

Early Childhood Care and Development Programs Implemented by NGOs Fostering Inclusivity in Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood care and development (ECCD) sets the foundation for the growth and development of an individual. However, there are children who experience multiple layers of disadvantages that inhibit equal access to quality ECCD programs. This article aims to describe the ECCD programs being implemented by non-government organizations (NGO) in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. There are discussions on ECCD policies and legal framework, ECCD programs, challenges in the implementation of ECCD programs, and relevant recommendations to enhance the implementation of ECCD programs. Using a descriptive case study design, the results reveal that the countries have instituted national policies and programs that incorporate the elements of inclusive education. The non-government organizations have targeted specific marginalized sectors and have fostered the alignment of their program objectives with the priorities and plans of the national government. Collaboration among education stakeholders has been evident and instrumental in the attainment of holistic ECCD programs and services.

Keywords: Early Childhood Care and Development, Non-Government Organizations, Inclusive Education

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a determining stage of children's development as the peak of growth and brain development happens from zero to eight years old (UNESCO, 2019; WHO, 2019). A wide range of literature has established the benefits of investing in early childhood care and development for children's social, emotional, psychological, cognitive, and physical development (UNICEF, 2013). Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is a holistic concept that encompasses the provision of care, education, health, nutrition, and hygiene for cognitive, social, emotional and physical development and the social protection of children (Rao & Sun, 2010). Having quality ECCD programs has been associated with higher earnings, labor force productivity and stronger social attachment. It also supports having a level playing field for children regardless of status by reducing achievement gaps caused by social factors such as poverty. This allows children to have the necessary skills for employment and in turn, contributes to strengthening national economies (UNICEF, 2019).

However, despite the emphasis on establishing quality ECCD programs, inequities remain especially for disadvantaged children in developing countries. The marginalized groups of children who are most likely to be excluded from the mainstream education system include children from poor families, migrant children, those living in rural and remote areas, children with disabilities and special learning needs, and children from ethnic minority groups. These inequalities interact with each other creating multiple layers of disadvantage that further exacerbate social exclusion.

Having quality ECCD programs that are accessible for all is one way to address the intergenerational poverty experienced by children (Becher & Li, 2010). In a way, this creates a more equitable society that offers more equal opportunities for children regardless of their status and background.

The non-government organizations (NGOs) in this study implement ECCD programs that target specific marginalized sectors. In Cambodia wherein there is high levels of reported disability with only one in five among children aged 6 to 11 years old attend school (Filmer, 2008 as cited in UNESCO, 2017), Khemara focuses on delivering inclusive ECCD program through the Childcare Center program to the most marginalized children, especially those with disabilities. In Indonesia where there are more than 85 million children, thirty three percent (33%) of them are reported to live below the international poverty line of 1.25 USD (UNICEF, 2014). Poverty level is even higher in the Sikka District in Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) province which is one of the areas where Plan International Indonesia implements their community-based ECCD program. In Vietnam, children in ethnic minority group, specifically those belonging to Co Tu minority group in Nam Giang district, is the focus of the VVOB. These mentioned ECCD programs of NGOs have been implemented in alignment with the priorities and plans of the national government and aimed to promote inclusion of children belonging to disadvantaged groups. Such collaboration has been evident in the implementation of programs and considered significant in the attainment of inclusion in ECCD programs.

Objectives of the Study

This article generally aims to describe and analyze the ECCD programs being implemented by non-government organizations (NGOs) in three Southeast Asian countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Specifically, it aims to (a) describe policies and legal frameworks that facilitate an enabling environment for children; (b) examine the ECCD programs and interventions, including the innovations and good practices being implemented for children from marginalized groups; (c) identify the challenges in implementing ECCD programs; and (d) provide recommendations to enhance the implementation of ECCD programs.

Theoretical Framework

In analyzing the ECCD policies and programs for children from marginalized groups, this article utilized Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner as cited in Deurden & Wit, 2010) in combination with UNESCO's Inclusive Education Triangle (UNESCO, 2010).

The Ecological Systems Theory consists of multi-tiered layers that signify the different levels of ecological systems that interact with children to address marginalization. At the center of the

framework (see Figure 1) and the focus of this article is children aged 0-8 from marginalized groups. Around the center are the ECCD programs that intend to address marginalization among children. In this layer, there are interactions among teachers, childcare workers, parents and other relevant stakeholders. Beyond the layer of ECCD programs, there is a larger context that affects the implementation of ECCD programs: the socio-economic and political context; policy and legal context; and cultural value and customs. These ecological systems are structured around three elements of the Inclusive Education Triangle which include entitlements and opportunities; accessibility and affordability; and learning environment and learning delivery.

Entitlements and opportunities refer to legal provisions that set standards and establish the rights of people for education opportunities. In specific, it sets the enabling conditions to increase equity, alleviate poverty, increase social protection, and enforce legislation against discrimination, among others. Accessibility and affordability pertain to the proximity of schools to communities and the costs of education. These ensure that children are not in a disadvantaged position based on their location and socio-economic status.

The learning environment pertains to the quality of teachers, teaching materials, linguistic and cultural sensitivity, and the curriculum. Meanwhile, appropriate learning delivery includes qualified and motivated teachers, use of appropriate language of instruction and availability of adequate, and relevant teaching materials to address the needs of marginalized children. The interplay of the ecological systems and three elements of inclusive education are crucial factors in the learning and development outcomes of marginalized children.

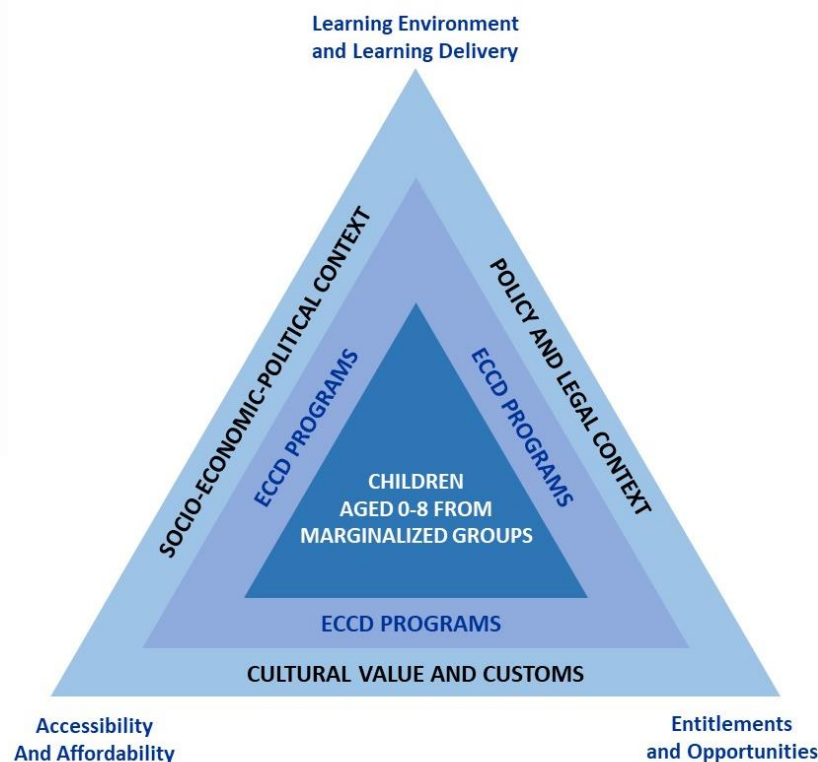


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

METHODOLOGY

This article is a descriptive qualitative study that features three case studies of ECCD programs implemented by non-government organizations targeting disadvantaged children. These NGOs and the countries where they implement the ECCD programs are Khemara in Cambodia, Plan International in Indonesia and the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB) in Vietnam. SEAMEO INNOTECH invited key people in ECCD from the participating countries to either serve as in-country researchers or give recommendations. There was at least one in each country who was engaged as in-country researcher. These in-country researchers were either from the Ministries of Education or universities in each respective country. Their engagement involved gathering of relevant information and writing a case study report through secondary data analysis and primary data gathering through interviews and focus group discussion, as they deem necessary. An outline as guided by the research objectives and theoretical framework was given to the in-country researchers for their report writing. Upon receiving the initial draft of the reports, SEAMEO INNOTECH conducted data validation through interviews with representatives from Khemara, Plan International Indonesia and VVOB. Their comments were incorporated into the final version of the case study reports. The gathered information from the interviews was analyzed to further identify the policies and legal framework that facilitate the enabling environment, examine the ECCD programs for disadvantaged children, and identify the challenges encountered in implementing ECCD programs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides an overview of the enabling environment for marginalized children in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. As identified in UNESCO's Inclusive Education Triangle, the elements of an inclusive education consist of entitlements and opportunities; accessibility and affordability; and learning environment and learning delivery. Further, this section discusses in detail the inclusive ECCD programs being implemented by identified non-government organizations in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

Enabling Environment for Marginalized Children

At the center of the theoretical framework of this study are the children who experience various types of marginalization that places them in a disadvantaged position of having quality ECCD programs. Among the common patterns of marginalization are poverty, geographic remoteness, ethnicity, disabilities, susceptibility to disasters, presence of internal conflicts, and statelessness. These are intersecting conditions that create overlapping layers of marginalization and further exacerbate the existing conditions and reinforce intergenerational poverty.

Addressing marginalization experienced by children and achieving inclusive ECCD programs may be accomplished by focusing on the three elements as identified in the Inclusive Education Triangle by UNESCO (2010) - entitlements and opportunities; accessibility and affordability; and learning environment and learning delivery.

Entitlements and Opportunities

One way of fostering inclusion in education is achieved when the State protects the rights of the children. With legal systems in place, the children can receive the necessary support to live in a

safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. ECCD programs for marginalized children need inclusive policies and laws that protect the entitlements and opportunities of children.

In recognition of the rights of children, the Constitution of Cambodia is protective of the right to life, protection from exploitation and the right to education (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1993). ECCD services shall be provided to children from zero to six, especially those from marginalized sectors such as children from poor families, indigenous minorities, and children with disabilities. Cambodia has also institutionalized and adopted various policies at the national, regional, and international levels to protect the rights of children with disability.

In Indonesia, the Constitution is supportive of the right of every person to develop oneself through the fulfilment of basic needs which include the right to education (Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945). Towards this end, the Law on the National Education System was implemented wherein one of the education levels specified is early childhood education for children aged zero to six years old (Law on the National Education System, 2003).

Similar to Cambodia and Indonesia, the laws of Vietnam recognize the rights of children and the role of family, schools, State, society, and its citizens to uphold these rights (Law on Child Protection, Care and Education, 2004). The holistic development of children is valued as an important factor in developing a creative labor force and national defense (Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2013).

The entitlements and opportunities for children as reflected in the constitutions of the participating countries support the rights of children to equal treatment and protection. Having these legal frameworks that promote inclusive and holistic child development supports and enables the implementation of inclusive ECCD programs.

Accessibility and Affordability

Accessibility and affordability as an element in achieving inclusive ECCD program focus on the proximity of schools to communities and the costs of education. These ensure that children are not in a disadvantaged position in terms of the accessibility of classrooms to their location or hindered by the costs of attending ECCD programs.

In Cambodia, community-based or home-based programs have been implemented to increase enrolment in early childhood programs (National Committee of Early Childhood Care and Development, 2014). Students with disabilities are also entitled to equal access to quality education by giving them the right to enroll in any public and private establishment. Similar to other learners, children with disabilities are eligible to receive scholarships (Law on the Protection and the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2009).

The accessibility and affordability of ECCD programs in Indonesia are supported by education laws that mandate basic education to be made available and free for all children (National Education System, 2003; Law on Child Protection, 2002). To ensure its implementation, the constitution requires at least 20% of the State and Regional budgets to be allocated for education (Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945). For every district in Indonesia, part of the mid-term plan is to have Holistic and Integrated Early Childhood Development (HI-ECD) services (Government of Indonesia, 2014). Other efforts to promote ECCD include providing access to quality health and nutrition services and provision of infrastructure and facilities for children from minority and isolated groups (Law on Child Protection, 2002).

In managing the budget, Vietnam prioritizes education, including early childhood education to support families in availing of educational services, especially those belonging to ethnic minorities. There is a regulation of fees that takes into consideration the economic conditions and the level of affordability in an administrative region. This process of regulation requires the approval of the People's Committees in the province and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). To further enhance accessibility and affordability, marginalized children may also avail tuition fee exemptions or reductions (Mechanism for Collection and Management of Tuition Fees Applicable to Educational Institutions in the Nation, 2015).

In all the countries, their national laws or plans support accessibility and affordability of education for all, including ECCD programs. This is reflected in the budget allocations or prioritization such as in the case of Indonesia and Vietnam. Efforts have also been made to make ECCD programs accessible and affordable for children in disadvantaged groups by implementing community-based or home-based programs, regulating tuition fees, offering scholarships and providing access to health and nutrition services, and having appropriate infrastructure and facilities.

Learning Environment and Learning Delivery

The learning environment and learning delivery are other essential elements in achieving inclusive education for marginalized children. The learning environment refers to having appropriate infrastructure, learning resources and facilities while learning delivery deals with having quality teachers, teaching materials and curriculum, including linguistic and cultural sensitivity. Altogether, learning environment and learning delivery need to be appropriate and consider the specific developmental, cultural, and socio-economic needs of children.

In Cambodia, the State has the obligation to preserve and develop national culture. It also requires that programs for children should be holistic by addressing all domains of development: physical, cognitive, mental, and emotional. For children with special needs, suitable educational programs need to be provided which involve sufficient facilitation in the learning process (Education Law, 2007). Special interventions are also given to vulnerable children with high risk of developmental delays, malnutrition, and disabilities (National Committee of Early Childhood Care and Development, 2014). Teacher training is being administered for those who handle early childhood education programs and part of the training is on the concepts of primary health care, life skills, and gender mainstreaming (MOEYS Cambodia, 2010).

In terms of the learning environment and learning delivery in Indonesia, the early childhood education programs follow the curriculum developed in accordance with the principle of diversification and adjusted depending on the local context and potential of learners. The children are also allowed to practice their own culture, language, and religion (National Education System, 2003). To enhance the quality of ECE services, improving the quality of teachers is given attention by strengthening teachers' associations and working groups, enhancing the role of ECCD supervisor and implementing teacher career development. To promote holistic and integrated ECCD services, coordination among relevant stakeholders, including parents, is also identified as another strategy.

An appropriate learning environment for ECCD programs in Vietnam is promoted by the enactment of the Universal Preschool Law for five-year old children which states the provision of adequate classrooms (Approving the 2011-2020 Education Development, 2012). The learning resources being used are also developed and contextualized for ethnic minority children (Law on

Children, 2016). Children from ethnic minority groups are also given the freedom to use their own culture and language (Law on Children, 2016). Teacher training for professional development, including instructional materials are also made available to capacitate teachers in handling ECCD programs, especially in remote areas.

In the three countries, policies and programs are in place to ensure appropriate learning environment and learning delivery are provided for the implementation of inclusive ECCD programs. The local contexts of children, including their language, culture, and individual capacities, are being taken into consideration in the development of learning resources, curriculum and even in teacher training. To enhance the quality of ECCD services, there are efforts in providing teacher training to promote professional development and further capacitate teachers in delivering ECCD programs, especially for disadvantaged children.

While the three elements of inclusive education are present in the three countries, inclusive ECCD programs are being initiated and implemented by non-government organizations to complement the existing efforts by the government. The featured programs of NGOs in this study utilize certain approaches that aim to reach and respond to the needs of marginalized children.

Inclusive ECCD Programs

Cambodia: Khemara's Childcare Center

Khemara was founded in 1991 and is the first local non-government organization focusing on women and children in Cambodia. In its establishment of their Childcare Center (CCC) project, it aimed to support the identified priorities of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of increasing awareness and acceptance of children with disabilities, recognizing their needs and providing quality ECCD services for them (Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities, 2008). Khemara identified the need to focus on children with disabilities given the strong links between disability, poverty and education exclusion. The Disability and Inclusiveness Policy was developed by Khemara to outline their approach to disability and inclusion and establish guidelines.

Khemara has promoted access to its Childcare Center as evident in the profile of learners who mostly come from low-income families and have disabilities. With experiences of not being accepted in other schools, Khemara's Center is the one that accepted them with a convenient process of application. Enrollment to the Center also does not require any tuition fees and miscellaneous fees.

An inclusive approach is being applied by Khemara in its implementation of CCC by mainstreaming children with disabilities in regular classrooms while their needs are still addressed. It adopts a holistic approach wherein the essential components for a child's development are integrated into the program. These include education, nutrition, health, and social protection. The Center utilizes a play-based curriculum wherein children are engaged in socialization with each other. Teachers are observed to have a deep sense of commitment that promotes a friendly and accommodating learning environment. Parents, especially those from low-income families, feel secure that their children are given proper care while they are engaged in full-time work. There is an established feedback mechanism between parents and teachers where they discuss together the progress and challenges at the Center and at home.

The eight (8) CCCs of Khemara have accommodated 320 children with an average of 40 students per Center in 2018. It has expanded its efforts to accommodate children with disabilities with children having Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) as the most common condition of children in Childcare Centers.

Indonesia: Plan International's Community-Managed ECCD Program

The Plan International Indonesia focuses its initiatives on helping marginalized children access their rights to health, sanitation, education, livelihood and protection. In its implementation of various programs, it utilizes the child-centered community development approach, a rights-based approach that acknowledges the active role of children, families and communities in their own development (Plan International, n.d.).

With support from Australian Aid (AusAID), Plan International Indonesia implemented the Community-Managed Early Childhood Care and Development (CM-ECCD) program in 2010. The CM-ECCD model recognizes the interconnections among child development, community development and poverty alleviation. The program incorporates health and development with education and addresses various aspects of child development such as parenting, stimulation, early education, health and nutrition (Plan International, n.d.).

The CM-ECCD program is implemented in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT). Specifically, the program was piloted in Sikka and Lembata districts and later expanded to cover three more districts: Timor Tengah Utara, Timor Tengah Selatan and Nagekeo. It is characterized as a high-impact but low-cost and culturally appropriate community-managed ECCD program. It is implemented through *Posyandu* and ECCD Centers for children aged four to six and their parents. The program eventually supported the government project on Holistic Integrative Early Childhood Development (HI-ECD) in the eastern part of Indonesia. The HI-ECD places the child at the center of the program and adopts an integrated, coordinated, and holistic system of care to address the needs of children.

The support for vulnerable and disadvantaged children through CM-ECCD program was able to help improve children's development and well-being. For instance, through the parenting group program, the adverse effects of poverty on family characteristics such as harsh parenting strategies, lack of child developmental stimulation and lack of paternal engagement have been minimized. By targeting children's immediate environment through their parents and caregivers, children's well-being tends to improve. This was conducted in an inclusive and accessible manner, regardless of socio-economic and educational background. Another success espoused by this program is the inclusion of fathers in parenting groups. This serves as an important step in promoting gender sensitivity.

One of the good practices of this program is the collaboration between Plan International Indonesia and the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) in developing parenting modules. Other agencies involved also include the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). Another good practice is the enactment of the new District Regulation of HI-ECD in Sikka District. Through this local regulation, the implementation of community based ECCD programs allows the local governments to contextualize their implementation based on the specific needs and capacities of their communities.

From 2015-2016, the program has formed 285 parenting groups in 155 villages, trained 5,169 parents for child development and capacitated 465 village health post-workers to facilitate parenting groups. Plan International Indonesia has supported a total of 394 ECCD Centers with 6,703 children who all enrolled in primary school. It also provided transition support to primary schools in 59 villages. There was a demonstrated improvement in the learning outcomes of children in the Centers, specifically in Sikka and Lembata districts. There was also an observed enhanced performance in achievement tests of Grade 1 students who were pre-school graduates from the Centers (Aboud et al., 2016).

Vietnam: VVOB's Child Monitoring System

The Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance or VVOB is an organization commissioned by the Flemish and Belgian governments to work on the provision of equitable quality education for all learners in Vietnam (Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance, n.d.). While VVOB has started its operations in Vietnam since 1992, it was in 2014 when it shifted its focus to early childhood care and education (ECCE) (World Bank, 2013). One of its projects is the Child Monitoring System (CMS) which allows teachers to systematically observe and rate the well-being and involvement of their students (Lenaerts et al., 2017). This system equips teachers in identifying the children at risk and developing appropriate actions to enhance the students' well-being and involvement. While it has the potential to help address effects of other types of marginalization in the learning of children, VVOB focused on children from ethnic minority groups, particularly the Co Tu ethnic group located in Nam Giang district, in implementing the program.

The CMS recognizes the need to equip teachers with the necessary skills to support disadvantaged children and help them address the challenges that hinder their learning. Teacher capacity and pedagogy have been identified as determining factors in high educational performance, especially for children in remote areas (World Bank, 2011). From the results of child screening and feedback of program stakeholders, the majority of children beneficiaries (162 out of 216 children) exhibited improved well-being and involvement levels (VVOB, 2016). This shows that the CMS, along with appropriate training of teachers, gives an enhanced learning experience for disadvantaged children.

According to the program proponents, among the strengths of the program include the design of the program contents, availability of tools and recognition of expertise of teachers and school leaders in the community. The program is considered relevant yet light and practical that makes teachers confident in applying their learnings in the classroom. VVOB has also provided teachers with necessary tools that made abstract concepts such as well-being, involvement, reflective teaching and active teaching and learning to be understandable and observable. The program has also empowered teachers and school leaders in the communities to take an active and direct role in the implementation of the program.

Challenges in Implementing Inclusive ECCD Programs

Khemara's Childcare Center in Cambodia

The efforts of Khemara have shown its commitment in addressing the barriers to inclusion of children with disabilities in ECCD programs and services. However, given the multidimensional needs of children, there is a need to establish partnerships with various organizations in different sectors to ensure effective and sustainable implementation of the project. There is an uneven implementation of the project given the limited funding and the lack of significant technical assistance from agencies responsible for the effective implementation of ECCD programs and services.

While there are national laws promoting inclusive education, the government needs to take a more proactive role in its implementation, according to the MOE staff interviewed for this study. There needs to be a focus on children, especially those with disabilities. In the process of implementing inclusive ECCD programs, there is a need to establish stronger relations between the Center and the government agencies. Currently, the coordination is only limited to the quarterly visits of MOEYS and the monthly medical and dental checkups of children. Also, there is only an annual monitoring visit being conducted by MOEYS to assess the performance of the Center, according to the teacher interviewed. There is no clear connection as well as to how the results of the assessment provide as inputs in improving the performance of the Center.

The budget available for Khemara to sustain its operation is limited to cover operations in all its centers. From fifteen (15) Centers in 2015, it was reduced to only nine (9) in 2017. Also, there is a need to provide regular training to teachers in order to adequately equip them with the necessary skills in handling children with disabilities. In terms of salary, teachers only receive a low compensation that is only dependent on the one dollar a day contribution from the parents.

In addition to the abovementioned challenges, the Khemara staff observed that there is a limited understanding of disabilities in the communities which is commonly understood as physical impairment only. This limited knowledge results in late detection and interventions for children with disabilities. There is also a lack of an updated database on children with disabilities. This is hugely important to support the process of planning the most appropriate and relevant ECCD programs.

Plan International's Community-Managed ECCD Program in Indonesia

The major challenge encountered in the implementation of the program is working with many sectors concerned with the implementation of ECCD programs and the tendency of each organization to work in silos. With a multi-sectoral approach, Plan International Indonesia took an active role in advocacy work and serves as the coordinator of the National Coalition of HI-ECD consisting of non-government organizations and international non-government organizations with advocacies related to ECCD in Indonesia.

Other challenges in the implementation of the program include the lack of teachers with appropriate ECCD qualifications, limited community participation, and having no clear technical guidelines in translating national laws at the district level. In delivering quality ECCD programs, one of the foremost priorities is having competent teachers to deliver the program. At the village level, promoting awareness of the need for quality ECCD and budgetary support need to be enhanced which can later enhance community participation.

VVOB's Child Monitoring System in Vietnam

The program encountered minor challenges at the onset of its implementation with teachers not being familiar with reflective teaching and finding the program burdensome with additional paperwork. VVOB responded to these challenges by involving experts and providing teachers with revising the existing lesson plan to already incorporate the documentation of program implementation.

With the positive feedback from its implementation, VVOB intends to scale up its implementation of the program to more districts and provinces in Central Vietnam. With this, a larger network of education stakeholders needs to be engaged and counterpart funding from the government or other organizations would be needed. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the scale-up of the project would require scientific monitoring and evaluation that would systematically document and measure the success of the program.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Supporting children at an early age is important as it sets the foundation for holistic development. Having quality and inclusive early childhood care and development (ECCD) programs for children, especially those in disadvantaged positions, is important in creating an equitable society and building productive citizens. However, children continue to experience exclusion brought about by patterns of marginalization. These patterns of marginalization (poverty, geographic remoteness, ethnicity, disabilities, susceptibility to disasters, presence of internal conflicts, and statelessness) compound with one another, creating multiple layers of marginalization and further exacerbating intergenerational poverty.

The marginalization experienced by children may be addressed by enhancing the inclusiveness of systems through incorporating the three elements of inclusive education: entitlements and opportunities, accessibility and affordability, and learning environment and learning delivery. In Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam, these three elements are evident in their policies, plans and programs. They recognize and protect the rights of children and acknowledge the importance of ECCD.

The three non-government organizations (NGOs) from Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam have initiated ECCD programs that fostered inclusivity. Through Khemara's Childcare Center in Cambodia, children with disabilities are provided equal opportunities to attend ECCD programs and services that address their needs. In Indonesia, the CM-ECCD program of Plan International Indonesia adopted a high-impact, but low-cost and culturally appropriate community-managed ECCD program that improved the levels of well-being and learning of children. For VVOB, the implementation of the Child Monitoring System (CMS) in Vietnam capacitated the teachers to assess students' level of well-being and engagement and make appropriate actions to manage the barriers to their learning.

The alignment of the mentioned programs with the national plans and priorities of each respective country and their coordination with the government have been key factors in the success of implementation. The collaboration among different education stakeholders needs to be continued as the delivery of holistic ECCD programs requires the involvement of different sectors. With proper coordination, duplication of efforts may be prevented and would allow the optimization of efforts to enhance the delivery of ECCD programs for marginalized children. Another important factor in the

implementation is taking into consideration the local contexts and culture of children. This enabled the NGOs to understand the background of children and implement necessary strategies for the implementation of programs.

To support the implementation of ECCD programs spearheaded by non-government organizations, it is recommended to have the government support by instituting policies to make their programs sustainable while maintaining the minimum national quality standards. This will facilitate wider implementation of programs and ensure financial capacity for sustained implementation.

This study only features one (1) NGO-initiated ECCD program in each of the three (3) Southeast Asian countries. Future studies may consider covering more exemplary ECCD programs fostering inclusivity and expand the coverage of the study to other Southeast Asian countries in order to have a regional perspective.

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