumers.

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Capacity Building across Cultures and Contexts:
Principles and Practices

Judith L. Evans
University of Victoria
Asha Mohammed Ahmed
Zanzibar Madrasa Resource Center, Tanzania
Charlotte Day
University of Malawi
Stella Etse
Association for the Development of Education in Africa, Ghana
Rosemary Hua
Ministry of Education, Makurdi Benue State, Nigeria
Ben Missani
Basic Needs, Tanzania
Chaliza Matola
Association of Preschool Playgroups in Malawi
Lydia Nyesigomwe
Action for Children, Uganda

Abstract: This article provides an opportunity to look at issues related to capacity building—how the concept has evolved and how it is currently being applied—and a review of the components of effective capacity building in working with individuals and organizations. This is followed by a description of capacity-building projects undertaken by ECDVU students that illustrate the application of these principles at all levels of society—from working with parents as they support their children's develop-

Address all correspondence to: Judith L. Evans, ECDVU, School of Child & Youth Care, University of Victoria, Box 1700, STN CSC, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 2Y2. E-mail: jevans@shaw.ca

ment, to providing training and support to caregivers, to building the capacity of those responsible for creating and evaluating programs, to developing community capacity to sustain programs, to raising the awareness of civil society at large to issues related to early childhood development. In spite of the variety of audiences for whom capacity-building activities were created, the set of projects reviewed in this article have several commonalities, a key one being the fact that the capacity-building activities created have been developed within the context of the cultures where the projects were operating. Another notable quality is that the capacity-building activities were developed in consultation with those who were seeking new knowledge and skills.

> Let us understand capacity building as a journey, or a series of journeys. There is a path, and a facilitator . . . . There is an inner as well as outer journey. Therefore a capacity building journey must be understood in both senses. One is of the organic body of the organization, the other of the minds of the people working there. (Sakil Malik, 2003)

As African countries increase their efforts to address poverty and social inequities, the demand within Africa (and from external donor agencies) is for the development of local capacity. From the community perspective there is recognition of the need for support in the development of civil society (Fowler, 1997, 2000). From the donors' perspective there is a realization of limits in the absorptive capacity of government and country-based organizations to handle the breadth of work that could be funded (Cissé, Sokona, & Thomas, n.d.; Eade, 1996; Gupta, 2004). As Malik (2003) notes, the link between needs and supply is weak, and there is a need for capacity building support to accomplish change.

These issues also arise in relation to the field of ECD. As awareness has increased of the crucial importance of ECD, this has led to greater investment in programs for young children and their families, resulting in an increased demand for people who can implement effective early childhood programs. However, to date, many capacity-building programs in relation to ECD: (1) have seldom provided a holistic perspective on children's development; (2) often have not provided people with the knowledge and skills required to work in a specific context; (3) have tended to be highly Western-oriented; (4) have only sporadically been built on local strengths and wisdom; and (5) have frequently been conducted by institutions and organizations that are isolated from others attempting to undertake similar activities (Evans & Ilfeld, 2002).

What is capacity building? One definition states that the purpose of capacity building is "to strengthen or fortify the operation of systems and

the skills of individuals" (Evans, Myers, & Ilfeld, 2000, p. 392). Malik (2003) states: "Capacity building is much more than training and includes the following: human resource development, the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively" (para. 1). While technically these definitions are accurate, they do little to emphasise the importance of process in the development of human capacity. A more dynamic interpretation of capacity building is provided by Ahmed (2004, quoting Ball, 2000, p. 3), who points out that "capacity-building initiatives must be anchored deeply in the community's context, existing strengths, potential for cultural reconstruction, and ability to push forward their own agenda towards self-identified goals" (Ahmed, p. 46).

If a capacity-building effort is indeed anchored in context, then it does not just entail offering a training course or set of courses. It is best understood as a process that begins with a thorough understanding of the participants' reality and identification of the knowledge and skills they already possess, as well as the gaps in their understanding. From there, activities can be created that provide participants with new skills, knowledge, and understandings that become embedded in their daily life and enhance the capacity of the organizations within which they operate.

Experience and research related to the process of capacity building have led to the identification of the elements of effective capacity-building activities, whether the focus is on individuals or on organizations (Fowler, 1997, 2000; Gupta, 2004; Malik, 2003; Matheson, 2000; Reinhold, 1993; Torkington, 1996). These will be discussed in the section that follows.

Effective Capacity Building

In a sentence, effective capacity building entails contextualizing processes and content. The dimensions of this include building relationships; deepening knowledge and understanding through linking theory and practice; identifying and building on what would motivate people to change; creating an enabling environment; ensuring time for reflection; and creating systems for monitoring and evaluation. It is also important to realize that effective capacity building requires time and a long-term commitment to the process (Cissé, Sokona, & Thomas, n.d.; Fowler, 2003; Malik, 2003).

Building Relationships

Development, in every context and at all levels, revolves around relationships between people. Capacity building requires creating trust

and having a mutuality of purpose that allows for co-creation of vision, objectives, and activities.

In a capacity-building context, one of the keys to the creation of good relationships is clarity and honesty in establishing a shared understanding of the purpose of capacity building. This requires dialogue. As Fowler (2000) notes, "early, balanced negotiation between relevant stakeholders is . . . vital" (para. 2). If the dialogue or negotiation results in mutual trust and respect, one of the outcomes is a shift in focus from what the facilitator has to pass on to an appreciation for what everyone has to offer.

Identifying and Building on What Motivates People

Identifying and building on what motivates people involves tapping into what drives people to do what they do. It means focusing on understanding attitudes and beliefs and building on people's present level of development.

Fowler (2000) refers to this dimension as identifying "the 'trigger' for change" (para. 4). He notes that it is important to identify whether the trigger is internal or external and goes on to state that when the trigger is external, "far more attention must be paid to issues of ownership, commitment and empowerment" (para. 4). Ownership, commitment, and empowerment happen most easily when capacity-building activities are built on people's internal motivation, two elements of which are 1) what people know and 2) what they bring to the experience from their culture.

1. Building on current knowledge and understanding. People are unlikely to learn if they are told that what they currently do is not adequate. For example, almost all parents want to do the best they can for their child (the motivation), and if there is acknowledgement that what parents are doing now is supporting the child's development in many ways (i.e., there are many good things happening already), parents are likely to be open to learning about other things they can also do to support the child's well-being. In this scenario, an effective approach to working with parent groups would be to allow parents to pool their own knowledge and experience about how children behave and ways in which they have responded to that behaviour, with the facilitator bringing in additional or alternative responses to the situations. By sharing knowledge and participating actively in sessions, parents will learn from each other, gain confidence in their own knowledge and abilities, and expand their repertoire of parenting behaviours.

It is important not only to identify local knowledge, but also to work with the holders of that knowledge and to build on it when possible. As noted by Cissé, Sokona and Thomas (n.d.), "The primary task for each

country is the identification of local expertise. There is no need to replace existing expertise or to start from scratch" (para. 11).

2. Building on local culture and tradition. What people know is grounded in their culture. With an understanding of culture, it is possible to identify attitudes and beliefs that determine the behaviours that people exhibit. Building on local culture can help get a project started but, more importantly, it helps ensure that the project continues and is owned by those participating in it (Cohen, 1994; Eade, 1996; Matheson, 2000; Salole, 1991).

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

Deepening knowledge and understanding includes increasing knowledge on a given topic and reflecting on and incorporating that knowledge into the way one works; it represents an integration of theory and practice.

Training approaches and methods need to help individuals to bridge the gap between practice and theory. As noted by Malik (2003), bridging the gap happens only when training allows for full participation in the learning process of both the facilitator and the participants. Torkington and Landers (1994) expand on this idea: "Working together, trainer and trainee can construct situations which give the trainee first hand experiences during the training itself. These experiences can illuminate and bring greater understanding of theoretical concepts" (p. 8).

Co-constructing of experiences involves questioning, thinking, talking, debating, and taking action, all of which lead to greater understanding. As understanding deepens, people become more self-confident in expressing their knowledge and in putting it into practice. In essence, people become empowered to act.

Creating an Enabling Environment

Supports (formal and non-formal) need to be created to ensure that the processes set in motion to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals are sustained over time.

Creating an enabling environment means looking beyond the parameters of a given program and ensuring that the intervention has supports within the wider community. In an article focused on the need for social mobilization and advocacy, Bautista (2003) notes: "We can no longer afford the luxury of seeing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) as primarily 'delivery of services,' because experience has shown us that services that are delivered without supports and learning built into the environment around the child and/or family will quickly diminish in effect when the services are withdrawn" (p. 13). Therefore, capacity-building programs need to be developed within a broad conceptual

framework that is part of a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy; they should not be developed in isolation of other services. Fowler (2000), in stating the preconditions for effective capacity building, cautions those involved "to check how the anticipated level of intervention 'nests' within others. . . . Taking a system view of CB [capacity building] is one way of understanding and mapping linkages to important features surrounding the intervention" (para. 3).

Ensuring Time for Reflection

Having time for reflection helps deepen understanding of what is being accomplished. One of the striking outcomes of a study to determine the elements of effective early childhood programs was that the projects built time for reflection into their ongoing work (E. Ilfeld, 2003, personal communication). While in some instances this was a conscious part of the formative evaluation process undertaken by the organization, in other instances a space to reflect on what was happening within the project was informal and, not infrequently, included those being served by the project. This time for reflection was frequently characterized as a safe place within which personal (as well as program) issues could be explored, due to the fact that an atmosphere of trust and mutual support had been created.

Creating Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation

Too often there is little thought given to evaluation until the project is well underway. And, while setting aside time for reflection is an important part of a monitoring and evaluation system, additional activities need to be developed that allow a range of stakeholders – from those funding the program to those being served – to identify the impact of their work and to make recommendations in terms of what might happen next (Evans et al., 2000).

The ECDVU Capacity Building Projects

The projects that provide the core set of examples of capacity building for this article represent a continuum in terms of their focus—from working with parents to engaging with civil society in general. A brief description of each of the projects follows:

Working with Parents and Grandparents in Support of Children's Development

Three projects focused on developing support for parenting and caregiving. In one of them, Chalizamudzi Matola undertook a study to understand the dynamics within women-headed households in rural

Malawi to determine the kind of capacity building these women required. Matola interviewed the women and observed their interaction with their children. In addition, however, she assessed the context within which they live to understand the supports (or lack thereof) for these women in their communities. Based on information gathered, capacity-building activities were created. While the basic content focused on mother-child interaction to improve the kind of care that the children are currently receiving, the training also provided women with skills so that they could become economically independent.

The second project on parenting was undertaken by Rosemary Hua, who examined the role that fathers play in early childhood care and development among the Tiv in Nigeria. Focus group discussions indicated that the fathers' current attitudes, beliefs, and practices in relation to childcare are deeply rooted in their cultural settings. Also evident were the ways in which fathers' roles have intergenerational family support, with grandparents playing a major role in childrearing. The care of children was and still is a communal role. Of particular interest to Hua was the fact that if fathers' roles are to change, there needs to be acceptance of this change within the wider culture.

In the third project, developed by Lydia Nyesigomwe in Uganda, the focus was on strengthening the capacity of grandparents to care for grandchildren affected by HIV/AIDS. The importance of grandparents, especially grandmothers, in looking after children in this era of HIV/AIDS cannot be overestimated. The main purpose of the project was to strengthen the capacity of the already existing community support system to ensure that all children under the care of ageing grandparents receive quality care, as defined by a holistic approach to development. In addition the project was designed to address the overall welfare of the families taking care of the children. (A more detailed description of the project is provided in the article by Jackson et al. in this issue.)

Building the Capacity of Those Responsible for Creating and Evaluating Programs

As part of an evaluation of a Plan International-assisted ECD program in Ghana, Stella Etse interviewed parents, ECD providers, and managers of ECD centers in relation to their understanding of children's development and what they thought was required to best support that development. The study employed quantitative and qualitative approaches in the design, data collection, data management, and analysis and reporting. The major findings of the study indicated that parents are knowledgeable about what children need to develop well and what is involved in designing quality ECD programs. Equally important was the fact that parents' knowledge and understanding did not differ signifi-

cantly from that of other respondents. Thus there is good reason to believe that in this setting there is congruence among stakeholders in understanding children's development and determining the kinds of supports that need to be provided.

Developing Community Capacity to Sustain Programs

Two projects were included in this category, one of which illustrates an appropriate way to enter and begin working with a community to ensure that what is developed is embedded in that community, while the other focuses on ways to build supports within the community that will sustain a well-established ECD program.

Charlotte Day's project involved the creation of a rural, community-driven ECD program in Malawi where the emphasis was on engaging the whole community in an exploratory, experiential learning process. At the time that the project was begun, there was no system of care and stimulation for young children in the community. Project activities that were used to ensure that the project was built on culturally and developmentally appropriate practices included interviews, participatory learning and action (PLA) processes, modelling, observation coupled with reflective times, and teacher training sessions. Over time an ECD program was created, a kit of experiential teaching and learning aids was compiled, and a shelter for the ECD activities (as well as other community activities) was built.

The second project, undertaken by Asha Ahmed, is illustrative of capacity building in relation to a well-established ECD program—the Madrasa Preschool Program (MPP) in Zanzibar. The objective was to ensure the sustainability of the program through the development of local Community Resource Teams (CRTs) that have the responsibility for ensuring that the existing technical expertise in communities is sustained. The MPP was developed over a ten-year period with the aim of supporting poor communities to establish, manage, and own quality preschools. However, during that period no support system had been put in place to maintain the quality of the preschools over the long term. Ahmed's project involved creating a set of training and support activities with the CRTs to take on a sustaining support role.

Raising the Awareness of Civil Society at Large
to Issues Related to Early Childhood Development.

Ben Missani implemented a project emphasizing leadership skills training for administrators and parent support training for caregivers. Due to a high incidence of abuse of children's and young people's rights

in the Mtwara region of Tanzania, this project focused on raising awareness within the community of the importance and value of children's participation. The project involved working with a wide range of stake-holders—teachers, school inspectors, communities and village leaders. The process included consultation meetings and children's workshops, using techniques such as focus groups, interviews, and observations. These methods were used to explore issues related to children's needs and rights and the potential for children's greater involvement in governance and curriculum matters and their potential to bring about change in their communities.

Applying the Principles

Within the limits of this article it is not possible to describe the many ways in which the projects illustrate the principles outlined above. For that reason, only brief examples of the principles are provided in this section.

Building Relationships

As noted, capacity building requires creating trust and having a mutuality of purpose that allows for co-creation of activities. This respect for what each person brings to a capacity-building activity was evident in many of the projects where there was a shift away from a top-down approach to activities that resulted in the building of trust and a mutuality of responsibility. Day (2004) credits "an overall relational mode of leader-ship which provided a departure from a 'top-down' prevalent type of hierarchy" (p. 58) as one of the keys to the success of the project in Malawi.

Building trust takes time. When work begins with a group of people, the degree of openness is quite limited, with people providing answers to questions based on what they think the questioner wants to hear. As a trust relationship is established through people really listening and taking on ideas from all involved, participants feel freer to express their ideas. This change in openness was noted by Nyesigomwe (2004) during the evaluation of her project:

> Unlike during the needs assessment, grandparents were willing to answer the questions they were asked during the evaluation period. They were friendly and welcoming, and they willingly gave out all the informa-tion needed. This indicated … that they had developed a positive attitude towards themselves and others around them. (p. 70)

A key in developing trust was the fact that early on in the project the grandmothers were included in community meetings where issues relating to their situation were discussed. The grandmothers felt impor-

tant because they were able to participate in the initial stages of the program and their ideas were incorporated from the beginning. One person attending the meeting comments: "I feel so valued and recognized by your organization. I know a lot about our community but I did not know I would be consulted. Now that you have involved me, I will give you full support so that together we can help the elderly" (p. 59).

Identifying and Building on What Motivates People

As noted, one of the keys to effective capacity building is assessing current knowledge and behaviour. All the projects included extensive data-gathering processes using quantitative and qualitative methods and triangulating to ensure understanding. Methods included:

1. Observation and Interview. Etse (2004), for whom the project and setting were new, began by making an informal visit to the community to gain an understanding of the general community layout, accessibility to services and the way in which the population was distributed. In addition, the visit "provided an opportunity to find out the 'entry point' or contact persons for the communities, the expected procedures for entry into the communities and when parents were likely to be available for interviews" (p. 34). Matola (2004) also used both observations and interviews, which proved to be very useful; the observations helped to verify the information that was provided during the interviews.

2. Focus Group. A focus group brings together different sets of people to talk about an issue or idea. A group setting allows for cross-fertilization of ideas as a topic is discussed, with the result being a richer understanding of people's thinking about an idea than would be gained by individual one-on-one interviews.

Focus groups were one of the basic activities employed by Hua (2004) in Nigeria to gain an understanding of fathers' roles in relation to childcare. Hua developed an open-ended questionnaire that was used as a guide to conduct the discussions. Items in the questionnaire included general perceptions of children, role and responsibilities of fathers in the family, attitudes towards childcare, and factors that are likely to encourage or discourage fathers from participating in childcare. The focus group discussion was documented and recorded through note-taking and by use of a video camera.

3. Participatory Learning for Action (PLA). Participatory Learning for Action (PLA) builds on the idea of a focus group but takes it further. In addition to activities that help define people's reality, within PLA the community determines actions that can be taken and engages in taking the actions. As in the creation of focus groups, PLA groups can be created for specific purposes.

Day (2004), in Malawi, conducted PLA activities with traditional leaders, parents, and children. The meetings were called by the local Chief; this helped ensure wide participation. The suggestion of a village ECD program generated a meeting of parents, children, and traditional leaders from other villages. The meeting involved an interactive PLA process that provoked the interest and future involvement of the community. The process took the group to a "point of action": an informal preschool was proposed. When asked what they wanted for their children, a parent commented, "We want something happening to help our children stay in school" (p. 46). Subsequent activities were developed in relation to the goal of creating and supporting a preschool.

In his exploration of attitudes and beliefs about children's participation, Missani (2004) also used PLA to assess the current level of children's involvement in different activities at family, school and village levels. In group discussions, children were encouraged to speak about their concerns to their parents and leaders. Missani noted:

> Documentation of stories and experiences was carefully done to enable the participants … to have complete records and reference materials regarding all matters discussed. Minutes for implementation were jointly approved, providing a plan to ensure that in future children and youth are fully involved in the process of bringing development to their villages (p. 6).

4. Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Appreciate Inquiry involves identifying the positive things that are taking place. In contrast to a needs assessment, a capacity revealing assessment takes place and appreciation is shown for what is working. This technique was used in Malawi in a meeting with villagers. As Day (2004) notes: "The exercise 'rippled' to an inclusionary time when the capacities of the village became apparent. . . . From this beginning by the village grew a project for the village, sustained with resources from the village" (p. 46).

5. Self-evaluation. Interestingly enough, as participants came to understand that their ideas were valued and had worth, they themselves began to define the kinds of additional knowledge and skills they wished to acquire. This happened in the Zanzibar setting where CRTs, based on their understanding of their roles, reflected on these roles and prioritized their needs and the issues and topics they wanted to know more about. Staff then identified how these could be introduced through theory and practice (Ahmed, 2004). In the Malawi rural childcare setting the caregivers themselves requested training; they wanted to learn more about child development and ways of supporting children though play. Day (2004) notes: "The teachers' desire for training emerged from the reflective times, as requested by them" (p. 36).

6. Taking it back. A key in many of the projects was not just the gathering of data, but taking the data back to those from whom the data were gathered to see if the conclusions drawn by the facilitator were accurate. This occurred in the Uganda project where, once the data were collected and analyzed, the organization called the grandparents together to share the findings with them. Participants, together with facilitators, grouped the challenges into different categories: those to be discussed and solved by grandparents, those to be discussed by Action Groups, and those to be addressed by the community (Nyesigomwe, 2004). Because the women had been involved in analyzing the data, they could see what needed to be done. Ownership in terms of defining the needs created ownership in the activities undertaken to meet those needs.

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

The data-gathering process, in its various forms, eventually led to a definition of the content and process to be used in support of participants. Since the focus of the projects was ECD, it is not surprising that the great majority of the content included in the various capacity-building activities emphasized issues related to child growth and development. However, many of the projects went beyond promoting theory and practice related to child development.

In Zanzibar (Ahmed, 2004), where the CRTs were already well-grounded in child development information, they required skills and knowledge related to management and community organizing. Thus their training content included basic knowledge of: (1) classroom practice; (2) financial management including keeping financial records; (3) general management and administration of the preschool; (4) monitoring and evaluation skills; and (5) the development of monitoring/evaluation tools. Once trained, the CRTs took responsibility for training others, training as they were trained, using methods that integrated theory and practice.

Creating an Enabling Environment

Several of the projects recognized the need to pay attention to the context within which their interventions were being created. For example, Hua (2004) became convinced that it was necessary to create a male-friendly environment to facilitate the creation of a culture of men's involvement in childrearing. She recognized that it would not be sufficient to simply provide parenting training for fathers; the wider society had to be supportive of fathers' new roles.

Matola, in her work with women-headed households in rural Malawi, quickly identified the lack of supports for these women. She concluded that it was important to sensitize the community to the challenges these

women face and to find ways for the community to support the women, rather than stigmatizing them. Matola also recognized the need to develop supports beyond the community: laws concerning marriage, divorce, and maintenance of children need to be changed as part of creating an enabling environment.

Ensuring Time for Reflection

In a discussion among the authors, it became evident that they built time for reflection within their projects. All felt this was a critical element, the benefits of which included:

1. A deepening of knowledge and understanding. "The reflective times spent with the *Mizu* village teachers provided informal fora allowing theory and culture to be translated into practical ideas. These times built confidence within the teachers, provided collegiality, in addition to offering opportunities to hone their new ECD skills" (Day, p. 78).

2. Greater confidence in carrying out their roles—increased self-esteem. "The [caregivers] assumed new responsibilities, exhibited more initiative and creativity. Their commitment to the center grew exponentially. They seemed to gain a more purpose-driven lifestyle" (Day, p. 60).

3. The creation of a therapeutic environment. For the grand-mothers in Uganda, time for reflection often provided a place where people could share their experiences and mourn their losses. Many had lost hope, and the sharing process was healing (Nyesigomwe, 2004).

4. Peer-to-peer support. Participants became each other's teachers and problem-solvers. "When working with CRTs, this time for reflection helped make them aware of their accomplishments, and this gave them motivation to work together to define the way forward" (Ahmed, p. 66).

5. The evolution of other projects. The women in Matola's group in Malawi began to talk about other ways in which they could help themselves and created income-generating activities. This was also true in the grandmothers' support groups in Uganda.

Day (2004) summarizes the value of creating times for reflection: "The synergy that developed fueled the project" (p. 59).

Creating Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation

The capacity-building activity that was the focus of each of these projects was a relatively new activity—regardless of how old the hosting organization—so the outcomes of these efforts are not yet fully evident. Some preliminary data, however, would suggest that there are levels at which the positive impact of the program can already be seen. These include:

1. Impact on the community. Where the wider community was involved in the overall project, there was evidence of the impact of the project on that community, even within a relatively short period of time. In the Uganda case, Nyesigomwe saw the impact of the grandmother's project in terms of community mobilization and organization. She concluded that it would now be easy to implement any development project in the community as a result of the process used to create the support groups. In addition, the project had an impact on services being offered in the community. Within the local health post there was better access to health care and improved health within the population being served; most grandparents were now seeking health care from the health post.

2. Impact on those involved in the capacity-building activities. Day describes what she felt were some of the changes for those caring for the children: "I observed, over time, that the teachers gained increased self-confidence in their teaching. In their new capacities, they gained respect from the community. Leadership became evident in a natural way as teachers found the activities with the children that they enjoyed and accomplished well" (p. 48).

In the Zanzibar case, during the course of working with CRTs, some of them stated that they found the training and support valuable, so much so that they were able to help bring about changes in their communities even during the training.

As noted by Nyesigomwe, "Learning does not end" (p. 76). Grandparents were able to attend residential training sessions and became trainers and leaders themselves. Through the project, grandparents improved their 'social lives' through weekly meetings in their support groups, exchange visits, and other community gatherings. They also realized that the community appreciated their role in caring for the children. They felt recognized.

3. Impact on the family. For Day in Malawi, the impact on the family had several dimensions: (1) it freed parents to work in the fields as there was now a safe place for children to be while the parents were away; (2) it gave parents an understanding of the ways in which they can interact with the child to support the child's development; (3) parents saw the ways in which their children were more prepared for primary school. Day noted that the long-term payoff is that by continuing their education, the children will later help with family income. In this sense the children were both participants and benefactors (p. 7).

4. Impact on the child. Impact on the child was reported in two of the cases: Missani's work in Tanzania and Day's work in Malawi.

Children were impacted directly in the community awareness workshops in Tanzania since they were a part of these activities. In the focus

group discussions and consultation meetings with parents, children were very open in telling how they were being excluded in the process of school governance. As a result, teachers for the most part expressed a willingness to examine the assumptions and wrong perceptions they had about children (Missani, p. 46).

While the children in the Malawi child care center were quite young, they were still consulted. From the inception of the project, all children felt welcome and were considered important by the teachers. When asked their opinions during the PLA, they said they wanted "to sing and dance." That contribution resulted in traditional songs and dances being included in the daily schedule (Day, p. 34).

5. Ripple effects. Through the ECDVU experience it has been possible to identify 'ripple effects' which, in many cases, represent unanticipated outcomes and/or spin-offs resulting from activities people have engaged in along the way.

A significant spin-off is when trainees take responsibility for 'the next step' in the development of a project, whatever that might be. In the case of the Zanzibar Madrasa Resource Center, the next step was to create additional training materials and processes. According to Ahmed's description, once the CRTs were trained in selected classroom practice and school management topics, they drafted a set of training outlines to be used in their training of others. This was expanded on later and made into a full training manual to be used in the training of CRTs (Ahmed, 2004).

Nyesigomwe (2004) describes how participation in the support groups motivated the grandmothers to engage in additional activities. Over time they developed income-generating projects (group and individual gardens) and worked within the community, providing support to the community health center and sending school-age children to school. Grandparents were encouraged to work and save money. As a result, they had income they could use for emergencies. The project also had a multiplier effect in that, even during implementation, non-project families were already copying and learning from the grandmothers. They started cleaning their homes, making utensil racks, and digging rubbish pits. In addition, the zone leaders gained popularity and were now attracting more development projects for their community.

Missani (2004) reported that because of the positive feedback and lobbying effort, the processes used within the community awareness project continue to be introduced and practiced in the rest of the wards. The host organization and district officials have replicated the exercise, with government counterparts and district inspectors taking the lead.

Conclusion

In summary, the principles of effective capacity building have been evidenced in the cases presented in this article. While those involved in the capacity-building activities may have had a theoretical understanding of these elements as their course of study began, the projects they engaged in provided an opportunity for them to apply these principles in a wide diversity of settings, at very different stages in the life of the projects. Clearly the results have demonstrated the ECDVU participants' ability to bridge the divide between theory and practice – for themselves and for those with whom they work. Day commented that the learning of new skills encourages acquisition of more skills. And, as Nyesigomwe notes, "Learning does not end." Indeed, it would appear that the processes stimulated by the capacity-building activities described in the case studies will, in fact, continue, that new skills will be acquired, and that learning will not end.

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About the Contributing Authors

Lead Authors Listed by Alphabetical Order

Judith L. Evans, Ed.D. is currently an Adjunct Professor at the University of Victoria, in Canada. Previous employment has included: Director of the Department of Programme Documentation and Communication at the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Director of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, Programme Officer with the Aga Khan Foundation, and Vice-President of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. She has written numerous articles for the *Coordinator's Notebook* that bring together research and practice on various early childhood issues, and produced an early childhood programming manual, *Early Childhood Counts* (with Robert Myers and Ellen Ilfeld), that was a collaborative project that included the Consultative Group, UNICEF, the Aga Khan Foundation, Christian Children's Fund and the World Bank.

Lynette Jackson served as Cohort Manager of the pilot Sub-Saharan Africa ECDVU program. She has played a key role in piloting a variety of innovative projects designed to support the well-being of children and youth, including: applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in support of indigenous children and families; raising international awareness of the sexual exploitation of children and youth; promoting support services for children with disabilities in multi-cultural communities; and facilitating community-based aboriginal child and youth care training.

Chloe O'Gara, Ed.D. is Director for Education and Early Childhood Development Programs at Save the Children US. Her work focuses on education and AIDS and home to school transitions, and emphasizes modalities of stakeholder engagement, multidisciplinary collaboration, and gender analysis to generate new solutions to problems in education and the lives of communities, families, and children. She has done extensive project development, management and consulting in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the FSU.

Kofi Marfo, Ph.D. is Professor of Educational Psychology and Director of the Center for Research on Children's Development and Learning, College of Education, University of South Florida. A graduate of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, and the University of Alberta,

Canada, Dr. Marfo's 27-year academic career has been spent at four universities in three countries: Ghana, Canada, and the United States. He holds an adjunct graduate faculty appointment at the University of Victoria, as a member of ECDVU's international faculty. He has edited or co-edited 6 books and published over 50 journal articles and book chapters, with over 180 citations of his work appearing in 81 journals in multiple disciplines around the world. His current research interests include ECD, school readiness, developmental science and social policy, early intervention, parent-child interaction, and cognitive approaches to instruction.

Alan R. Pence, Ph.D., Professor, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, is the founder and director of the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU). Prior to joining the University of Victoria in 1980, he had worked professionally for ten years in a variety of early years and child special needs programs. Since the late 1980s, Dr. Pence has worked extensively in cross-cultural and international early childhood care and development. In 1989 he established the First Nations Partnerships Program, a community-based Indigenous early childhood undergraduate education program. In the mid-1990s he established for UNICEF a series of ECD training seminars, which led to the development of the ECDVU program in 2000 and 2001. Dr. Pence has authored over 90 journal articles, chapters and monographs and edited, co-edited or authored nine books on a variety of child care and development topics.

Jessica Schafer, Ph.D. is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Victoria. Dr. Schafer's undergraduate work was at the University of Manitoba. She received a Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship to carry out her doctoral studies at St Hugh's College, University of Oxford. She received the Audrey Richards Prize from the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom for her thesis work on post-war politics in Mozambique and the reintegration of demobilized soldiers after the civil war. Dr. Schafer has participated in eight major research projects over the past ten years. Her research experience spans the field of international development and African politics, with special interest in environmental history and early childhood issues.

Contributing Co-Authors from the ECDVU—2004 Cohort

Listed by country, name of student, organizational affiliation and Thesis or Project title:

Erithea

Abeba Habtom is the Head of the Early Childhood Development and Special Needs Section, Ministry of Education, Eritrea. Her major ECDVU project research is titled, "*Improving the quality of childcare through parental enrichment and training of trainers: The Eritrean model.*"

Wunesh Woldeselassie Bairu is currently a Research Assistant in Infant Motor Skills Assessment, Infant Development Center, Women and Infants' Hospital of Rhode Island, U.S. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Curriculum development using community resources."*

The Gambia

Jenieri B. Sagnia is the Education Project Officer, ECD Focal Point, UNICEF Banjul, UN House. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Indigenous knowledge and practices of parents and families regarding psychosocial care for children in three rural communities in The Gambia: Implications for UNICEF programming in ECD."*

Ghana

Felix Kwasi Agorsah is the Assistant Director and Officer-in-Charge, National Nursery Teachers' Training Centre, Ghana Education Service of the Ministry of Education. His major ECDVU project research is titled *"The development of an integrated early childhood development urban model training program for informal minders and community volunteers in Ghana."*

Susan Sabaa is the National Coordinator, Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC). Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Development of a model framework for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in their early years in Ghana."*

Margaret Amponsah is the National Coordinator, Early Childhood Development Unit of the Ghana Education Service. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"The status of coordination and supervision of early childhood education in Ghana."*

Stella Etse is currently affiliated with the Working Group on ECD – Association for the Development of Education in Africa, ADEA-WGECD, c/o UNICEF-WCARO/BRAO, Regional Office for West and Central Africa. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Parents' and other caregivers' perception of early childhood development needs and quality: A study of the PLAN-Assisted programmes in Bawjiase, Ghana.*

Kenya

Samuel Ngaruiya is Deputy National ECD Coordinator and Senior Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. His ECDVU thesis research is titled *"Assessing the influence of different early childhood development models on pre-school children's school readiness in Kenya."*

Lesotho

Phaello Ntšonyane is the Information Technology Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher, Maseru English Medium Preparatory School. His major ECDVU project research is titled *"Incorporating indigenous*

stories of Basotho in an ECCD programme at Leseli Community Centre."

Edith M. Sebatane is an Inspector within the Lesotho Ministry of Education—ECCD Unit Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Developing an ECCD teacher training curriculum in Lesotho as Part of a College of Education program."*

Malawi

Francis R.W. Chalamanda is the National Coordinator for ECD within the Malawi Ministry of Women, Children's Affairs, and Community Services. His major ECDVU project research is titled *"Coordinating the development and implementation of the 2003-2013 National Action Plan (NAP) for Children in Malawi."*

Charlotte Day is the ECD Director for SAFE (sub-Saharan Africa Family Enrichment), A Malawi NGO, and Lecturer at Chancellor College, University of Malawi. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"A community-driven rural early childhood development (ECD) Master's Project, with emphasis on culturally and developmentally appropriate exploratory learning concepts."*

Chalizamudzi Elizabeth Matola is the Deputy Executive Director, Association of Preschool Playgroups in Malawi (APPM). Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Assessment of interaction and stimulation in single-mother low-income families."*

Mary Phiri is the Director of the Chirunga ECD Centre. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Using indigenous material for ECCD curriculum in Malawi."*

Nigeria

Olive Erinma Uzoamaka Akomas is the Deputy Directory/State Nutrition Officer, Ministry of Health, Umuahia, Abia State. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Assessment of the caring practices in two motherless babies' homes in Abia State, Nigeria, and the development and delivery of a nutrition training program to the staff of these homes to improve nutrition of children in their care."*

Mgbechikwere Uche Ezirim is a Project Officer, Education, UNICEF Nigeria. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Integrating indigenous knowledge in ECD training and services."*

Rosemary Hua is the Project Officer, Early Childhood Care and Development, Ministry of Education, Makurdi, Benue State. Her major ECDVU project research is titled **"***Involving fathers in early childhood care and development."*

Celestina Amauchechukwu Ibetoh is the Deputy Director / Monitoring Officer, School Services Department, State Primary Education Board, Imo State. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"A*

Guide for effective school and parent collaboration: A cooperative development and delivery approach."

Tanzania

Asha Mohammed Ahmed (Zanzibar) is the Project Director, Zanzibar Madrasa Resource Centre. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Building community leadership for quality sustainability in Madrasa preschools: The case of Madrasa preschools' post graduation support."*

George A. Kameka is the Commissioner for Social Welfare, Ministry of Labour, Youth Development, and Sports. His major ECDVU project research is titled *"Improving multisectoral cooperation and coordination in support of early childhood development programs in Tanzania."*

Benedict M. Missani is the Training Coordinator – Basic Needs. His major ECDVU project research is titled *"Leadership skills training for administration and parent support training for caregivers."*

Leoncia Nyeme Salakana is the Country Learning Advisor, Plan International Tanzania. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Traditional child care practices in Tanzania: Supplementing PLAN training programs."*

Uganda

Anne Barabogoza Gamurorwa is the Executive Director, Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU). Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Utilizing indigenous stories in the promotion of early childhood development programs in Uganda."*

Monica. R. Muheirwe is a Lecturer /Teacher at Kyambogo University. Her major ECDVU project research is titled **"*Professional Associations in support of child well being in Uganda: Establishment of ECD Newsletter Series."*

Hilda Carolyne Nankunda is a Lecturer at the Uganda Christian University, Mukono, and an affiliated researcher at the Makerere Institute for Social Research, Kampala. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Policies and programs in support of childcare for working families: A case study of data sets and current activities in Uganda."*

Lydia Nyesigomwe is the Director, Action for Children. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Strengthening the capacity of grandparents in providing care to children less than 8 years old affected by HIV / AIDS."*

Zambia

Margaret Abosede Akinware is the Project Officer for Education, UNICEF. Her major ECDVU project research is titled *"Pilot study of the adaptation of an established measure to assess the quality of child services in a selected orphanage in Zambia: The Inclusive Quality Assessment (IQA) tool."*

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