



# APC Regional ECD Research Online Launch

## MEETING NOTES

DATE AND TIME	6 July 2023 / 15:00 – 18:00 SGT	
LOCATION	Zoom	
AUTHOR	Kew Yu Jing	
PRESENTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Esther Goh, CEI</li><li>• Dr J. Satrijo Tanudjojo, Tanoto Foundation</li><li>• Maryanna Abdo, CEI</li><li>• Assoc Prof Robyn Mildon, CHILD</li><li>• Rushda Majeed, Van Leer Foundation</li></ul>	
APC STAFF	Jasmine Khin, Kew Yu Jing, Ooi Koon Peng, Rafid Shidqi, Stacey Choe, Sue Fertal Toomey, Suyin Liu, Theresa Cua	

## Background

Early childhood development lays the foundation for a child's physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being, and is a strong predictor of long-term development. The [Regional Early Childhood Development \(ECD\) Landscape Study](#), conducted by the [Centre for Evidence and Implementation \(CEI\)](#) and supported by 12 philanthropic organisations in Asia, is a comprehensive mapping of ECD policies and early childhood programmes in the region, with particular focus on China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore.

Through this research, donors and key stakeholders can identify gaps and opportunities for sector development and collaboration to attain better outcomes in areas such as funding, programming, service integration, and evaluation for ECD.

## Key Takeaways

- While governments have made significant commitments and investment into early childhood development across the region, gaps exist especially in local implementation—Broad recommendations include capacity-building for the ECD workforce and local governments, improving access to healthcare and nutrition, improving sectoral coordination between key actors—from government to funders to service providers.
- Reliable data is critical in informing the state of ECD, identifies implementation gaps in ECD programmes and policies, and guides better decision-making within the sector for improved outcomes.



- Local policy decisions require a localised evidence base that considers unique cultural and geographical nuances, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach.
- In scaling programmes, working with governments to leverage their existing systems and networks is beneficial and sustainable. Their expertise in operational scalability is invaluable to achieve long-term success.

## Presentation of Key Findings: Regional ECD Landscape Study

- In his opening address, [Tanoto Foundation](#) CEO **Satrijo Tanudjojo** shares how the landscape study aligns with the foundation's efforts in catalysing support for ECD initiatives. With ECD issues central to their work, Tanoto Foundation was the first foundation to approach APC putting together this study.

The deep dive into the contexts of ECD in each country will also help inform donors and philanthropists on their funding decisions, allowing them to better support the delivery of quality ECD services.

- The study examined ECD policies, programmes, and service offerings across four countries: China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore. In recent years, there has been **greater emphasis on ECD issues at the community level**. This is evident through greater attention given to positive caregiving practices and increases in public and philanthropic funding for ECD services.
- Main insights from findings include:
  - All countries in the landscape study have seen increased commitment and investments in ECD from government, and progress in various ECD sectoral outcomes.
  - All countries share a common issue regarding **nutrition**, albeit on different fronts:
    - China, Indonesia, and the Philippines face continuing challenges in malnutrition and stunting;
    - All countries face an increase in rates of childhood obesity;
  - While national commitment and policies for ECD have increased, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines **continue to face challenges in local implementation, especially for rural areas**; often at sub-national levels, local communities face resource and capacity constraints and the lack of sustainable financing.
  - In Singapore, while early childhood services are largely available, there is a **need to improve access to ECD services** especially for families with special and multiple needs, and provide support in navigating a highly complex ECD system
  - Some recommendations to address these shared challenges include:
    - **Training, retaining and recognising the early childhood workforce** beyond the most direct actors of educators and healthcare workers, but extending efforts to social workers, learning support practitioners, and etc.
    - **Improving availability of information and access** to healthy food and the 'right' nutrition
    - **Better coordination in systems** and actors to reduce gaps and overlaps in service provision
    - **Capacity-building** for local governments
    - Expanding the **concept of caregiving** beyond maternal roles to **fathers and grandparents** as women are increasingly involved in the workforce (across all countries).



- Strengthening the capacity for **data-driven decision-making**, with a specific focus on developing a **localised evidence base** in order to make informed decisions about scalability according to regional needs (across all countries);
- More information on the key research findings can be found on the [Executive Summary](#) or through the [launch recording](#).

### Improving ECD Outcomes through Parenting and Transforming Cities

*Rushda Majeed, Chief Programme Officer at Van Leer Foundation, shares about the organisation's ECD initiatives and the key factors contributing to their success in achieving scale.*

- The [Van Leer Foundation](#)'s work and [new strategy](#) (2020 -2023) pivoted its ECD focal areas towards **parenting** and caregiving efforts, as well as creating **vibrant cities** that maximise the experiences of children and their families.
- The Van Leer Foundation focuses on **developing and sharing knowledge to scale ideas** by connecting businesses, foundations, and civil society with governments who are already operationally working at scale to address unmet needs.
  - One example is [Urban95](#), an initiative that aims to improve the lives of children and families living in urban environment. This initiative works with partners to ensure cities are designed and developed in a way that considers the needs and well-being of children and their families.
  - Urban95 collaborates with government actors, such as national and city governments, to leverage its operational success. It also relies on technical partners, frontline workers, and communities to co-create solutions.
- To scale impact, it is crucial to **tap into existing systems** as projects grow. Additionally, **simplicity** is necessary to adapt these models to as many contexts as possible.
  - Van Leer Foundation's [work on parenting](#) builds on pre-existing government systems and networks to coach parents from low-income backgrounds about parenting practices.

### Improving ECD Outcomes through translating research into policy

*Robyn Mildon ([CHILD](#)) emphasises the need to put evidence and policy into practice for the ECD sector.*

- The benefits research will not be realised unless we **effectively and efficiently implement them in practice**. To effectively incorporate innovations into policies and systems, we need to use implementation strategies. Examples of such strategies include tailoring interventions to fit existing systems, educating and training stakeholders, or offering support for field staff.
- **Measurement is vital** to implementation science. Although establishing monitoring and evaluation measures is challenging, it is essential to **gather reliable and comprehensive data** in order to identify relevant obstacles. The collected data can **provide valuable insights into the success of projects** by examining their acceptability and feasibility.