

THE MINUTES OF ECD SUB-CLUSTER MEETING

Venue: Lemigo Hotel, Kigali.

Date: January 25th, 2019

Chaired by: Dr. Anita Asiiimwe; Coordinator, NECDP

Co-Chaired by: Michael Banda, Chief ECD, UNICEF

The meeting Agenda

- Welcome and Opening Remarks;
- Reports from the two technical working groups
- Preparation of the 1st Conference on Early Childhood Development on 11th-12th June 2019
- Update and resolutions from NGFC Steering Committee Meeting Presentation of GEWE Priorities -2018/19
- Feedback on presentations

The meeting background

The main purpose of the meeting is to continue to strengthen the Early Childhood Development Sub-cluster as an important coordination and cooperation platform, as well as a part of the National Gender and Family Cluster (NGFC) and give an update on ongoing projects in the ECD areas.

Opening of meeting

The meeting was opened by the NECDP Coordinator Dr .Anita Asiiimwe. She started her remarks by welcoming everyone and wishing them a happy new year 2019. She then took the opportunity to remind everyone that the efforts to combat malnutrition are as strong as they have ever been, if not stronger, over the past year. She then argued that anyone who closely listens to the speeches of his Excellency, President Paul Kagame, would hear that no matter what the subject was that he would always come back malnutrition as one of the root causes for poverty and one of the main obstacles for development. As such, she talked about their role of ECD- services acceleration and prevention of stunting, as the NECDP and partners, she said that 'we journey together and the government of Rwanda is counting on all of us to reduce stunting in record time'. She then declared the meeting open and introduced Michael Banda, Chief of ECD at UNICEF Rwanda, who would act as co-chair in that day's meeting, in the place of Nathalie Hamoudi, Deputy Country Representative UNICEF, who had to attend to an urgent matter on last minute.

Presentation on Community dialogue to reduce stunting among children

Silver Karumba, a nutrition expert from USAID, he first presented on community dialogues held to prevent and reduce stunting among children.

He went further to explain that the dialogues had organized by NECDP in collaboration with the districts from November to December 2018, and that they were conducted in 13 districts with high rate of stunting and poverty (Rusizi, Karongi, Rutsiro, Rubavu, Ngororero, Nyabihu, Gakenke, Nyamagabe, Nyaruguru, Huye, Ruhango, Bugesera and Kayonza).

He pointed out that all community dialogues had two parts, first discussions with district partners followed by a community dialogue at the site and the main objectives of community dialogue were:

- Increasing awareness and knowledge on stunting prevention among young children through integrated ECD services
- Deliberate on the roles and responsibilities of all community stakeholders in addressing stunting issues

The dialogues were attended by parents (mothers and fathers, especially pregnant and lactating women and their children less than 6 years old), Community volunteers, Local leaders, Army and police, Partners in Nutrition, WASH and ECD, Faith based Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, and private sector members.

Key activities included:

- Meeting with partners intervening in Nutrition, WASH and ECD area,
- Growth monitoring and promotion services at the site for children under 5 years of age including height for age
- FP services for those who were interested
- Awareness on management and use of nutrition commodities (FBF, Milk and Onger)
- Exhibition of the activities of the partners of Nutrition, WASH and ECD
- Child feeding
- Mass media coverage

The following were the main challenges:

- Men are less interested on child nutrition and health
- Nutrition knowledge on wasting and stunting is very low
- Kitchen garden and cooking demonstration not properly functioning
- Low coverage and mismanagement of Nutrition commodities
- Low awareness on nutrition and Hygiene practices

- weak collaboration of the stakeholders at District, sector, villages level

Finally, the presenter outlined next steps:

- 28 January: conduct Food, Nutrition and WASH Technical Working Group
- Present and discuss the annual results by partners
- Discussing joint Supportive supervision with partners in February 2019 (Date, Check List
- Present nutrition documents that are under revision (Nutrition policy, MIYCN, CBNP, Integration of Monitoring into Immunization)

Discussion on first two presentations

The discussion on the two presentations was started by giving the word to Martin Ongol, an advisor at DFID Rwanda. He started by thanking the presenters for their good work, he then moved on to the brought up issue with mismanagement on fortified blended foods. He wondered whether it is actually mismanagement, or is the families having food security stress where others are consuming provided food, or the way the portions are given in the wrong way not promoting best practices, or something else?

The first presenter, Silver Karumba, a nutrition expert from USAID noted on the issue that one thing, which could be contributing, to mismanagement is surely family size, especially mothers with three or more children, they share the commodities with the children they have. Further they have found that it is relatively common to sell the products, where mothers take the products and sell them.

Alexis Mukumbitsi, head of department at NECDP added that mismanagement has another component, namely one where the problem is the storage. He said that if you go to the stock room in a health center it is not unlikely you find the product is managed poorly. He then said he thought they need to apply supervision and better manage these commodities to improve the health centers management of this product.

Veniste Muhamyankaka from Sun Alliance also had a question on the first presentation, namely on behavior change and what they had found, if anything, that could contribute to behavior change in the low level institutions, and what they what might have thought about is the poor functionality of the current plans, and finally how they had found the local ownership of these communities.

Egidia Umutesi, the Education Technology Program Manager at World Vision Rwanda started by thanking the presenters, adding that her question also had to do with behavior change in its essence what had they learned about it during the process?

Silver Karumba replied that on the issue of behavior change, if you look at the structure of the health centers, they are really independent, they receive trainings, they have the tools, and to reach our goals, its matter of updating these, their involvement is critical.

Freya De Clercq, from NECDP, also weighed in on the issue on behavior change, and said that she believes that they are working on integration of all aspects of ECD. She stated that parents who sell their fortified blended foods (FBF) do it because they are not aware of the impact it could have on their children's cognitive development. She further noted that this is something all ECD providers can help fix, for example, Partner in Health recently added new components in their parent education on nutrition support and parenting support groups. She then said that if we all provide holistic support on the ground, we can prevent this from happening. Related to that with reporting and program integration in the health centers, we have been training 13 master trainers, and 4 trainers per district, and over 1200 caregivers in the country, we are ready to share our tools whenever necessary.

Silver Karumba then went back to the issue of behavior change and noted that it is a complicated process; it is not overnight and that we are all part of this by leading with our own example. He then gave the example of a smoking doctor telling patient not to smoke, and said that these issues are already part of our culture, which is why we have such good results with breastfeeding, while for example food is harder to change, because it is equally entrenched. Nevertheless, he said, this only means that we will try harder. Regarding GMP, he noted that Rwandan compliance is very high, around 60-70 %. But that this doesn't mean that we can't get better, and that Fathers should also be a part of the message.

Gebremariam explained about the community dialogue in Kayonza and that it had been a wonderful event with all partners on joining the planning table. What came out was an action plan, where seven to ten NGO partners and service providers from the sector divided responsibility in the 12 sectors of Kayonza among themselves. He said that the platform was needed, as they had needed someone to catalyze the process and remind the sector to promote behavior change. He said he thought all partners were passionate to start the process and that they are now working with the staff of one sector to coordinate with the health partners so the service can reach the population. He then moved on to his original question, namely how to sustain the process. He stated that they had created this but wanted to know what the plan is for following up and holding people accountable, not only in the 13 districts, but also across other districts as well. His second question was on the integration of health services providers to get on board, which he said, in practice is not happening. He said that they need to find out the root causes for why height is not continuously reported in health checks and how we could decentralize this monitoring in an efficient way. He then noted that this should be possible as we currently do get high level data from health centers, and as partners they could do more to support, especially knowing that stunting is right there, and that the frameworks need to go all the way down to the local providers.

Katie Beck, the nutrition manager from Partners in Health, also thanked the presenters, and apologized if her comment was already known, but at a meeting she had recently attended on parenting work they had talked about the one district approach, and suggested they could attend this platform and present their work here as well.

The meeting co-chair thanked her for her suggestion, noted that the one district approach had been on the agenda in the two previous meetings, and would provide an update in the upcoming meeting as well. He further explained that while it had been on the previous draft for this meeting agenda as well, they had decided to table it. He then informed the participants that since the previous sub-cluster meeting they had had a meeting in Gicumbi with all partners and stakeholders. And when they had discussed implementation they had found that foreign programs do not match with all existing problems in individual families, and that they need to conduct continued profiling to find better indicators.

The meeting chair Asiimwe wanted to remind everyone that they are part of the people, and that everyone needed to see parents as stakeholders and not beneficiaries, in fact, she argued, they are the number one stakeholders when it comes to promote ongera and micronutrient powders. If it is not valued, parents are not aware of the powder's content, but when you explain, they get excited. She then gave the example that if wanted to cook a meal herself as nutritious as ongera is she would have to by multiple supplements from the pharmacy, something which the parents don't know. Further they are not informed well enough on the preparation, so they may be surprised or suspicious of color change during preparation, which would be easily fixed by informing them of this beforehand. She then moved on to the issue of the sustainability of the community dialogues, and explained that they had from day one emphasized that the local staff should carry it on, and some already have organized second dialogues. On growth monitoring she said she thought the health centers need to reenergize. Further [Central Government representatives] have not requested on this data, or emphasized it importance. They will only give us this data if we request for it. Then, she continued, they want to move more towards visualization, from the community so parents visiting the local health care centers can easily see their children's height for their age is in red, yellow, or green, and know that this is equally important as weight or other health indicators. Only then can we get regular data that we can count on it.

Emmanuel Hangamwana, a field coordinator from RWAMRE wanted to talk about the challenge of involving men in these issues, he said that maybe the programs themselves could do more to engage men so they can contribute more, as he pointed out that children are not only of women. Men might think they are not concerned by them, but that is not a good practice, and he said he thought the technical working group should do more to include men.

The meeting Chair Asiimwe asked whether RWAMREC participates in the TWG meetings, and if not, invited them to join as they surely have much to teach us on the men engage approach.

Reuben Muvunyi, a manager from ADRA then wondered if they had gone further to get the best practices, or identifying the strengths in applying these programs?

Rose Mutesi, from YWMnet, said that her organization often focus on teen mothers, and thought there should be more focus on cooking demonstrations, as most of these mothers have children that are already stunted, and that there is little use talking about kitchen gardens when they don't have access to land, with little knowledge and experience. Secondly, on the issue of men

engagement she said, that in fact it is often the men that are family breadwinners, and therefore decision makers on how to spend the money, which is why it would be essential to make them aware of the importance of preventing stunting and providing a nutritious diet for growing children.

The chair of the meeting agreed, saying that teen mothers are babies themselves, there is work going on how best to reach this group, those who have already become pregnant and have babies, often the babies are not registered, recently we changed the instruction that these children will be able to enroll into insurance scheme

Diane Umutoni, the gender program manager at FVA, wanted to share their experience from the community dialogue, where they counted the districts, and all partner took the lead on one each on subject, such as nutrition. To sustain this practice, she said, but if there was a forum, where those who took the lead could show what they were able to, and if that would be a successful model, it could be duplicated. She then said she has a question to Freya, and said that they are working on tools for children with disabilities, and that some disabilities are harder to detect if you are not knowledgeable, such as autism. She said their staff lacks this knowledge and wondered how to coordinate with relevant authorities to intervene with a functional tool in time. If they had thought about mapping the country or districts to do comparative study on effectiveness among districts.

Father Mudacyahwa from the Catholic church on his turn commented that there is so much milk, he doesn't understand there is a problem with stunting, and wondered if it was a matter of bad collaboration.

A representative from RUSA said that it was his first time attending a cluster meeting, and explained he was from the retired university staff association and that they we wanted to support NECDP. For the issue of Ongera, he wondered if there had been any efforts for self-assessment that parents can do them self and measure progress.

Mebwe Kabadege the Country Director of Community Fountain Organization active in Kamonyi district said that they plan to implement integrated ECD in new centers, and are going to start in one sector and later scale up, my question is about integration. She said there are many community based programs on nutrition, but that ECD is still a parallel program, therefore integration is not yet effective. She then wondered how to get this integration effective and successfully implemented?

Bosco Karenzi, the Zonal Manager from Global Communities first had comment on strengthening home based ECD:s, saying he had found them more effective as the parents own it and community health workers can more easily monitor it, making it more effective and manageable. Secondly on increased supervision he said that no one is monitoring how they function in the community, and that if we do this, we can even coach them ourselves, which would really help them to own the issue on how to fight malnutrition.

Silver Karumba then commented on the issue of men's involvement, and pointed out that if we would compare it now, and five years ago, he thinks we would already see some improvement. Still, the points highlighted, he said, are critical, and we haven't reached our goal, but there is progress, and we promise as partners to do even more.

Another participant talked about sustainability and suggested having a presentation of best practices.

Kristine Garn, a nutrition specialist from UNICEF wanted to comment on the issue of Ongera, which initially was introduced in Rwanda with acceptability for care givers, and with instructions for parents how to give it to the children, and how to use it. It seems, she said, that these practices have been eroded, and that adherence to instructions seems to have gone down. She then noted that since they have the knowledge and it has worked before, it should not be difficult to do it again.

Freya De Clercq then added on the issue of men engagement, adding that it might be true that a lot has happened in five years, but that even more has probably happened in the last 40 years. It may be that mothers are biologically more close to their children, but culturally in Rwanda that close affection between father and child used to be there and we want to bring that back. Further she said, they should talk more about vulnerability, saying that she doesn't necessarily like talk about putting a man at the head, but use a safe format where men feel safe, and to bring back a message of how important a father's affection is for development. On the issue of successful integration, she said that that is why we are here, that is what we are all doing, including those extra activities in our program, and knowing the importance of supervision. She agreed home based ECD is great for ownership, but that they need more of supportive supervision.

Connie Wu, the Country representative of Chance for Childhood said that they have been working on a model to identifying variations such as autism through a screening with a set of questions we ask.

Silver Karumba noted that a guiding document on how to integrate ECD in nutrition and wash activities will be presented in the next in the meeting.

After the discussion the meeting was paused for a coffee break.

The presentation on the ECD, Nutrition and WASH SBCC Strategy

After the coffee break Anastase Rwabuneza, the Communication & Advocacy Specialist at NECDP, held a presentation on the National Integrated ECD, Nutrition and WASH SBCC Strategy for 2018-2024.

He first explained that the Early Childhood Development Communication and Advocacy Strategy was developed by MIGEPFOF in 2017, and that following that RBC its partners (CRS/Gikuriro Project) developed the National Integrated Nutrition and WASH Social Behavior Change

Communication Strategy, which was then reviewed by HP TWG and Nutrition TWG. The two documents were merged by a task force composed by NECDP, RBC/RHCC, Social Cluster Ministries, UNICEF, CRS/Gikuriro Project, and the World Bank into the new “National SBCC Strategy for Integrated ECD, Nutrition and WASH 2018 - 2024 and was also reviewed by the HP TWG, the SC of NECDP and the SMT of RBC. The launch of SBCC dissemination was on January 17, 2019.

The main objectives of the strategy was to provide technical guidance at all levels for National SBCC programming Integrated ECD, Nutrition and WASH, and to implement integrated ECD, Nutrition and WASH SBCC in effective coordinated way. Further objectives included:

- Address key identified barriers in people’s behaviors related to integrated ECD, nutrition and WASH
- Provide guidance on key messages content and use
- Increase knowledge, raise attitudes and promote best practices around integrated ECD, nutrition and WASH
- Provide a framework for obtaining reliable data to generate information on the implementation of designed behavior communication interventions on ECD, nutrition and WASH

The strategy is developed to be used by Government (Social and economic cluster ministries, etc.), local government, CSOs, private sector, community members, care takers and are givers, parents, UN agencies & Development Partners.

Rwabuneza then quickly went through the literature review, as well as some key facts underlying the need for the strategy;

- 38 % of children under age of 5 in Rwanda are stunted and 14% severely stunted.
- 2 % of children under age of 5 in Rwanda are wasted and less than 1% are severely wasted
- 9% of children under 5 of age in Rwanda are underweight and 2% severely underweight.
- 27 % of households use unimproved source of water. 12% of households had a place for hand washing and among them 37 % had water and soap
- 56 % of households do not treat their water prior to drinking.
- 29 % of households use an unimproved facility, with the majority 24 % using a pit latrine without a slab or an open pit.
- 13% of children age 36-59 months are attending an organized early childhood education program.
- 49% of children engaged with an adult household member in four or more activities that promote learning and school readiness
- 63% of children age 36-59 months are developmentally on track in literacy-numeracy, physical, social-emotional, and learning domains.



He then listed key negative behaviours and alternative behaviours to promote, as well as listing relevant audiences, the primary audience being pregnant women and lactating mothers, caregivers of children of 0 – 59 months, parents (fathers and mothers), and secondary audience being health care provider's community volunteers, young and adolescent girls and boys, grand-mothers and mother-in-laws, while tertiary audience include local leaders, opinion leaders, decision makers and CSOs.

Rwabuneza then explained that the main communication channels for the content in the strategy was expected to be interpersonal communication channels, community dialogues through different forums, mass media communication, cultural events, new technologies, printed materials; and other outdoor communication. Finally, he described the implementation plan for the strategy. He stated that the Social Cluster Ministries will do advocacy for resource mobilization and involvement of the local governments in implementing this SBCC Strategy, while the NECDP will oversee the overall coordination and implementation of this National SBCC Strategy, including but not limited to, organizing quarterly meeting of all related technical groups, including health Promotion TWG, to monitor the progress on regular basis. Finally, the Rwanda Biomedical Center and the Rwanda Health Communication Centre will chair National Health Promotion Technical Working Group activities to ensure all communications tools related to the implementation of SBCC Strategy are reviewed and approved.

The presentation on the 2019 ECD Multimedia Campaign

The next presentation was on the 2019 Early Childhood Development Multimedia Campaign, and was held by Rajat Madhok, Chief of Communication, Advocacy and Partnerships at UNICEF Rwanda.

He first pointed out the target audience would be parents and primary caregivers, especially those with young children aged 5 years and under. He then explained the campaign would be launching in May 2019, ongoing for two years into 2021, and that expected results includes supporting the implementation of the Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy, but that the work plan for the campaign is still to be determined.

Key activities and tools for the campaign will be television, including blast ECD messages at the beginning of the campaign to spark awareness and bring topics to the forefront of discussion, as well as radio, through Itetero, additional radio spots, blast ECD messages at the beginning and during key milestones of campaign. Further milestone events of the campaign would be the ECD center inauguration in Rutsiro, Tour du Rwanda, the Parenting Month in June 2019, and the World Children's Day.

Finally, the campaign would try to use more innovation tools such as, radio in car parks, internet of Good Things, Telecom, Social media and a ECD newsletter.



Discussion on two previous presentations

Alemayehu Gebremariam stated the conversation by pointing out that it is a great idea to roll out the strategy and its content, and noted the CRS would be happy to collaborate. On the campaign he noted, that in rural areas, there is a limitation on the reach of TV and social media, and wondered how to ensure the message is heard in remote and the most isolated villages.

Rajat Madhok agreed with Gebremariam and noted that this was exactly the intention, and that TV and social media are complements to main strategy. Further he pointed out that we still need to fill the gap on those barriers, and that existing studies should be complemented.

Gilbert Munyemana, the ECD and Education Manager at Plan International, wanted to give his appreciation for the strategy, but then wondered whether it could also include edutainment in line with entertainment, such as videos. He then further noted that while there are still relatively many people without access to internet or smartphones, these tools should not be underestimated, as was seen with the flooding videos Nyabugogo, where people showed the video with those without personal internet access. He then noted that in both nutrition and education, we ought not to see people as beneficiaries, but as producers for information for others. He then said that in Rwandan culture “we say, we don’t say”, and that we all know that there are things that everyone knows are forbidden, and that such culture could be expanded to other harmful practices and mainstreamed in school.

Madok then noted that they would definitely look at the community as content producers, and that they would take that as key feedback from the meeting.

Someone commented that additional communication platforms could be the Miss Rwanda competition and churches.

Presentation on the preparation process for upcoming ECD Conference

The next presentation was held by Moses Tumusiime, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Specialist at NECDP, on the preparation process for an upcoming ECD Conference.

He stated that the objective of the conference is to share evidence on local and international research findings on ECD, to bring awareness on the importance of ECD investment for human capital development, to strengthen multi-sectoral and international ECD partnerships, and to bring awareness to homegrown solutions to bridge the gaps in ECD. He then informed the participants that the conference theme would be “Investing in early years for optimum human capital development”, and that the conference would be held at Kigali Convention Center, from June 11th to 12th, 2019. Further, the conference would include plenary sessions featuring keynote speakers, panel discussions with experts, regional and country representatives to collectively address issues

and recommend solutions, as well as paper, video and other interactive presentations accepted through NECDP's call for proposals.

He then said that the conference would welcome 300 participants, with some 50 international delegates, more precisely the participants would include national and international ECD practitioners, development partners, international NGOs, civil society, academia, social cluster ministry and agency representatives, members of Senate and Parliament, local government, faith based organizations, religious institutions, Private Sector representatives, and Media.

As for results, Tumusiime, expressed they expected to increase knowledge on best practices for ECD implementation, strengthen advocacy for ECD investment at government at community level, strengthen multi-sectoral, regional and international partnerships for research and implementation of ECD, as well as to formulate recommendations for policy makers in the sectors of health, agriculture, health and education. Tumusiime then went thought the preparations timeline, noting that in February they would both publish a call for papers, and share the final concept note and proposed budget of the conference, while papers would be reviewed in March. He then thanked everyone for their presentation.

The word was then given to Micheal Banda who thanked Moses for his efforts, and reminded that this is not the only time this year that Rwanda will be an international example in ECD, but that the global forum on ECD this year in Macau, China, an assembly that happens only once in every two years, will this year be opened by the first lady of Rwanda by telecasting from Rwanda.

Presentation on the NGFC Steering Committee meeting

The final presentation of the meeting was given by Nadja Piironen, a Bilateral Associate Expert at MIGEPROF, summarizing the content from the NGFC Steering Committee meeting held in December 20th 2018.

She explained it has been the first bi-annual steering committee meeting, and that they had agreed on the following members: MIGEPROF, MIFOTRA, RAB, MINALOC, LODA, MINECOFIN, MINEDUC, MINEMA, MINICOM, RIB, NPPA, MINISPOC, MINIYOUTH, MINJUST, MOH, RBC, GMO, RDF, Rwandan Parliament, Rwandan Senate, Supreme Court of Rwanda, ONE UN/UN Women, World Bank, Sida, Co-Chairs, Network of INGO, Civil Society Platform, Unity Club, Rwanda Interfaith Council, Private sector, PSF, Rwanda Media Commission, and Academia.

The agenda of the meeting included presentations on the coordination mechanism in gender equality and family promotion to "Build the Family we want", NGM Priorities 2019-2020,

Preparations for the International Women's Day 2019, and briefings on the preparations for the Beijing +25 report and CSW 2019.

The participants were informed of some ongoing and upcoming NGFC activities including an ongoing study on GBV root causes and IOSC service delivery expected to be finalized by April 2019 and a review of policies including the National Gender Equality policy and the National Family Promotion policy.

The presentation also provided a summary on the NGM 2019-2020 priorities that were based on NST1 pillars within the four areas under NGM mandate:

Social Transformation pillar

- Family promotion, fighting against GBV, Child abuse
- Establishing new and strengthen existing family cohesion home grown initiatives.
- Implement the integrated health care services for GBV victims.
- Strengthen partnerships with the Private sector, CSOs, Faith Based Organizations for fighting GBV and child abuse
- Ensure that orphans are raised in families.
- ECD and Fighting against malnutrition
- Prevent and Manage all forms of malnutrition (acute and chronic)
- Ensure and sustain food security through supervision of distribution of Food and nutrients through existing programs
- Strengthening Multi-sectoral coordination through the National Early Childhood Development Program.

Economic Transformation pillar

- Women Empowerment:
 - Support and empower youth and women to create business through entrepreneurship and access to finance

Governance Transformation pillar

- Gender Equality Promotion:
 - Strengthen and promote gender equality and ensure equal opportunities for all Rwandans whilst fostering the culture of solidarity with vulnerable groups.
 - Mainstreaming gender across sectors, districts strategies, investments.

Finally, the presentation summarized the key resolutions from the steering committee meeting:

- MIGEPROF is committed to put in place guidelines for partners intervening in gender and family promotion, spread to every partner and validated together with partners
- Strategic plan of NGFC should be speeded up for better planning of all stakeholders
- NGFC Secretariat to be staffed
- Everyone is called upon to be mindful on bringing men and boys on board. MIGEPROF considers men's engagement as key actors in gender equality and family promotion.
- Conduct awareness raising about GBV and more specifically about the consequences of teenage pregnancies at all levels and in schools at different levels.
- There is a need for various institutions to take full ownership in implementing gender equality principles as MIGEPROF staff can't be everywhere.
- Directors of Planning in GoR are Gender Focal persons and responsible for gender mainstreaming
- Local leaders' capacities must be strengthened so they ensure gender mainstreaming in all their daily work.

Discussion

Alemayehu Gebremariam asked the first question in the discussion and wondered about the scope of the conference, and whether it would especially focus on any specific area, such as nutrition or wash, or if it would focus strictly on traditional ECD. He said this would be relevant information to know what examples they could highlight, especially as many countries are grappling on modalities, and how to package it with ECD, there for he thought this would be a great opportunity for Rwanda to display its strategy.

Meeting Chair Dr. Asimwe replied the conference will focus on all pillars under ECD and that the papers submitted should show how they are linked and improve the early years of life and what it means for the individual and the human capital index framework. Further, she said they could make sure that one of the main areas would focus on integration of ECD.

Martin Ongol also had a few comments, his first concern being the timeline, and wondered whether it was not too soon, as his opinion was the preparation for such conferences tend to take more time than expected.

Moses Tumusiime agreed that the time frame was short, but it was set in cooperation with RCS who had suggested these dates.

Meeting chair Asimwe then suggested that Martin could join the planning team, as she knows he is experienced in organizing such events.

Gilbert asked whether the paper submissions should be purely traditional research, or whether they also practical experiences.

More to that he noted their worry for the tight time frame, further recommended to get in touch with the organizers of the first African network conference in Nairobi, as it could be a good way to inform people across Africa, or even consider this meeting as its regional network.

Diane Umutoni wanted a clarification on the issue of paper proposals, on wondered if everyone should write an academic paper or what should be sent in for the call of proposals.

Freya De Clercq answered that interested institutions should feel free to send any form of proposals, both abstracts for academic papers, but also papers to pitch or present on practical experiences answered this question.

Micheal Bond noted that the next preparatory meeting would be looking at crosscutting themes, scientific evidence, programming, and practice, evidence and case studies, and that papers could follow into any of these aspects. He sid they could emphasize on an area or theme, as long as they contribute to the overall workshop and that it should be relevant to child development, and as inclusive as possible. Finally, on the number of participants he said it would need to managed as they are expecting 300, not 900, to attend.

Silver Karumba suggested the organizing committee could divide into two or more sub-groups, to held divide and organize tasks to be done.

The meeting chair noted that the next meeting to plan the conference would be in the first week of February, and that those interested would be welcome to join, and that they would email out information was the date was set.

Moses Tumusiime also thanked everyone for their comments and promised they would be considered before closing the discussion.

Closing Remarks

Michael Bond, acting Co-chair gave the closing remarks. He thanked all participants and said they could be very pleased to be part of the cluster meeting. While the meeting has gathered under many names, which at times has been confusing, but that they had now passed that formative phase and knew who we were. He then said he would once again like to thank everyone for their participation, but especially their actions, as they had moved from challenges to progress in ECD and nutrition, and he said he could see this cluster is helpful, as it provides a platform for honest feedback. Such interpersonal communication, he continued, is necessary to clear targets with clear impact. He noted that what we share among each other here also informs our programs. He then returned to the issue of never seeing families as end users or beneficiaries, but that they are core partners in our work, not passive recipients, as we are not giving aid but co-designers for our community



across the various outcomes. The then thanked the chair, and the participants again and closed the meeting.

Minutes taken by:



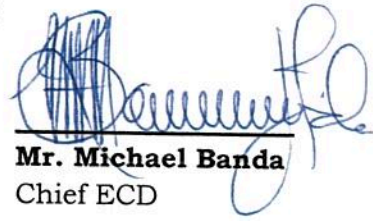
Moses Tumusiime
Partnerships and
Resource
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