

THE MINUTES OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT SUB-CLUSTER MEETING

Venue: Lemigo Hotel, Kigali.
Date: Friady May 10th, 2019
Chaired by: Alexis Mucumbitsi, Head of Nutrition and WASH, NECDP
Co-Chaired by: Nathalie Hamoudi, Deputy Country Representative, UNICEF

The meeting Agenda

- Welcome and Opening Remarks;
- Update on conference on ECD June 11-12, 2019
- Update on the National Parenting Curriculum
- Revised Nutrition Policy Document
- Update on NECDP strategic plan

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). The meeting will follow the resolutions on the previous ECD Sub-cluster meeting, as well as give an update on ongoing projects in the ECD areas.

Opening of meeting

The NECDP Head of Nutrition and WASH, Alexis Mucumbitsi opened the meeting. He started his remarks by welcoming everyone noting that it was his pleasure to be there in place of Dr. Anita Asiimwe. He then thanked the organizers for calling this ECD sub-cluster Meeting.

He then went on to thank UNICEF and particularly Natalie Hamoudi as the meeting co-chair. He then listed the topics for the meeting, starting with the ECD conference in June, the national parenting curriculum, which he noted required the participants' comments, the national ECD strategic plan, which he hoped could be approved by the meeting, as well as the nutrition policy document, which also required comments. He then once again thanked everyone and declared the meeting opened.

Presentation on upcoming ECD Conference

The first topic of the meeting was the Upcoming ECD conference, for which Immaculee Kayitare provided an update.

She first noted that this was the first international conference they would organize, as before they had only organized symposiums. To scale that up, and to share the Rwandan experience with a larger audience, they would now organize this first conference.

She explained that the theme of this year's conference is "*Investing in early years for optimum human capital development*", and that the objective of the conference would be to share research findings on ECD, bring awareness on the importance of ECD for human capital development, and to promote home-grown solutions to bridge the ECD gap. Further, the organizers hoped the conference would strengthen multi-sectoral and international partnerships and highlight possible areas of research collaboration.

Primarily, she said, they were hoping to receive content within the four following main themes and sub-themes.

1. Benefits of ECD and Development
 - a. Stunting
 - b. Parenting Education
 - c. Nutrition
 - d. Early Stimulation
 - e. WASH
 - f. Health – Maternal and Child Health
 - g. Impact on human development throughout the life course (primary school outcomes, workforce productivity, peace building, economy, etc.)
2. Workforce
 - a. Cost of program implementation and delivery
 - b. Utilizing Volunteer Workforces
 - c. Delivery Models
 - d. Quality Control Methods
3. Coordination Management
 - a. Grassroots
 - b. Private/Public/Religious Based Organizations' Partnerships

- c. Policy
 - d. Efficiency and Effectiveness of Programs
 - e. Advocacy, Impact and Accountability
4. Pedagogical approaches to ECD
- a. Holistic Child Care
 - b. Science of Early Stimulation and Play
 - c. Curriculum development
 - d. Training and delivery mechanisms
 - e. Information Communications and Technology

The conference would be organized on the 11-12th of June 2019, and they expected some 300 participants, from both Rwanda and abroad. The conference itself would include a variety of communication platforms, such as traditional panel discussions, presentations, roundtables, as well as more interactive side events as well.

She then noted that the online registration form was open and that they had so far received 18 papers, and three institutions that wanted to chair panels. As they had hoped to receive more proposals, Kayitare noted they would extend the registration deadline for another week. She then noted that the link to register and participate in the conference would be shared with the meeting participants.

Discussion on upcoming ECD Conference

The floor was then opened for questions on the upcoming conference. The first question was on what could be done to advertise the conference further and to increase its reach outside of Rwanda. Kayitare responded that to this they had already extended the deadline, to give more people the opportunity to take part of the conference.

Next someone asked why they should limit themselves to only 300 participants, as this would be a good opportunity to reach practitioners, volunteers, and other people, even outside of the conference, people could be reached through radio. Overall, it would be a good opportunity to get people nationally to own the question of ECD in their communities. Kayitare responded that while this was a good idea they didn't want to be too ambitious, and reminded everyone that this was their first conference, there for they needed to scale up carefully, to ensure the event could grow organically.

Next someone wondered whether abstracts could be on experiences from outside Rwanda, to which Kayitare responded that they could, and that such abstracts were very welcome.

Next question was on if the conference overall structure had already been set, and whether they know approximately how the two day would look, or whether they were waiting to receive all abstracts first. Kayitare informed the participants that there was an overall structure set, for example with a panel discussion and breakout sessions the first day, and that this had been done to measure out how to use the time optimally. After this Moses Tumusiime closed the session.

Presentation on Parenting Curriculum

The next presentation was on the recently developed parenting curriculum. Katherine Thomas from Mott MacDonald Consultancy presented a summary of the current curriculum draft. She started by pointing out that the curriculum is now fully developed, nearly finished translating into Kinyarwanda and ready for a steering committee review and final revisions. The curriculum, she then noted, had been developed to be taught in parenting education programs, designed for service providers from CHW to CSO levels and aligned to policy documents and national SBCC messages, as well as outlining all parent competences' that parents need to be successful providers of nurturing care.

She then moved on to methodology and how the curriculum had been developed. She noted that first step had been to develop a literature and desk review on international and national research on effective programs, policies and documents, work and programs originating from Rwanda. The findings from the review helped the next steps of preparation to set up early stakeholder consultations with a large group of identified parenting stakeholders that were asked to review and discuss the findings from the review. They had shared experiences from their work in parenting in Rwanda, discuss any gaps they believe existed in the review findings, and supported development of the NPC Framework.

After this Thomas explained that they had organized writing workshops with local stakeholders to improve and contextualize the curriculum. They also did a field study where the developed content was tested with parents around the country to ensure alignment of parents' values, accuracy of assumptions from research, and a fully contextualized content.

She then moved on to explain that the curriculum currently includes the following components:

- Introduction
- Vision
- Guiding Principles
- Parenting Competences
- Parent Profile
- Use and Organization
- Overview of Modules/Themes
- Cross-Cutting Theme
- Service Delivery – sectors and platforms

She then summarized these components, as well as other key themes in the curriculum. Before ending her presentation, she noted that next steps would include finalizing the Kinyarwanda version of the curriculum, a validation workshop that was planned for May 23rd and 24th, as well as printing and dissemination, which was planned for June 2019.

Discussion on Parenting Curriculum

When the floor was opened for discussion, the word was first given to meeting co-chair Natalie Hamoudi, who wondered what challenges parents described themselves. Katherine Thomas answered that something they had heard over and over again from stakeholders was the lack of resources, such as play items, and services, as well as a lack of time, parents being very busy, resulting in them thinking they don't have time for cognitive stimulating activities, taking them to the doctor, providing healthy food and safe water. These are some of the issues I noted, but I also want to note that in my experience there is nothing specifically Rwandan about these issues, instead they are rather universal, the feeling of not having enough time to spend on parenting is definitely something I myself has felt has a working mother. That is why we have tried our approach not to make parenting an additional task, but instead incorporate parenting in things you already do in your daily life.

Joyce Musabe, the second consultant from the team who had developed the curriculum then noted that they had found that some parents have problems with parenting in an efficient manner, and that the curriculum is designed to help with that.

After this the issue of men's role in parenting was brought up, and how men could be brought more onboard.

Micheal Banda then noted that while it had not been thoroughly explained in the presentation he knows that gender equality and gender roles are comprehensively discussed in the curriculum.

Next question was about mass media, and whether the curriculum tackled the issue of children's easy access to harmful content online, to which Thomas replied that while it certainly was a parenting concern become relevant for almost all parents, it currently not included in the curriculum, but could be discussed.

After that a participant questioned the need for the curriculum and wondered whether Rwandan parents were currently doing a bad job without the curriculum. To this Thomas replied that the intention was never to imply that Rwandan parents don't know how to take care of their children. Instead, that they know Rwandan parents already have a lot of knowledge, and that they simply want to build on that knowledge and update it to what we know through science today, for example on issues such as nutrition. She then noted that thanks to research we have more knowledge today about child care than we ever did before, the point of the curriculum is not to imply that Rwandan parents have been doing anything wrong, rather to give an update on the newest information, which is relevant not just in Rwanda, but globally. Next question was in Kinyarwanda, and was on physical discipline, the question resulted in a short debate in Kinyarwanda on the topic, ending with UNICEF noting that physical discipline was not only illegal in Rwanda, but deeply harmful and carries long-lasting consequences for victims.

Next a participant asked if the curriculum could be adjusted for a nanny or a housekeeper as well, to which Thomas replied that the curriculum had been developed for all possible caretakers, and that not only was it possible to teach the content of the curriculum to a housekeeper who looks after children, but in fact it is the responsibility of parents to ensure that the people they ask to care for their children have adequate knowledge on child care.

Before the session was closed Micheal Banda gave a short comment on the issue of professionalized child care, noting that as people to a larger degree join the global workforce they also leave their children to be cared by others. Moreover, to a larger degree we are seeing this happening also in African countries, where for example in Ethiopia they have established a training center for child care, something we should learn from, as we see it becoming an emerging profession and an opportunity for employment.

Presentation on NECDP Strategic Plan

The consultants presented on the NECDP Strategic plan draft. opportunity for employment.

The plan, he noted would focus on the following themes;

- School readiness
- Parenting and early stimulation
- Child protection and Inclusion
- Quality of ECD services
- Health & Nutrition
- Food Security
- Social Protection
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- Cross-cutting Issues

The presenter then summarized the key content of the strategy by presenting 8 Strategic Directions, together with relevant priority areas and strategies, which are all summarized in an annex below. The presenter then explained implementation framework, and noted the following steps to finalize the strategy:

- Validation workshop (in ongoing meeting)
- Compilation of final input
- Production of a final draft
- Review by Social Cluster and steering committee
- Approval and dissemination
- Costing of the NSP/IC.

Discussion on NECDP Strategic Plan

The first question was raised on the issue of the community platform and its roles and responsibilities, wondering who specifically is the focal person on ECD in the community, to which the consultant replied that local leaders and community health workers would be educated on the strategy.

Next question was on the coordination mechanisms that are planned, and whether different partners implementing different parts. The consultant responded that the coordination platform is finally developed, on coordination he noted that everyone will not work together, but that there will be a separation of labor.

Next a participant wondered if it wouldn't be better to do the costing before approving the document, to which the consultant replied that integrated ECD services, as a holistic idea, it is a very complex concept, and it is not limited to having qualified caregivers, but also includes setting, teaching, learning materials, the community, parents, therefore the costing should not be done by NECDP alone, but together with social cluster ministries.

Nutrition Policy Update

Before closing the meeting there was a short update on development on the new nutrition policy document delivered by Mucumbitsi Alexis. He first explained the reason why such a policy was needed, noting that the purpose of the National Nutrition Policy would be to provide a clear framework to help the government in achieving their commitments to reducing malnutrition, as well as to link the Nutrition Policy with the mandate and pillars of NECDP.

He then noted that the policy would include the following components; an introduction that presents a nutrition situation analysis and main challenges, a chapter that outlined the policy areas and specific goals, a chapter on M&E with a broad focus on coordination between government institutions, donors, CSOs, academia, development partners, and media.

Before ending his update, he noted that the specific nutrition policy areas that would be covered were the following:

- Nutritional status of women of reproductive age (15-49 years)
- Nutrition status of children under five
- Reduce the prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies in the population
- Prevent deterioration of nutritional status and save lives of vulnerable groups in emergencies
- Access to quality curative nutrition services
- Prevention, management and control of diet related NCDs
- Nutrition in schools
- Knowledge, attitudes and practices on optimal nutrition
- Strengthen the nutrition surveillance, monitoring and evaluation systems
- Enhance evidence-based decision-making through operations research
- Strengthen coordination and partnerships among the key nutrition actors.

Closing Remarks

Michael Bond, Who had taken over as meeting Co-chair from Hamoudi during the meeting, gave the closing remarks. He started by thanking NECDP and other partner who had helped organize the meeting. He then moved on to highlight some key messages to take away from the meeting discussions. On the upcoming ECD conference, he noted that it would be an opportunity and platform to share innovative ECD development, and he urged partners to take the opportunity to

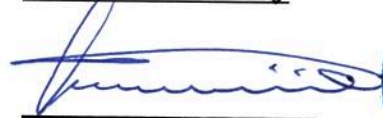
register for the conference. He continued by noting that many people were complaining that there is a gap on knowledge on ECD, elsewhere, as well as in Rwanda, and that the conference would enable a child friendly policy environment to show what policies produce best results, which would help us move forward. On the strategic plan presented, he then noted that the process had started last year, and that the plan goes to 2024, and that it as a document provides a blueprint for developing comprehensive and robust ECD in Rwanda. He argued that to succeed the framework required clear targets that are also costed, this he continued, didn't mean that NECDP has fund all the costs, but that partners contribute, and in order to do this it is good to have the targets costed in advance. He then further noted that the exhaustive consulting process has ensured a joint ownership, which he applauded, and encouraged all to continue with the same level of commitment. On the Parenting curriculum, which he noted had been to most debated topic, had shown that there is a need for parents to know the parental responsibilities for their children at different ages, as these are wide and complex. He noted that it was fortunate that we today know more about child development and creating conducive environment for children, than in any other time in history, and that the curriculum is based on those ideas, developed within the Rwandan context and is therefore a home grown solution. He finally noted that it was his understanding that the curriculum focuses on themes already considered and cherished by Rwandan parents, and is designed to improve parental knowledge for optimal and holistic child care. He then thanked everyone for their participation and urged for the discussions to continue during lunch. The meeting was then closed.

Meeting Resolutions

The ECD documents should be shared with ECD partners for proper implementation and ownership.

The next ECD Sub Cluster meeting will be in first quarter 2019-2020

Minutes taken by:



TUMUSIIME MOSES
Partnership and
Resource
Mobilization
Specialist



Minutes approved by:



Alexis Mucumbitsi,



Nathalie Hamoudi,

Head of Nutrition and WASH
NECDP

Deputy Representative
UNICEF

Country

Attendance list

Name	Institution	Position
Lulu Karangwa	ADEPE	Project Manager
Kamarara Jean D'arc	ADRA	ECD Education facilitator
Kagwesage Aureo	ADRA	Project Manager
Naisebuye Aloysie	APAPEB TVET school	School Manager
Djuma Hussein	Avvari	Officer
Kate Thomas	Cambridge Education	Education Advisor
Joyce Musabe	Cambridge Education	Executive Director
Connie Wu	Chance for Childhood	Country Rep
Odette U Kamanzi	CRS	Nutrition Advisor
U S Yvonne	CRS	DCOP Gikuziza
Mulisa Chris	Edify Rwanda	CTTO
Ssekaypa Joseph	Edify Rwanda	Mentor
Eddy Kalisa	ICRI	Executive Director
Ildephonse Hitimana	Imbuto Foundation	ECD Community Mobilizer
Valentina Venkova	Institution for transform.& peace	Volunteer
Sarambeye Yvette	Itotero Day Care	Managing Director
Nadja Piironen	MIGEPROF	BAE
Uwizayeyezu Marie Therese	MINEDUC	PPPE Specialist
Kayitare Immaculee	NECDP	School Readiness Specialist
Emmanuel R	NECDP	
Moses Tumusiime	NECDP	Partnerships
Feliz Muramutsa	NECDP	Consultant
Habumuremyi JMV	NECDP	Consultant
Mucumbitsi Alexis	NECDP	Head of Nutrition and WASH
Katie Beck	PIH	Senior Nutrition Manager
Umutoniwase Sabine	PIH	Nutrition Program Manager
R Silas	Reach Rwanda	Family Promotion
Nusore Olivier	RRLF	Finance Officer
Gasama James	RRLF	Member
Alexis Nkurunziza	RRLF	Executive Director
Evas Kyomusishe	Silver Bells	Executive Director
Muhamyankaka Venuste	Sun Alliance	Coordinator
Mary Ann Schreiner	Three Stones International	Health and Nutrition Advisor
Jesse Routte	Three Stones International	CEO
Kayitesi Mathilde	Umuhuza	Executive Director
Risa Kojima	UNICEF	ECD Officer
Dusengumuremyi Firmin	UNICEF	Education Officer
Micheal Banda	UNICEF	Chief of ECD
Nathalie Hamoudi	UNICEF	Deputy Country Representative

Edigia Umutesi	World Vision Rwanda	Education Manager
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