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Regional Early Childhood Development Landscape Study

Final Report

Asia Philanthropy Circle



Centre for
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The Centre for Evidence and Implementation envisions a world where people can improve their lives through support that is equitable and effective. We are a global, for-purpose evidence intermediary and advisory organisation dedicated to using the best evidence in practice and policy to improve the lives of people facing adversity. Established in Australia in 2016, CEI is a multi-disciplinary team across five offices in London, Melbourne, Oslo, Singapore, and Sydney. We work with our partners, including policymakers, governments, practitioners, program providers, organisation leaders, and funders in four key areas of work:

- Understanding and making sense of the evidence base
- Generating evidence through trialling, testing, and evaluating policies and programs to drive more effective decisions and deliver better outcomes
- Developing methods and processes to get high quality evidence into policy and practice
- Building cultures for evidence use



Chapters

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Nanjing Normal University: Located in Nanjing, NNU is one of the provincial key universities under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and the Jiangsu Provincial Government. As a century-old university, NNU is home to many famous masters and has a rich cultural heritage. Famous Chinese educators such as Tao Xingzhi and Chen Heqin have taught here. At present, NNU has six national key disciplines, and preschool education is one of them.

We acknowledge our partners, the Asia Philanthropy Circle (APC) and the Centre for Holistic Initiatives in Learning and Development (CHILD).



Asia Philanthropy Circle (APC) is a community of philanthropists collaborating to chart a better future for Asia. Founded in 2015 by Asia-based philanthropists to encourage peer exchange, APC has grown to over 50 members across 13 markets.

We are home to a diverse network of philanthropists—across generations and interests—seeking collective impact together. Our members give in financial and human capital, champion social innovation for public good, and pioneer collaborative initiatives to build the social impact ecosystem and address systemic challenges. APC is a registered charity headquartered in Singapore with roots throughout the region. For more information, please visit www.asiaphilanthropycircle.org.



The **Centre for Holistic Initiatives for Learning and Development (CHILD)** at the National University of Singapore, Yong Yoo Lin School of Medicine aims to improve the lives of all young children and families in Singapore, especially those who are vulnerable. CHILD works closely with stakeholders in early childhood policy and practice, including the preschool, healthcare, and social service sectors, in evidence review and knowledge translation regarding early child development, and also collaborates with CEI in implementation science to bring about evidence-based interventions.

This study benefited from the participation of an Advisory Group that engaged with and supported this complex collaborative project for more than a year. Many of these eleven organisations are APC members.

This group included early childhood development experts, practitioners, grantmakers, and corporate funders. This work would not have been possible without their generous financial contributions, expertise, feedback, and steadfast partnership. Contributors are listed in alphabetical order below.



Ayala Foundation is the social development arm of the Ayala group of companies that aims to improve lives through three key programme areas: education, sustainable livelihood, and love of country. Ayala Foundation envisions communities where people are creative, productive, self-reliant and proud to be Filipino. We act as a catalyst for inclusion to bridge community and business aspirations by understanding community realities and engaging people in the change process. Our mission is to build nurturing partnerships with public and private groups and civil societies to achieve impact, scale and sustainability for everyone involved.



Bakti Barito Foundation is a corporate foundation that monitors and evaluates all sustainability initiatives for all Barito Pacific Group companies in Indonesia. It focuses on delivering quality education and environment programs that are aligned with national policies and SDG goals.



Djarum Foundation operates a number of programs in selected fields, which had been chosen for their potential to make a positive impact to society. Specifically, Djarum Foundation promotes excellence through community, sport, environmental, educational and cultural initiatives. These are part of Djarum commitment to realising Indonesia potential to become a well-rounded world citizen.



Ishk Tolaram Foundation provides access to quality education, healthcare, and skills training to underserved individuals in Indonesia, Nigeria and Singapore. Its purpose as a philanthropic organisation is to enable individuals to improve their quality of life



The **Knowledge Channel Foundation** Inc. (KCFI) is a non-profit organisation in the Philippines, whose mission is to co-create and provide transformative learning experiences especially for poor and marginalized Filipino children and communities. Since 1999, KCFI has developed and acquired thousands of multimedia learning resources and has trained thousands of teachers in basic education and early childhood development to improve the learning outcomes and holistic development of Filipino children



LI Foundation's (LIF) mission is to inspire and impact lives by maximising everyone's potential. Based in Singapore and with a focus on South-East Asia, LIF is committed to provide grants to innovative and impactful projects. LIF's core values are: Innovation; Integration; and Impact. By identifying innovative and sustainable solutions to address social challenges, we hope to gather the right people and resources by integrating innovation into our ecosystem. This will then create a multiplier effect that will result in a magnified impact.



Nomura is an Asia-headquartered financial services group, with an integrated global network spanning over 30 countries. Through both our business and philanthropic activities, we aim to deliver a better tomorrow for future generations. In Asia ex-Japan, our grant-giving is focused on tackling poverty by ensuring the region's most vulnerable children receive the early learning and stimulation they need to thrive.



Quantedge Advancement Initiative funds international charitable and climate initiatives and has been registered as a grant-making charity in Singapore since February 2021. Quantedge Advancement Initiative aims to deliver impactful solutions to environmental and social challenges around the world by focusing on areas where it can achieve the largest amount of impact per dollar disbursed. Its main focus areas are in global health and development, and climate change action across Asia and beyond.



The **Ramon Aboitiz Foundation, Inc.** (RAFI) is committed to upholding the dignity of man by working with communities to elevate their well-being. RAFI remains true to our vision of “Touching People, Shaping the Future,” whereby community resilience is at the heart of our vision. The Foundation’s strategic intent is centred on enabling resilient, prosperous, and vibrant communities. To achieve this, RAFI has three main program well-being domains, these are Social, Physical, and Economic Well-being. RAFI is accredited by the Philippine Council for NGO Certification and a member of the Association of Foundations.

Tanoto Foundation

Tanoto Foundation is an independent philanthropic organisation founded by Sukanto Tanoto and Tinah Bingei Tanoto based on the belief that every person should have the opportunity to realise his or her full potential. Tanoto Foundation started its work in 1981 when our founders established a kindergarten and elementary school in Besitang, North Sumatra. Tanoto Foundation programmes stem from the core belief that quality education accelerates equal opportunity. We harness the transformative power of education to realise people’s full potential and improve lives. Tanoto Foundation focuses on making an impact in three areas: improving learning environments, future leaders’ development, as well as medical research and sciences.



Zuellig Family Foundation (ZFF) is a non-profit family foundation in the Philippines. ZFF is a catalyst for the achievement of better health outcomes for all Filipinos, working with local governments and partners on resilient local health systems, universal health care, nutrition for the First 1000 Days, and adolescent-friendly communities.

Executive Summary

Background

Early Childhood Development (ECD) lays the foundation for a child's physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being and is a strong predictor of long-term human development. Recent evidence and developments in the ECD landscape have shown that children need access to comprehensive programmes and services between the ages of 0 and 6 years that address health and developmental needs (including early education¹) to support them to have the best start in life.

Across the East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) region, there have been significant improvements in the breadth of policies and the provision of programmes supporting the needs of young children, mothers, and their families. However, there is insufficient understanding of the full landscape of available policies, services, and programmes for young children and families. Even strong ECD systems can have service and programme gaps, meaning that children and families may not have access to effective interventions that address their needs.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study was to improve understanding of the current ECD landscape of policy, programme, and service provision in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore. The four geographies were selected by the study funders as the first set for exploration, and further country chapters may be added to this volume.

This study was the first of its kind to be conducted in the EAP region. It had three key objectives:

- 1 Provide comprehensive information to donors, service providers, government agencies, and other key stakeholders about what ECD policies, programmes, and services are currently provided in each country.

- 2 Identify any gaps in the ECD system in each country that may merit action, with particular attention to the level of integration of policies, programmes, and services within the ECD landscape.
- 3 Provide recommendations for areas that require additional funding, programming, service integration, or evaluation, in order to strengthen the ECD landscape in each country.

There is tremendous energy and interest on the part of stakeholders across the regional ECD sector in accelerating progress and enhancing programmes, services, and policies that will improve life outcomes for young children. The results of this study will help stakeholders, particularly donors – who are its primary audience – to identify where new or enhanced programmes, policies, or funding may be required to enhance ECD or attain the desired outcomes for children and families. Opportunities for sector development, collaborative initiatives between stakeholders, and areas for enhanced ECD research and evaluation activities are also outlined in the findings of this study.

Approach

The landscape study drew on two widely used ECD frameworks to guide data collection, synthesis, and reporting of ECD policies, services, and programmes: the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) for Early Childhood Development (UNICEF and WHO) and the World Bank's 25 Key Early Childhood Development Interventions.² These frameworks were selected because they provide a comprehensive overview of the multisectoral policies, programmes, and services within ECD.

A landscape study approach was selected because it provides an overview of what is currently provided (policies and programmes) and highlights areas in which gaps may exist. This landscape study also included available information about programme evaluations to provide insight into ways in which evaluation and ECD evidence could be strengthened in each of the four countries and across the region.

The study used a mixed-methods approach to data collection using a combination of desk-based research and expert interviews. Three research questions guided the study:

- 1 What parenting and ECD policies, programmes, and services are currently being implemented across each country aimed at families with children between the ages of 0 to 6 years?
- 2 What gaps currently exist in the ECD policy and programme provision in each country when mapped against international frameworks?
- 3 What evaluations of ECD programmes and services have been undertaken?

For China, Indonesia, and the Philippines, four representative provinces in each country were also selected for further examination of programmes and policies. This was included in recognition of the geographical and economic diversity of these three countries and to provide insights into how ECD policy and programme provision may differ within a country.

The method for the study was a sequential approach, adapted from a literature review methodology, which set a standard process for the identification of ECD programmes and policies and the screening of identified programmes and policies for inclusion. In each

country, ECD experts were interviewed to provide additional perspectives about the strengths and opportunities in the ECD landscape.

Data was synthesised to provide an overall summary of the landscape of ECD programmes and policies in each country, as well as where there may be a need for further evaluations and programme and sector strengthening. Based on the data synthesis, recommendations were provided on ways to strengthen the ECD sector. The recommendations were focused on the potential actions for a key target audience of donors and focused on the ways in which donors could be actively engaged in sector strengthening activities and based on both the current landscape and the best available evidence for ECD programmes.

Regional findings

Across the four countries there has been a clear increase in holistic support to children, families, and the community, through both financial investment and programmatic offerings. In China, this is observed in both the recent development of long-term policies that support children and mothers and the implementation of preventative measures to improve the quality and availability of care to women and children. In Indonesia, the government has developed strong inter-ministerial collaboration, while grassroots organisations have concurrently designed and implemented innovative programmes to reach and engage parents in changing specific caregiving behaviours. In the Philippines, aside from passing legislation, government and non-governmental stakeholders have also come together to champion key ECD issues, such as the promotion of breastfeeding. Finally, in Singapore, the government has led the way with significant long-term investments in ECD that are both broad-based and targeted to meet the needs of all families.

The strengths of each geography and the significant policy and programmatic strides made into children's development are further explored later in this chapter and in detail in the report. It has been a period of unprecedented positive sector growth and evolution, and sectors across all four geographies are working toward improved outcomes for babies, young children, and their families.

Nonetheless, gaps persist across the region. These include:

- A paradoxical “double burden” of stunting and obesity, where Indonesia, the Philippines, and China all have continuing challenges with malnutrition and stunting in some areas, and all four countries are experiencing increasing rates of childhood overweight and obesity. The reasons for this are varied and complex, but include access to and availability of healthy food, caregiver knowledge of healthy feeding and eating practices, and reduced physical activity in children.
- Inequity of access to health services for women and children that affects some populations. This is due to financial barriers as well as lack of availability of health services in rural or remote areas. A shortage of trained professionals contributes to challenges of access.
- A lack of good evidence on the home learning environment, which has been shown to be critical for ECD, especially for very young children, who are likely to be cared for at home rather than in formal childcare settings. The home learning environment includes access to books, playthings, and caregivers who provide sensitive and responsive caregiving.
- A need to attend to fathers' roles in caregiving. While evidence indicates that fathers have an impact on ECD, the majority of services and programmes have focused on

supporting the caregiving practices of mothers. Few, if any, programmes work specifically with fathers to enhance the ways in which they can interact and provide care for their children. Other caregivers (e.g., grandparents) have traditionally also not been included in programmes that aim to enhance caregiving skills.

- The protection of the most vulnerable groups of children and families. In China, Indonesia, and the Philippines, rates of birth registration are lower than expected in certain regions. Birth registration is a critical step to ensuring access to services (e.g., health services in China) and protection from exploitation and abuse.
- The lack of up-to-date and reliable data. This is present in all four countries to varying degrees and in varying areas of ECD. Without reliable data, it is difficult for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to understand the context, track progress to achieve goals, and to address gaps in provision.
- The absence of localised research evidence and evaluations. The absence of local programme evaluations prevents stakeholders from having pertinent information to support evidence-informed decision making about programme scale up, sustainability, or the need for programme modification. The lack of localised evidence also prevents stakeholders and policymakers from having a clear and accurate understanding of the pertinent issues and the key barriers in addressing these issues.

Based on the analysis of regional strengths and gaps, we developed a set of strategic recommendations to guide the actions of donors and stakeholders. These recommendations focus on:

- The generation and utilisation of more robust data to inform decision making about programmes and policies. This allows policymakers, researchers, and programme developers to understand the overall state of children’s health and development, coverage of interventions, and any gaps that exist, and subsequently to make informed decisions.
- The coordination of stakeholders and system actors to ensure effective implementation of policies and programmes. Improving coordination across stakeholders would not only benefit families in ensuring easy access to services, but would lead to systemic improvement by reducing inefficiencies and wasted resources.
- Enhancing ECD workforce training and recognition to minimise attrition and support continuity of programme provision. This includes not just ensuring a clear set of standards and expectations, but also improving remuneration, working conditions and the status of the workforce in society.
- Supporting high-quality, independent programme evaluations to build the local and regional ECD evidence base. Understanding whether a programme or policy works or meets the needs of the target population and whether it is or can be implemented with fidelity is imperative to understanding what is meaningful to scale up or continue funding support.
- Fostering a policy environment that is focused on the needs of children and families. By centring policies and regulatory frameworks around the needs of children and their families, governments move away from siloed structures towards keen considerations on what is needed to support the whole child’s development.

Country findings

China

A total of 29 national Chinese policies and 63 ECD programmes were screened in for this study. Of the 63 programmes, 55 are delivered by non-governmental organisations, while the remaining eight are delivered by the government. The majority of programmes fall within the component of Opportunities for Early Learning, with an even distribution of programmes across the other four components. The policy structure of China is such that each national policy is then adapted for regional implementation, based on specific population needs or priorities. Therefore, in addition to the 29 national ECD policies, China also has 48 provincial level sub-policies within the select provinces. Only 14 of the 63 programmes have publicly available evaluations. Four provinces were also studied to provide additional insight and to account for the large geographical and economic diversity in China. These provinces were Guangdong, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Gansu. While the assessment of four geographies is by its nature limited in scope, it helps to illustrate some of the realities of service availability and implementation at a local level.

Strengths

Through its policy framework, which comprises 29 national ECD-related policies, China has demonstrated a deep policy commitment to improving the lives of mothers, infants, and young children. This has been paired with increased investments nationally to ensure that families, regardless of socioeconomic status, are able to access health services, through the national health insurance scheme, and early learning opportunities, through subsidies for preschool education. Furthermore, China has made rapid, important strides in reducing infant, under-five and maternal mortality rates through expanding pre-natal care and investing in healthcare infrastructure. This policy framework has dramatically expanded service provision and policy protections for huge numbers of people in the world's most populous country.

Gaps

Nonetheless, gaps persist. While the government has played a significant role nationally in closing crucial gaps in areas such as stunting reduction, health service provision, and access to preschool education, challenges remain at the local level due to a lack of local capacity, reliable data, physical inaccessibility, and need for adaptation of national programmes and policies to local contexts. This is exacerbated by a distinct urban-rural divide that affects multiple ECD sectors. Furthermore, issues such as maternal mental health and responsive and sensitive parenting currently lack local research that can help stakeholders gain a clear understanding of strengths, gaps, and areas for enhancement. Finally, there is also a need to ensure high quality, targeted training across the ECD workforce such that the needs of children and families can be adequately met.

Recommendations

In China, donors would be best placed to work closely with local and national government on commonly identified areas of need. The recommendations below focus on issues that cut across multiple NCF components. More detailed recommendations can be found in Chapter 4 - China.

- 1 Retain and train the ECD workforce:** With inconsistent training, low pay, and a lack of professionalisation across the workforce, China faces an urgent issue with retaining and improving quality of midwives, carers, community health nurses, educators, and the many others who interact with babies, young children, and their families. Donors may consider working with local service providers to develop evidence-based training content and ensure that this content is delivered through effective training approaches.

- 2 **Improve coordination across sectors:** Donors can consider ways to work with community-based service providers, families, and the local government to identify ways to improve service coordination and to streamline support for families.
- 3 **Strengthen data-driven decision making across the ECD sector:** The lack of reliable, up-to-date data affects all areas of ECD. High quality data and monitoring is an essential part of the evidence-based decision-making process, for both policymakers and programme providers. Donors should ensure that any programmes they fund have embedded mechanisms for evaluation and data monitoring, which can then be shared publicly in order to inform better-informed decision-making at both the programme and policy levels.

Indonesia

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago and its fourth most populous country, with geographic spread across approximately 17,500 islands and 700 different ethnic groups that speak about 1,000 different languages or dialects, with attendant religious, cultural, and historical diversity. It is also a young and rapidly urbanising country: two-thirds of its population is between 15 and 64 years of age, and by 2030 it is estimated that the same proportion of people will live in urban settings.³

A total of 54 programmes and 19 policies relating to ECD were examined for this study. Both programmes and policies are represented within each component of the NCF indicating that all key areas of ECD are being addressed in the country. Four provinces – Nusa Tenggara Timur, West Java, Papua, and Riau Islands – were studied in further detail to provide additional insights to province-specific needs, service provision, and programmatic gaps. Most provinces benefited from both national programmes alongside programmes that were specifically designed and delivered for the local population.

Strengths

The Indonesian government has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the ECD sector, particularly since 2011, when the National Grand Design was established. This is evidenced by its commitment to reducing rates of stunting and the introduction of long-term strategies for early childhood care and education. Financial and strategic policies that aim to improve the early education sector, with a focus on improving the quality of the workforce, also demonstrate a national commitment to ECD. The government has also embedded strong inter-ministerial collaboration – so essential in this area of policy that crosses diverse sectors – to address complex, cross-sectoral issues such as stunting, integrated childcare, and early learning. The country also has a strong community base, with local stakeholders and organisations providing interventions and programmes to meet the needs of local children and families.

Gaps

The study found that while policies at the national level demonstrate significant strength and focus on early childhood, Indonesia's key challenge is programme implementation at the local level. While there has been a national emphasis on learning and development for the youngest children in Indonesia, this has come in tandem with increasing decentralisation of decision-making and programme implementation to the provinces, away from the national government, which complicates frontline provision. These challenges are complex, including inadequate capacity at local level, challenges with resource allocation – both human and budgetary – and local government prioritisation that does not always count ECD among its most urgent needs.

Recommendations

Given the thriving grassroots space in Indonesia, donors and stakeholders can contribute to advancing ECD and bolstering existing initiatives in Indonesia. The recommendations

below focus on the cross-cutting issues. More detailed recommendations can be found in Chapter 5 – Indonesia.

- 1 Scaling programmes and replicating approaches:** Donors might consider taking existing and effective programmes and interventions and working with partners to a) scale these programmes to new regions or new target populations, and/or b) apply effective programme elements to new initiatives.
- 2 Supporting greater awareness of the importance of aspects of nurturing care for babies and young children to enable integration into national policy priorities:** Building awareness and research on the importance of policies and programmes that support fathers and fatherhood should be a priority. It is well-evidenced that supporting fathers has a positive impact on women’s participation in the workforce, on reduction of domestic violence, and that it improves outcomes for children. Caregiver mental health is also known to be critical to children’s development, but in many geographies, including Indonesia, this area is not yet well reflected in policy.
- 3 Increasing advocacy efforts with project partners and local government to enhance data collection and monitoring efforts.** Donors are in a unique position of being able to provide catalytic support to enable the development of data systems; skills for data collection, analysis, and interpretation; and approaches to leveraging data in decision-making that can enable better governance and policymaking. Better and more complete data will contribute to evidence-informed decision making about where and how programmes need to be implemented, de-implemented, or modified to better meet the needs of the local population.
- 4 Play an active role in the coordination of civil society.** Our study reveals that there are areas of significant overlap in service provision, in part due to the lack of coordination between players in the sector. Expert interviews also focused on the need to bring key stakeholders together to ensure that efforts are not unnecessarily duplicated, leaving certain segments of the population or areas of the country without programmes or interventions.

The Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines is a sovereign state in archipelagic Southeast Asia, with over 7,600 islands spanning more than 300,000 square kilometres of territory. The Philippines has experienced rapid economic growth in the last decade⁴ and in 2019, the Philippines was one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. The Philippines has also experienced a rapid expansion of its workforce (ages 15-64). Given this backdrop, this is an opportune time for the country to allocate resources toward economic development and social services (education, health, and nutrition).³

A total of 76 programmes and 36 policies relating to ECD were examined for this study. There was an even distribution of ECD programmes across the five components of the NCF. The majority of the 36 ECD policies assessed were in the areas of Adequate Nutrition and Safety and Security. Four provinces were studied to provide additional insight: Cavite, Palawan, Mountain Province, and Basilan. These provinces benefited from both national programmes alongside programmes that were specifically designed and delivered for the local population.

Strengths

The Philippines government has demonstrated significant commitment to the early years through various legislation alongside the formation of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council. The Council, a government agency, addresses cross-cutting priorities in the areas of health, nutrition, early education, and social services for children

0-4 years old. In 2018, the ECCD Council, with the support of UNICEF, adopted the National ECCD Strategic Plan 2019-2030. Philippines also has developed broad-based comprehensive programmes, such as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (4Ps) that seek to meet the diverse needs of young children and their families.

Gaps

The analysis of programmes and policies has identified areas in which the Philippines can continue to enhance and support ECD. Despite concerted government efforts through both policies and programmes, there are ongoing challenges with childhood malnutrition, overweight, and obesity. Uptake of childhood immunisations, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, is another area of ongoing concern. The lack of consistent data about maternal mental health, preschool enrolment, and child protection means that there is little clarity about the seriousness of these issues and which areas should be considered priorities. Furthermore, there is a need to ensure that the ECD workforce is adequately trained to engage with families and ensure appropriate support is provided to children, women, and families. Finally, while the government has put in place policies to ensure children and women are protected, there are gaps in implementation and enforcement.

Recommendations

Private philanthropists, institutional foundations, and donors can play an important part in improving lives of young children and families in the Philippines. In addition to the gaps discussed above, donors can play a role in addressing the cross-cutting issues that affect the entire ECD sector. The recommendations below focus on the cross-cutting issues. More detailed recommendations can be found in Chapter 6 – The Philippines.

- 1 Build the local knowledge base:** There are gaps in understanding of the impact of programmes and policies on families and young children. Donors can help to build this knowledge base by supporting organisations to conduct evaluations and working with local government units (LGUs) to embed learning into programme implementation. Donors can also advocate for the national government to strengthen policymaking in areas of most need.
- 2 Build the capacity of local government units:** While the government has demonstrated a commitment to ECD through national-level policies, the implementation of these policies through programme provision at the local level is the responsibility of the LGUs. Capacity and capability within LGUs can be significant barriers to programme implementation. Lack of adequate funding, shortages of trained staff, and insufficient knowledge about the importance of ECD interventions all have an impact on what is, or can be, implemented by LGUs.

Donors can help build capacity of LGUs by providing funding for training to build a skilled workforce, working with LGUs to conduct local needs analyses to understand the priorities of the local population, and working with LGUs to request required resources from the national government.

- 3 Strengthen data-driven decision making across the ECD sector:** The Philippines does not currently have consistent, periodic national surveys to collect household data and to understand shifts within families and communities. These shifts can affect ECD in significant ways, and having reliable data would aid in evidence-informed policy making. At the LGU level, methods of data collection are inconsistent and sometimes outdated. Within ECD, reliable local data is as important as national level data, especially considering that most programme delivery is conducted by the LGUs.

Donors can ensure that any programmes they fund have embedded mechanisms for evaluation and data monitoring, which can be shared publicly to inform decision-

making. Donors can also provide support to the programmes they fund to use data and evidence in decision making for programme sustainment or scale-up. Finally, donors can increase advocacy efforts at the national level to increase the consistent collection of data.

Singapore

Singapore has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last 60 years, taking the city-state from humble beginnings to the world's most globally competitive economy, boasting a highly skilled workforce ranked third in the world. These relatively rapid changes have been brought about through strong leadership, careful governance and policy planning, and a track record of strong implementation of these policies on the ground.

A total of 83 programmes, two services, and 13 policies relating to ECD were examined for this study. The majority of programmes (72 of 83) focused on the NCF component of Opportunities for Early Learning. The 13 policies spanned all areas of the NCF except Adequate Nutrition.

Strengths

The country's commitment to progress is evident in its ECD landscape. This is fuelled in part by advances in early childhood research. The government of Singapore has also committed to a national focus on child and maternal health and well-being to '...support our young achieve their maximum human development potential.'⁵ Furthermore, the government had made significant investments to infrastructure, workforce, and interventions to ensure that children and families are able to access quality programmes that are carefully regulated. Additionally, the government has put in put various financial and non-financial support, such as the Baby Bonus Cash Gift and extended paternity leave to support families.

Gaps

The research indicates that there are areas in which Singapore can continue to make progress in the ECD landscape. First, while the population in general enjoys the security of stable housing due in part to strong government policies, there are smaller groups of families with distinct needs who may still struggle with providing their children with safe and secure homes. Second, increasing concerns about obesity and overweight in young children point to the need to equip families with the right tools to access the 'right' kind of nutrition and instil healthy dietary habits for long term health.

In areas where Singapore has many services and programmes, for example in Good Health and Opportunities for Early Learning, the research indicates that coordination of and integration between programmes and providers may require additional attention. Due to circumstance, location, or other factors, some families may still not be able to access needed programmes and services. In other cases, families must navigate a complex system and may have less support than they need, leading to delays in access and intervention for identified issues. New government-led initiatives to address these issues through multi-agency taskforces has started the process of addressing these gaps.

Recommendations

Donors can play an important part in improving lives of young children and families in Singapore. In particular, donors can work with both the government and service providers to test and adapt effective programmes. The recommendations below focus on the cross-cutting issues found through the study. More detailed recommendations for each of the five NCF components can found in Chapter 7 – Singapore.

- 1 Improving coordination of services across the ECD sector:** Donors can consider working with service providers, practitioners, and policymakers to identify ways in which to help families of young children navigate a comprehensive but sometimes complex system.
- 2 Improving retention and quality of the ECD workforce.** Singapore, like many other countries, is facing a high rate of turnover and attrition of the ECD workforce. Donors can work with service providers and policymakers to support efforts to understand the reasons for turnover and attrition and can support programmes aimed at providing mental health services for staff in the ECD sector, as burnout and stress are frequently cited challenges.
- 3 Strengthening data and monitoring systems.** High quality data and monitoring is an essential part of the evidence-based decision-making process, for both policymakers and programme providers. Donors can support the work of service providers to enhance data collection processes and encourage the ongoing sharing of data between service providers and policymakers. Donors can also work with researchers to identify areas in which data collection and monitoring can be improved or enhanced.

Conclusion

This report represents the first step in building a consolidated and coherent understanding of ECD programmes and policies across China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore. It does so by bringing together a comprehensive desktop search with insights from leading experts within each country. The analysis and subsequent country and regional recommendations present timely and relevant ways for donors and other interested stakeholders to strengthen the sector within each country and across the region. Additionally, this is a critical juncture for stakeholders to consider how they may work together to further regional ECD learning and collaboration.

How to read this report

The report on the ECD landscape in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore presents the following detailed information:

- **Method:** Detailed information is provided about the method used to conduct the landscape study. This chapter also includes information about the state of the global ECD evidence for the region using the UNICEF-Campbell Mega Map.
- **Cross-cutting findings:** Findings that cut across all four countries are presented, with a focus on common strengths, gaps, and areas of opportunity for donors and other stakeholders at a regional level. The cross-cutting findings are common to at least three of the four countries included in the study.
- **Country specific chapters:** Findings for each country are presented in alphabetical order. Each chapter includes key cross-cutting recommendations, as well as specific recommendations pertaining to each NCF component, details on the ECD policies and programmes that were examined for the study, and information about all publicly available programme evaluations for shortlisted programmes. Detailed information for every shortlisted programme is provided in an appendix for each chapter.

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