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**Project to Support National Policy
Planning for Early Childhood Development
in Three Countries of West Africa**

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Final Report

Project to Support National Policy Planning for Early Childhood Development in Three Countries of West Africa

**Working Group on Early Childhood Development
Association for the Development of Education in Africa**

**Emily Vargas-Barón, Ph.D.
ADEA Consultant**

February 29, 2004

Appreciation

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- ∞ Senegal
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- ∞ Mr. Vincent Snijders, Netherlands/Ouagadougou

Activities in the nations were successful due in large measure to the dedicated leadership of the following National Team Leaders and Lead Policy Drafters:

National Team Leaders:

- ∞ Burkina Faso
 - Mme. Agnes Kabore, Director General of Social Action in the Ministry for Social Action and National Solidarity
- ∞ Mauritania
 - Mme. Hetoutou mint Abdoullah, Director of Family and Children's Services, Secretariat on the Status and Condition of Women
- ∞ Senegal
 - M. Moussa Ndao, Early Childhood Coordinator, Delegated Ministry for Early Childhood and the Case de Tout Petits

Lead Policy Drafters:

- ∞ Burkina Faso
 - M. Ignace Sanwidi
- ∞ Mauritania
 - Dr. Eby Ould Cheikh
- ∞ Senegal
 - M. Tamsir Samb

Emily Vargas-Barón

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Final Report

Project to Support National Policy Planning for Early Childhood Development in Three Countries of West Africa

ADEA Working Group on Early Childhood Development

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I. Introduction

Project History

The Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) in sub-Saharan Africa was established in 1997 by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs became the leader of the Group. The first meeting of the WGECD was held in March 1999, with the participation of African nations and partner donor agencies. At this meeting, the WGECD decided to focus on developing competence for national policy planning for early childhood development in sub-Saharan Africa, with strategies for activities in three areas: research, advocacy and policy influence, and capacity building.

The work of the WGECD has been guided by the following principles that reflect and integrated approach to early childhood development (IECD):

- ∞ Child development is holistic: all dimensions of the development of children are interdependent and equally important
- ∞ ECD policy and action should be based on an integrated approach and focused on the developmental needs of children;
- ∞ Child development begins before birth, and continues in the early years of schooling;
- ∞ Satisfactory development requires good nutrition, health and education of mothers and children;
- ∞ Services should be targeted at and support the parents and caregivers as well as the children;
- ∞ The cultural ideals and practices of childrearing should be respected, and ECD policies are to be rooted in and relevant to the African realities;
- ∞ The strengths and involvement of communities are crucial for the quality of ECD action;

- ∞ Communities, community-based organizations, NGOs and other private organizations should be respected partners in ECD policy development and the provision of services.

The WGECD has worked as a facilitator and catalyst. It has succeeded in making ECD a new priority on many national agendas and it has helped to build new collaborations between Education, Health, Finance and other relevant ministries in three countries. It has focused on activities in the following areas:

- ∞ Advocacy and mobilization of political and public support for ECD;
- ∞ Policy studies that assist with policy development and implementation processes;
- ∞ Partnership development at various levels;
- ∞ Capacity and knowledge building, and
- ∞ Promoting policy planning for IECD.

In collaboration with UNICEF and the ADEA, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs initially sponsored a WGECD study on ECD policies and policy formulation in Namibia, Mauritius and Ghana.ⁱ

The second consultative meeting of the WGECD met in The Hague in December 2001 and reviewed the results of this study. This discussion led to expressions of interest for support to draft IECD Policies on the part of three francophone countries: Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal.

As of 2001, interest in national policy planning for IECD had increased significantly, due especially to the World Education Forum held in April 2000 in Dakar, Senegal. The ***Dakar Framework for Action*** called for all nations to prepare national EFA Action Plans, including ECD Plans as integral parts of national EFA plans.ⁱⁱ Nations were encouraged to ensure that their ECD policy plans were consistent with Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or other education plans. In addition, MINEDAF VII, held in 1998, had called for the formulation of ECD plans in all nations of sub-Saharan Africa.ⁱⁱⁱ It was recognized that the nations of sub-Saharan Africa were facing major challenges as they sought to develop culturally appropriate and effective IECD policies.

The “Project to Support National Policy Planning for Early Childhood Development in Three Countries of West Africa” began on June 15, 2002 and extended to November 30, 2003. A Consultant was contracted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands on behalf of the ADEA WGECD, and as of this writing, she is continuing to assist the policy planning teams to complete their work.

The Three Nations Selected for the Project

Achieving comprehensive and participatory national IECD policy planning in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal is especially difficult given the prevalence of major

challenges with regard to the status of young children and their parents and the level of institutional development in these countries. These challenges include:

Institutional Challenges

- ∞ Low levels of national investment in early childhood development;
- ∞ Little understanding at both national and community levels of the importance of the first years of life to developing healthy, knowledgeable and productive citizens;
- ∞ Inadequate institutional development related to early childhood development;
- ∞ Over-centralization of services for children in capital cities;
- ∞ Singular focus on preschool education for a few families, usually in urban settings;
- ∞ Lack of experience in developing integrated or coordinated services for health, nutrition, sanitation, education and juridical protection;

Environmental Challenges

- ∞ Poor national resource base due particularly to difficult Sahelian and Saharan environmental conditions, inadequate exploitation of natural resources, inequities in wealth distribution, and limitations regarding transportation and communications;
- ∞ Famines and endemic malnutrition due especially to desertification, weather patterns, agricultural processes, and a series of other food and education security issues;
- ∞ High levels of endemic poverty in both urban and rural areas compounded by migration from rural areas to urban slums that lack essential services;

Health, Nutrition and Sanitation Challenges

- ∞ Chronic ill health and endemic diseases, including a rapid increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDs;
- ∞ Partially developed health systems with inadequate geographical coverage and quality services;
- ∞ High rates of fertility, maternal mortality, infant and child mortality, and low birth weight;
- ∞ High rates of malnutrition and low levels of coverage on the part of nutrition programs;
- ∞ Lack of adequate access to clean water, waste services, and education on household and community sanitation;

Education Challenges

- ∞ Lack of access to quality basic education, especially for girls;
- ∞ High financial and human costs for basic education related to high levels of grade repetition, absenteeism and drop out before the completion of primary school;
- ∞ Lack of parent education services especially for pregnant girls and women, divorced or single mothers of young children, and adolescent girls from poor communities;^{iv}

- ∞ Lack of adequate training systems for parent educators, preschool teachers, and mid-level managers for planning, integrating, coordinating and implementing and evaluating programs;

Conflict Challenges

- ∞ Complex emergencies and crises within and between nations negatively affect children and mothers, and especially those displaced from their homes and/or living in refugee camps in the Casamance and in Southern Burkina Faso; (According to UNICEF statistics, most of the persons affected by complex crises are civilians, and 80 percent of them are children and women.^v)
- ∞ High levels of children with disabilities or developmental delays are unidentified and unserved – or worse;

Prevalent Special Challenges for Children

- ∞ Inadequate laws and legal structure for ensuring juridical protection for pregnant women and children from birth to eight years of age;
- ∞ Child abuse and neglect;
- ∞ Presence of mendicant children and people who exploit them;
- ∞ Children affected by HIV/AIDs, including an increasing number of orphans;
- ∞ Lack of services to provide early stimulation, family support and inclusive education for children with special needs.

Given these complex and pervasive realities, it is important to develop cross-sectoral, coordinated, and as possible, integrated national ECD Policies and Annual Action Plans to address the needs of all children, with special emphasis upon high-risk children and their families.

On the positive side, West Africans tend to be highly dedicated to their children, hard-working, skilled in specific professional areas, and very collaborative. These committed people face the dual problems of severely restricted resources and a low absorptive capacity for managing large programs in their nations. Fortunately, new leadership for IECD is emerging in each country, thanks in part to this project.

II. Project Objectives

General Guidance

National ECD policies were to focus on expanding budgetary and other resources to achieve ECD programming that would be:

- ∞ Participatory and locally “owned”
- ∞ Holistic, comprehensive and integrated across all relevant sectors
- ∞ Continuous from pre-birth to age eight, as possible
- ∞ Culturally derived and culturally competent
- ∞ Equitable, reaching the under-served and most needy communities
- ∞ Family-focused and family strengthening

- ∞ Community-based and nationally supported
- ∞ High in quality, both in terms of outcomes and inputs
- ∞ Flexible, accountable and creative
- ∞ Sustainable

It was recommended that to the extent possible, IECD policies should cover the period from pre-birth to age eight to ensure adequate attention to: the initial period of rapid brain development from pre-birth to age three; parenting education and support for family strengthening; early childhood education and care, and positive preparation for and transition to primary school.^{vi}

Objectives

The objectives of this project were established on the basis of a discussion held during the WGECD meeting of The Hague in December 2001 and of ECD policy planning experiences in other nations.

The project has four main objectives and several sub-objectives:

Objective I: To support selected countries in conducting their policy planning processes and to assist them to prepare their policies for future implementation

- ∞ To assist Country Teams to consider the essential elements of preparing a holistic IECD policy
- ∞ To assist Country Teams to identify areas that may need further attention;
- ∞ To review the current status of their policy planning process and to provide technical support for their efforts
- ∞ To consider the relationship and articulation of the IECD policy with larger education policy, poverty reduction strategies and the policies and plans of other government ministries, agencies, and many institutions of civil society
- ∞ To stimulate increased national governmental support for IECD
- ∞ To consider alternative implementation strategies during the policy planning process with the goal of achieving enhanced programmatic feasibility
- ∞ To assist Country Teams to consider systems for monitoring and evaluation to help ensure the achievement of outcomes and systems accountability

Objective II: To strengthen national networking, partnerships, cooperation and policy dialogue among practitioners, communities, NGOs, trainers, activists, government representatives and other stakeholders in IECD.

- ∞ To help Country Teams identify all potential national stakeholders and partners in the public sector, civil society, communities, private sector, faith community
- ∞ To consider alternative Action Plans for outreach, inclusion and consultation

- ∞ To help Country Teams prepare Action Plans for conducting fully participatory consultative processes for formulating their national IECD policies
- ∞ To assist with the development of IECD policies and plans for strengthening or establishing sustainable networks and coalitions of partners and other stakeholders in support of IECD
- ∞ To review financial and other resource issues in order to help create sustainable IECD policies and to attract additional funding support

Objective III: To enhance methodological and analytical skills for policy development and analysis in the field of IECD, and thereby strengthen the institutional capacity within the government and other institutions.

- ∞ To help build capacity for participatory policy planning and analytic planning activities in both government and civil society in each nation
- ∞ To identify key areas for future capacity building and tool development in support of IECD policy development and implementation in sub-Saharan Africa
- ∞ To help each nation build a Action Plan for IECD policy advocacy, based on their current strengths, knowledge, practice and experience
- ∞ To provide suggestions for the guidelines under preparation for IECD policy planning

Objective IV: To identify strategic areas of action in the fields of advocacy, mobilization of public and political support, capacity building and resource mobilisation for IECD in sub-Saharan Africa.

- ∞ To contribute to regional capacity building and networking in the area of IECD policy development and planning;
- ∞ To promote awareness on the importance of IECD for development and poverty alleviation in West and Central Africa;
- ∞ To provide elements for the consideration of other nations in sub-Saharan Africa that are preparing their first national IECD policies and plans;
- ∞ To help build support for WGECD's sub-regional group for West and Central Africa as a step toward forging a continent-wide supportive network for IECD in sub-Saharan Africa;
- ∞ To help attract additional donor and technical support to IECD in sub-Saharan Africa.

Overall, it was anticipated that this advisory activity would lead to knowledge building and the identification of new policy planning tools required to assist future IECD policy planning activities in sub-Saharan Africa and other world regions.

III. Project Activities and Results

General Project Overview

The four main objectives and most of the sub-objectives have been achieved. In some cases, expectations have been exceeded.

However, from the point of view of the “bottom line”: policies completed, adopted and implementation begun, more work remains to be done. However, all three countries, Mauritania and Burkina Faso are nearing completion. They have prepared advanced drafts of their Policies and they expect to complete them by June/July 2004.

From the outset, this project faced numerous challenges. For example, the objectives posited that the Consultant would assist Country Teams that were already established. In actual fact, the Country Teams did not exist until the Consultant arrived in each nation and began to work with leading ministries. Mauritania had some initial policy work underway that was being conducted by a consultant but a full Country Team had not been constituted. Thus, the first activity to be accomplished in each nation was to help representatives of leading ministries to discuss:

- ∞ Who would coordinate the policy planning effort?
- ∞ How would the Country Team(s) be configured?
- ∞ Who would participate on them and why?
- ∞ Who would be the lead drafter and who would participate on the Drafting Team?

Other major challenges for this project were the notable lack of knowledge and experience at ministerial levels regarding:

- ∞ Participatory policy planning processes, including especially:
 - Needs assessments;
 - Resource reviews;
 - Community and regional consultations, and
 - Consensus building.
- ∞ The integrated approach to early childhood development and the reasons for pursuing it;
- ∞ The primary importance of the zero to three year period for good child development, and the need for essential parenting education services;
- ∞ Effective policy formulation linked to:
 - Annual Action Plans (Operational Plans);
 - Preparation of financial projections;
 - Design of policy advocacy plans, and
 - Development of policy evaluation and monitoring systems.
- ∞ Building diversified funding support for a policy planning effort.

Participatory Processes

The reasons for conducting participatory processes for IECD policy planning were new to each group. All of the Country Teams’ prior experiences in policy development had been with traditional “central planning” that features guidance from external “experts” who set

the parameters for the structure and contents of their policies. They usually control the process in order to ensure policies meet donor agency requirements.

Therefore, substantial training was required from the outset and continuously regarding the rationale, methods and results of participatory planning. Fortunately, excellent specialists in sectoral planning (e.g., health, education and sanitation), national statistical development, and program development were found in each nation. These specialists learned participatory approaches quickly, grasped their relevance to multicultural national contexts, and then they applied what they learned effectively.

The Integrated Approach

Each of the teams requested and received multiple presentations on the integrated approach to early childhood development through individual coaching, small group discussions, and excellent workshop presentations by Eveline Pressoir and others.

One of the difficulties in promoting this approach in Africa is that very few examples of integrated structures and programs exist there. The Bisongo program of Burkina Faso presents a model whose directors, although still developing the program, are making a sincere attempt to build an integrated program. The conceptual framework for the Case de Tout Petites Program in Senegal features an integrated approach.

Infancy and Parenting Education

Virtually no parenting education is found in the region. Parents are recognized in all West African cultures as the people exclusively responsible for children zero to three years of age. However, the status of children living in poverty and other difficult situations is clearly fragile. Because no parenting education programs have existed in the region, people lack experience with their effectiveness. Furthermore, infant and toddler development has virtually never been a focus of teacher training or any other training programs.

However, research results from other world areas regarding early intervention and parenting education appear to be insufficient to convince West Africans of the efficacy and benefits of such programs. People will need to participate in parenting education programs that are culturally derived in order to be able to understand how they will help them to improve child and family development.

In spite of this situation, significant interest has been expressed by national leaders in developing new programs for the early childhood period using an integrated approach. This is an act of faith on their parts, and it will be very important to provide support to new programs for pregnant girls and women and the parents of children zero to three as well as to encourage inter-program site visits.

Policy to Implementation

Much of the sectoral policy work in the region has lacked a clear linkage between Policies and annual Operational or Action Plans. Thus, explaining the importance of building a long-term process (as opposed to simply drafting a Policy document to put in a bookcase) required special effort. None of the teams had experience with conducting financial projections and many of the team members feared proposing financial investments that traditionally had been the sole province of powerful national decision makers and Ministries of Finance and/or Planning. Thus, teaching members of Country Teams how to make proposals based on the results of their consultations and how to help build national consensus for those proposals required a great deal of work. Indeed, this area requires much more work in the future because it has been a learning process for all of the teams.

The role and approaches of social communications for policy advocacy for promoting Policy objectives and encouraging larger investments in early childhood development is another area that will require additional, long-term efforts. Finally, the idea of placing within the Policy a system for built-in Policy evaluation, monitoring and flexible revision was also novel. Mauritania has recommended a good system for policy evaluation and monitoring, and if it is implemented, it may prove to be a model for the region.

Diversified Funding Support for Policy Planning

At the outset, none of the Country Teams understood adequately the reasons for finding multiple sources of funding support for their policy planning processes. All of them were overly dependent upon UNICEF as the main donor in the area. However, other multilateral and bilateral donors and international NGOs were either interested or potentially could become engaged. Each team, frequently with the encouragement of national UNICEF offices, reached out to other donors and attracted considerable support for their activities. This should be of inestimable value for future Policy implementation.

Project Activities

The Consultant conducted activities in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal during the period from June 15 to November 30, 2004. Unofficially, she continues to support the Country Teams with the final work of the project.

The documents, meeting reports and PowerPoint presentations that were prepared by the Consultant are listed in Annex I of this report, and they are available upon request. All of them have been shared extensively with all sponsors and several of them were included in the CD ROM prepared by UNICEF and distributed at the Regional Conference held in Dakar in 21 to 23 October, 2003 for 14 countries of West and Central Africa. It is my understanding that the CD ROM has been sent to other African countries in the WCARO region, as well. In Annex II the Recommendations from the Regional Conference held in October 2003 in Dakar are appended in their entirety.

Consultations with each Country Team

Two missions were made to each of the three countries, according to the schedule presented in Annex I.

Every effort was made to use each field mission to:

- ∞ Conduct small group training for the Country Team;
- ∞ Visit several ministries and NGOs;
- ∞ Help build national support for the policy planning process;
- ∞ Prepare or adapt documents and PowerPoint presentations to provide guidance for the Country Teams in areas where it appeared they needed detailed recommendations, such as:
 - Planning policy development processes
 - Identifying and selecting indicators
 - Considering methods for holding regional and community consultations
 - Preparing financial projections
 - Conducting policy advocacy and social communications
- ∞ Plan, prepare, hold and report on a regional workshop during three of the visits;
- ∞ Gather, read and analyze national documents on poverty, health, nutrition, education, sanitation and juridical protection;
- ∞ Review and prepare detailed comments on the successive drafts of Policy documents and Action Plans of the Country Teams, and
- ∞ Report to leaders in the nations visited, Netherlands, UNICEF, ADEA and others.

Three regional training workshops were held, one in each of the three countries:

- ∞ First Regional Workshop for National Policies for Early Childhood Development, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 9 - 11 September 2002
- ∞ Second Regional Workshop for National Policies for Early Childhood Development, Senegal, Dakar, 6 to 7 February 2003
- ∞ Third Regional Workshop for National Policies for Early Childhood Development, Mauritania, July 21 – 23, 2003

Dr. Eveline Pressoir played a leading role in each of these workshops and supported the Consultant's work excellently. Dr. Joris van Bommel was also exceedingly helpful when he could be present. His assistance in Burkina Faso was of the highest value to achieving our goals there, along with helpful guidance from Vincent Snijders, Embassy of The Netherlands, Burkina Faso.

Each regional training workshop began with the presentation of draft country ECD Policies and additional country reports, followed by a group assessment of each country's progress and needs. The groups engaged in peer-support activities to assist each other with their policy processes. Then, special topics were presented, such as:

- ∞ How to link IECD Policies with PRSPs, MDGs, sectoral plans, etc.
- ∞ How to conduct regional consultations

- ∞ The integrated approach to ECD
- ∞ Early childhood development and parenting education
- ∞ Policy Indicators: how to select and use them
- ∞ Financial Projections

The final period of each regional workshop was devoted to preparing or updating each Country's Work Plan, presenting the Plan for discussion, making suggestions for the next regional meeting, and conducting other activities for peer exchange.

In addition to planning, holding and reporting on these regional training workshops, the Consultant assisted with the following consultations and conferences:

- ∞ Second International Conference on Early Childhood Development, Asmara, Eritrea, 28 – 31, August, 2002
- ∞ WGECD Consultation at The Hague, Netherlands, 14 to 16 April, 2003
- ∞ UNICEF Regional Conference on IECD, Dakar, Senegal, October 21 – 23, 2003

IV. National Planning Processes and Their Current Status

At the present time, the three nations have made the following progress in developing their IECD Policies and Action Plans.

Burkina Faso

The policy movement of Burkina Faso is led by the Minister for Social Action and National Solidarity, with operational coordination conducted by Mme. Agnes Kabore, Director General of Social Action in the Ministry for Social Action and National Solidarity. Previous to the beginning of this project in Burkina Faso, this ministry was delegated by national decree in July 2002 with the task of developing policy for young children and their families. Some discussion occurred at the outset, with other ministries such as the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy, regarding who would lead the policy planning effort. It was decided that because the Ministry of Education focused mainly on formal education, to achieve a more integrated approach, it would be necessary to select a ministry with a larger mandate and a good track record in building inter-ministerial agreements and working groups.

Two councils were developed to conduct the policy planning process:

- ∞ The Multidisciplinary Technical Committee, composed of selected leading ministries and national NGOs, and
- ∞ The National Validation Committee, composed of members of the Multidisciplinary Technical Committee and a large array of additional representatives of government, private sector, associations, NGOs, communities and cultural groups.

These groups have proven to be exceedingly helpful with the community, regional and national consultations. Their contributions during the national review meeting on the four main studies regarding the status of children in Burkina Faso were very useful for framing the main strategies of the Policy. Mme. Kabore grasped very well the potential power and utility of the participatory approach, and her leadership in carrying out the planning process has been outstanding.

The lead drafter, Mr. Ignace Sanwidi, is an accomplished, highly respected educational planner of Burkina Faso who recently retired from UNESCO after many years of service in other nations. He led a drafting team of four specialists who reviewed the status of children and the services provided for children in the following areas: early childhood development and education; health and nutrition; sanitation; juridical protection, poverty and economic development.

The Country Team has carried out consultations in four cultural regions of Burkina Faso using local languages and meeting with people at the community and regional levels. At present, the Team is conducting one remaining community consultation in the Dori Region in March 2004.

In late January, the second draft of the Policy was prepared. In February, I sent the Team nine pages of detailed suggestions. They have also solicited comments from members of the Multidisciplinary Committee and others. Based on all of these comments and the results of the last consultation in Dori, the Team will prepare the penultimate draft of the Policy, and possibly the first annual Action Plan.

Then, in April, a large National Policy Workshop will be held in April in Ouagadougou to discuss the third draft of the Policy. This will be a consensus building activity, and it will be complemented by many smaller meetings to ensure the policy meets the needs, commitments and aspirations of as many groups and agencies dealing with early childhood in Burkina Faso as possible.

Finally, after the final revisions have been made, a large National Forum will be held in June in Ouagadougou to conduct a final review and present the Policy to the nation. The final draft is expected to be completed by July 2004, and policy implementation and advocacy will begin at that time.

Given the quality of the emerging Policy and its valuable review of the striking needs of Burkina Faso's children and parents, it is hoped that this comprehensive plan with its new strategies for serving pregnant girls and women, young children and parents, and expanding integrated programming substantially, will attract significant additional international assistance.

Mauritania

The IECD policy movement in Mauritania led by the Secretary of State for the Status and Condition of Women, with operational coordination by the Secretariat's Director of

Family and Children's Services, Mme. Hetoutou mint Abdoullah. Previous to the arrival of the Consultant in June, 2002, the Secretariat had been delegated the task of policy, regulations and services for women with young children.

An inter-ministerial Early Childhood Council includes representatives of all relevant ministries and a few national NGOs and associations. Mme. Abdoullah has been very adept at managing the political realities of her nation, and she has been steadfast in pursuing project goals. She keeps the Council well-informed of progress and is awaiting the post-election period to complete all activities.

The core planning team is composed of specialists in early childhood development from the Secretariat. The drafter is Dr. Eby Ould Cheikh, a leading Mauritanian specialist in health planning. Through the policy development process, he has become very knowledgeable about others areas of early childhood development and the integrated approach. All members of the Country Team have learned a great deal through one-on-one training, small group discussions, participation in the regional training workshops and international travels to programs and conferences, many of which were sponsored by UNICEF.

The Country Team in Mauritania has prepared its penultimate (third) version of the *National Policy for Early Childhood Development in Mauritania* (completed on February 4, 2004) as well as the first version of its *Action Plan* for the implementation of the Policy (February 3, 2004). Taken together, these documents represent an excellent progress. They are comprehensive, well structured, and provide strategies, programs, indicators and budget projections. The strategic choices presented in the draft Policy respond to many of the most critical issues in child and family development in Mauritania. Additional areas could be treated, but frankly the Policy is very ambitious as it is and the absorptive capacity of the nation is limited. These documents also present plans for long-term policy implementation, policy advocacy, and transparent policy evaluation and monitoring.

I sent the Country Team seven pages of detailed comments on February 9, 2004. Currently, the Team members are revising the documents and conducting further consensus building activities while awaiting the results of national elections. The team plans to finalize the draft Policy and Action Plan and present them for adoption by April/May 2004. A National Forum for Early Childhood Development will be held at that time.

Barring unforeseen political events, such as another coup or a radical change of leadership in the Secretariat, because of the commitment of our colleagues in Mauritania, I expect the policy to be completed and to function as a model for the region. Furthermore, significant capacity building has occurred through the Team's participation in this project that subsequently will assist with Policy implementation.

Mauritania's follow-up structure and plan is particularly well-conceived, and it merits careful observation to assess results over the long-term. This plan will merit the

provision of significant additional national and international resources over the years to come.

Senegal

The Country Team of Senegal is officially led by the Delegated Minister in charge of Early Childhood and the “Huts for Little Children” (Case des Tout-Petits), which is attached to the Ministry of Education. The leadership of the policy planning process is with the Cabinet of the Delegated Ministry for Early Childhood and the Case de Tout Petits (MDPCTP). The director of the Country Team is M. Moussa Ndao, Early Childhood Coordinator at MDPCTP.

At the outset of our policy work with Senegal, the management of President Wade’s banner program for the Case de Tout Petits was located in Ministry of the Family, Social Development and National Solidarity (MFSDNS), a special ministry for early childhood development. Subsequently over a period of months, the leadership for early childhood policy and for the Case de Tout Petits was moved from MFSDNS to the Delegated Ministry MDPCTP. Although some people were transferred between the two ministries, the move led to a major revision of program objectives, mandated areas, methods, activities and budgets. Parent education, for example, remained largely, but not solely, with the MFSDNS but without significant budgetary resources. The Case de Tout Petits and all of the activities surrounding this program were placed solely in the MDPCTP.

A Policy Planning Team was developed with approximately 30 specialists representing all sectors concerned with early childhood in Senegal, including both government offices and NGOs. People working on programs in regions outside of the capital city were also invited to participate.

This Country Team selected M. Tamsir Samb, a skilled INEAD researcher, to draft the policy with a small team of national specialists. They conducted very rapidly at least four consultations in different regions. A major study on parenting practices (contracted separately) was completed during the preparation of the Policy, and it helped to shed light on some of the areas considered for inclusion in the Policy.

Draft II of the Policy was prepared and distributed in October 2003. It represented some good progress but it was far from complete. Draft III has just been prepared, and I shall send my comments to the Country Team very soon.

According to the latest report from Isabelle Austin of UNICEF/Senegal, the policy will be finalized through the following process:

- ∞ Review and validation of Draft III at a meeting of the National Council in early April, 2004;
- ∞ Revision and preparation of Draft IV, and
- ∞ Presentation to the Council of Ministers in June 2004.

Team Senegal has stated previously that it plans to hold a National Forum to announce the Policy, conduct policy advocacy activities, and begin program implementation.

V. Key Lessons Learned

Following are a number of the major lessons that have been learned during this three-country project for IECD policy planning.

Inter-agency partnerships are helpful for conducting participatory IECD policy planning.

- ∞ The collaborative arrangement led by ADEA's WGECD, in close coordination with UNICEF's national, regional and international offices, was highly successful in achieving key objectives for national policy planning.
- ∞ This partnership reduced significantly the costs that usually pertain to policy planning in each nation.
- ∞ Every effort should be made to include additional partners (especially bilateral and multilateral donors and international NGOs) from the outset for purposes of:
 - Ensuring sufficient and diversified funding and resources are provided to cover all costs related to IECD policy planning, including consultants, regional workshop costs, travel, materials, etc.;
 - Developing strong and diversified support for the future national IECD policy;
 - Helping to ensure the implementation of the Policy and its Action Plan;
 - Promoting transparency and accountability, and
 - Beginning national leadership for coordinating donor assistance for the mosaic of programs under the IECD Policy.
- ∞ Without adequate diversified funding from the outset, two of the three countries were unable to complete regional and community consultations according to their original schedules. They eventually achieved their consultation goals, but only after pausing to conduct significant fundraising activities.
- ∞ International donors dedicated to IECD should help each nation to include as many partners as possible, from the beginning of the project onward. UNICEF and UNESCO played helpful roles in this respect, as did the Government of the Netherlands.

Synergies result from inter-country dialogue during planning processes.

- ∞ It is helpful to have more than one country develop IECD policies at a time. It is clear that the Country Teams profit greatly from exchanging experiences and discussing tough problems related to national policy planning. Supportive bonds were developed between the teams, and at the same time, the undercurrent of competition kept each team on its toes. They wanted to do their best.
- ∞ The exchanges helped to reinforce national leadership and the sense of policy "ownership" of each team engaged in leading national policy planning processes.

Initial consultant visits must focus on structuring the policy planning process.

- ∞ Each Country Team experienced significant difficulty in selecting its members, and subsequently, in ensuring the commitment of all members to the effort. In one case, the members expected to be paid at all times and to receive other benefits. The other teams believed that they were conducting the work as a part of their normal responsibilities. Unlike some other policy planning projects with the support of international donors, high salaries and fees were not provided.
- ∞ Thus, it is important to clarify expectations, roles and financial implications at the outset and continuously so as to avoid potential misunderstandings.
- ∞ Guidance is required to ensure that a certain set of structures is required for developing a successful policy planning process.
- ∞ The Consultant usually plays an essential role in promoting positive communications, holding meetings and helping to mediate between groups.

Flexibility is essential in structuring the policy planning process.

- ∞ Each country has a different policy environment in terms of institutions, inter-ministerial relations, traditional and institutional cultures, ideology, leadership styles, legislation, decision making processes, methods for holding official meetings, financial management, etc.
- ∞ For these reasons, great flexibility is required. Models for policy planning in IECD cannot be imported from other nations. However, successful policy planning processes tend to be very similar from country to country. These processes can be replicated.
- ∞ A broad array of possible IECD objectives, program approaches, indicators, collaborative arrangements, consultative processes, etc. can be considered but decisions should result from consensus building with respect to national and sub-regional priorities.
- ∞ To do this, at the outset it is valuable to provide Country Teams with information on the general process, options for structuring their intent, and a broad array of approaches for:
 - Conducting consultations at community, sub-regional and national levels;
 - Setting objectives, strategies, programs, indicators and budgets;
 - Achieving consensus, and
 - Adopting, advocating for and implementing the policy.
- ∞ Because policy options are so sensitive and must be established flexibly within national contexts, donors should be wary about simply giving countries copies of policies and action plans of other nations and recommending they do something similar.

A broad coalition for IECD policy planning should be established at the outset.

- ∞ Institutions of the public sector should ensure the full participation of all relevant institutions of civil society and the private sector.

- ∞ In nations with weak NGO systems, the IECD policy planning process should be used to strengthen existing NGOs and their networks, and to encourage the development of new NGOs and networks.
- ∞ Representatives of the following sectors should be included from the outset: finance and planning, health, nutrition, sanitation, education, juridical protection, councils or associations for special populations, national statistics, women's programs, and possibly rural and urban development.
- ∞ Donors should be invited to a special initial planning meeting at the outset and periodically informed of progress, challenges, needs and results.

Needs assessments, resource reviews, and studies on the status of children revealed major barriers and challenges to good child development in each country.

- ∞ In at least two countries, the work conducted by the Country Teams constitute the first studies of their type regarding the status and comprehensive needs of pregnant girls and women, infants and toddlers and young children and their families. These studies are of great value.
- ∞ The needs assessments, resource reviews and studies were fundamental in helping people in national, regional and local consultations to understand the dire straits of many children and their parents.
- ∞ The needs assessments and studies also provided essential base line information and helped the Teams to select their strategies, objectives, and indicators. Later they will assist with the implementation of programs under the Policies and their Action Plans.

Policy planning processes utilizing the integrated approach to ECD are valuable learning experiences that are complex and necessarily time consuming.

- ∞ Because the integrated approach covers the period prenatal to age eight and includes several sectors, by definition IECD policy planning processes are highly complex.
- ∞ Nations with little experience in integrating or coordinating sectors face major challenges, and it takes them considerable time to plan and carry out consultations and consensus building meetings, to draft and revise their policies, and build support for their efforts, especially in institutions that are seriously stressed by many challenges and relatively few highly trained staff members.
- ∞ For these reasons, at least two years should be allowed to conduct IECD policy planning processes. This is not lost time. Participants learn during these processes and will apply their new concepts and methods during the period of policy implementation.

Nations tend to lack experience in planning inter-sectoral policies.

- ∞ In West Africa as in many world regions, nations have limited experience in planning inter-sectoral policies; however, this is changing rapidly with the World Bank emphasis upon the eradication of severe poverty.

- ∞ Additional coaching and training is required to help national specialists formulate ideas about new forms of inter-sectoral program collaboration, coordination and integration to maximize the value of limited resources.

Policy alignment must be stressed repeatedly.

- ∞ IECD Policies must be carefully aligned with Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), HIPC planning, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Plans for Education for All and other sectoral plans for health, nutrition, education, sanitation, women's or children's development, etc.
- ∞ However, the IECD Policy will contribute far more than simply presenting relevant sections of other plans. It will establish new integrative approaches, program syntheses and often, new organizational structures for ensuring children receive expanded and improved resources according to Policy priorities and strategies.
- ∞ Repeated efforts must be made by consultants and donors to ensure policy alignment occurs.

Incentives for policy development and donor coordination are required from the outset.

- ∞ Given the many demands upon ministerial officials' time, severely restricted national budgets for policy planning, and the relative scarcity of planning resources in West Africa, it is advisable to consider different incentives for IECD Policy Planning and donor coordination from the outset.
- ∞ It is advisable to develop a national donor coalition for policy planning that includes national and international donors, NGOs and foundations, each providing financial, technical or material resources.
- ∞ This support will be required to pay for national and international consultants, national, sub-regional and local consultations and consensus building activities, training workshops, materials, etc. A total budget should be developed at the outset and changed flexibly over time to achieve project goals.
- ∞ The initial buy-in on the part of donors will help to ensure their ownership of the resulting policy – even though they may not wish to support all aspects of the policy.
- ∞ The existence of a credible IECD Policy and Action Plan will meet often-heard donor complaints (and excuses) that they will not invest in IECD because developing nations lack well-conceived, detailed IECD Policies and Action Plans.

Nations lack knowledge about the importance of the zero to three period and the potential of parent education to improve child development.

- ∞ Although most nations have small public and private preschool education programs for children three to five year of age (serving from one to four percent of eligible children), they have almost no programs for children zero to three other than basic health services. And these health services assist only some of the children.

- ∞ Each Country Team has received coaching and training regarding the importance of this early period and the types of programs that can be developed.
- ∞ Nonetheless, this area will need to be the subject of continuing training and advisory assistance in order to ensure adequate services will be developed with communities to support parents and young children.

Frequent confusion is found regarding “goals for program development” and “goals for policy development.”

- ∞ National advocates for specific programs frequently confused program advocacy for policy planning. Some donors also exhibited similar tendencies for understandable reasons.
- ∞ Repeated training and coaching was required to help these decision makers to understand the difference and contribute fully to the entire policy planning process.
- ∞ This situation should be anticipated in all countries and dealt with not only at the outset but repeatedly.

Plans for social communications should be included in IECD Policies.

- ∞ Social communications plans for policy advocacy are of critical importance to achieving the objectives of IECD Policies and they should be included within the Policy and/or the Action Plan. These plans cannot be prepared, though, until the strategies, programs and policy structure have been outlined.
- ∞ Nations in West Africa tend to lack experience in policy advocacy for IECD. Thus, special support and training for policy advocacy and social communications is required.
- ∞ It is advisable to include national media or public relations people in the policy planning structures and processes in order to gain their whole-hearted support for policy implementation.

Plans for policy implementation, monitoring, evaluation and annual revision must also be included in IECD Policies.

- ∞ Evaluation and monitoring systems for policy accountability are essential components of an IECD Policy.
- ∞ Ministries that manage early childhood programs tend not to have many specialists in evaluation and monitoring. Thus, it is advisable to include on the Country Team members of national planning departments, statistics institutes, universities and research institutes. A small number of identified specialists may become long-term personnel for the evaluation of IECD policy implementation.
- ∞ The evaluation and monitoring plan cannot be formulated fully until consensus is reached on basic policy strategies, programs, objectives and indicators. This plan is among the last sections finalized.

Additional nations can be inspired to develop IECD Policies through observing the policy development processes of target countries.

- ∞ Invitations to Chad and Niger to participate in the Third Regional Training Workshop in Mauritania inspired them to reconsider their policy planning approaches. However, follow-up discussions demonstrated that they had not received enough guidance to be able to understand all essential points thoroughly or to put them into action in their countries.
- ∞ Many remarked that the UNICEF Conference held in Dakar for 14 nations was valuable in providing them with tools and knowledge of other country experiences.
- ∞ Such types of regional meetings can help to inspire and orient nations in sub-Saharan African countries that are contemplating developing IECD Policies; however, more in-depth assistance will be required for them to be able to conduct successful policy planning processes.

VI. Recommendations for Future Activities

Recommendations for continued support to the current three nations: Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal.

1. Consider providing one or two additional consultative visits to each of the nations to help them to:
 - ∞ Complete and adopt their IECD policies;
 - ∞ Complete their first Annual Action Plan, and/or
 - ∞ Begin policy implementation and program planning.
2. Publish the state-of-the-art reviews prepared by each of the nations in a special volume with an introductory chapter that synthesizes and analyzes the findings in each nation.
3. A paper should be prepared on the role of IECD policy planning and program development in achieving the goals of national PRSPs, MDGs and sectoral plans. This topic is of special interest to the Consultant.
4. After the policies are adopted, the WGECD should follow up on policy implementation in each of the three countries, actively assist them to attract additional support to achieve stated results, and conduct an evaluation of lessons learned within one year of policy completion.
5. Hold a regional workshop toward the end of 2004 for sharing experiences in policy consensus building, adoption and implementation.
6. Several members of each of the three teams expressed their interest in continuing to meet together in the future. Representatives from other nations, including Chad, the Gambia, Cape Verde, and Niger also expressed their interest in continuing to exchange experiences. It would be beneficial for the WGECD to build upon the foundation laid by this project and consider new ways to maintain exchanges in the region, especially with the leadership of the three main Country Teams.

Policy guidelines are needed.

Based on lessons learned and the tools developed to date, a document tentatively entitled, ***Guidelines for an Integrated Approach to National Policy Planning for Early Childhood Development***, should be developed to assist other countries to prepare IECD policies that are comprehensive and based on consultation and consensus building. Abundant suggestions were prepared by the Consultant for the future development of these policy guidelines. They are included in the documents, reports and PowerPoint presentations prepared under this contract (see Annex II). A CD ROM including some of these items has been prepared and distributed by UNICEF/WCARO.

More IECD tools should be developed and disseminated widely.

In addition to Guidelines, specific tools are needed in French, Arabic and local languages regarding:

- ∞ A training manual is needed on the integrated approach to early childhood development. Some excellent PowerPoint presentations have been prepared by Eveline Pressoir but a take-home manual for participants to use in training others would be useful.
- ∞ A training module on cultural competence should be prepared.
- ∞ Materials for use with parents, manuals for training parent educators and manuals for managing parent education systems, including evaluation and monitoring
- ∞ Realistic guidance is required for making low-cost learning toys and games from local materials for infants and young children and their parents.
- ∞ Parent literacy materials that reinforce key parenting skills are needed and should be written at no more than the fourth year level of readability.
- ∞ Child assessment tools are needed in all areas: language, cognitive, social-emotional, gross and fine motor, and perceptual development. These tools should be used within a system for the identification and provision of services for children with developmental delays, chronic ill health and malnutrition.

Consulting advice will always be needed in addition to published guidelines.

Although national leaders can certainly understand written policy guidelines, usually it is very difficult to implement them within institutional cultures that feature central planning, authoritarian decision making styles, budgetary control by a few people, a lack of transparency and similar situations.

For this reason, an outside Consultant is usually needed to help Country Teams to constitute themselves, plan and structure their work, and consider their options at every phase of policy development. The Consultant quietly trains them in participatory planning processes, methods for consultation and consensus building, reporting and communication techniques, etc. It can prove to be very difficult for Country Teams, and especially for drafters, to gain access to the people who direct their work. The Consultant can help to bring ministers and technicians together periodically and to maintain the flow of work in order that schedules may be met. It also becomes a “point of pride” for work

to be completed according to the expectations of the Consultant, which is part of the reason why I continue to work beyond the period of the grant.

Advisory services are needed by additional nations in West and Central Africa – and potentially other regions of Africa.

Additional nations in the region have requested advisory assistance with their national IECD policy planning processes. The nations that appeared to be most interested and requiring guidance included:

- ∞ Benin
- ∞ Cape Verde
- ∞ Cameroon
- ∞ Equatorial Guinea
- ∞ Mali (reported by Eveline Pressoir)
- ∞ Niger
- ∞ Chad
- ∞ The Gambia

Others may be added upon consultation with Eveline Pressoir. In addition, other nations in sub-Saharan Africa have expressed strong interest in carrying out participatory policy planning processes, including Tanzania, Uganda, and Namibia (to replace the current policy).

New support should be given to exploring an emerging theme: IECD and Koranic Education

From my discussions with specialists of East, Central and West African countries, I have become convinced that a major new regional theme will be the blending of Koranic education with quality IECD. This topic emerged as a major strategy for program development in Mauritania and Burkina Faso. Representatives of Chad and Niger also stated their strong interest in this topic.

Consideration should be given to holding a workshop for nations of East, Central and West Africa on this subject in collaboration especially with colleagues in Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar who have significant experience in the area. This topic could be of interest also to the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the Aga Khan Foundation that have provided funding to the Madrasa Resource Center programs in Kenya and Zanzibar. The results of this workshop would be valuable for programs in other Islamic nations in East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

IECD Networks should be expanded and nurtured.

The current sub-regional ECD network that exists in West Africa does not include members of the Country Teams of the three nations. Therefore, it will be important to link members of the Country Teams with this network or to begin a new network that is closely linked with the first one formed. A core group of the country representatives of the three countries, members of the prior network, and others could draw up an Action

Plan for the Regional IECD Network to which they would be committed personally and organizationally.

Initial work on financial simulations for IECD planning is promising but more work is needed.

The World Bank's computer program for budgetary projections for IECD investments zero to three years of age (parent education system) and three to six years of age (preschool system) is an initial attempt to provide a useful simulation tool. The collaboration of Bank staff in sharing their new tool was deeply appreciated.

Several members of the Country Teams had difficulty understanding and applying the tool. As a consequence, they stated they needed more hands-on training and guidance than was provided.

Furthermore, they were concerned that the tool did not cover areas of importance to developing integrated ECD services, such as:

- ∞ Nuances of program planning frequently faced in situations of resource scarcity;
- ∞ Assistance for planning nutrition, health and sanitation services, or
- ∞ Programs for children with special needs (mendicants, orphans, disabled children, abused children, etc.).

Some more sophisticated simulation tools, developed for use in states of the United States, also hold promise. These tools would have to be tailored through an interactive process conducted in the field with national planning specialists. Serious consideration should be given to exploring some of these new tools for financial planning in order to make every effort to maximize the use of scarce resources.

A major emphasis should be placed on providing training workshops.

As a result of experiences with the three main countries and also with representatives of Chad, Niger, and other nations, it is clear that major requirements will emerge for future training activities. It would be wise to consider developing an inter-agency "IECD Training Fund" that might include the following topics:

- ∞ Policy research, evaluation and follow-up;
- ∞ Program design, implementation and evaluation for programs in each age range and area of child protection;
- ∞ National and regional program leadership and coordination;
- ∞ National parent education systems;
- ∞ Community educators, polyvalent support teams and administrators;
- ∞ Preparing and supporting pre-school educators and administrators;
- ∞ Standards setting at community, sub-regional and national levels for comprehensive services for pregnant girls and women, parent education, infants zero to three, children three to eight, preschool education, transition to primary school, and parent involvement in child development and the schools;
- ∞ Curriculum, methods, materials and media development;

- ∞ Built-in program evaluation, monitoring and follow-up, and
- ∞ Social communications and policy advocacy activities.

Recommendation regarding establishing national IECD training institutes versus one or more regional training institutes.

Some have posited that one or two regional training centers should be developed in West and Central Africa in order to provide core training for early childhood specialists in Francophone and Anglophone countries, rather than invest in duplicative national programs.

However it is clear that each of these nations will require a new or greatly improved and expanded training institute for parent education and integrated approaches to early childhood development, prenatal to age eight. This means that a significant new investment will be needed in each nation, including both national and international funds. In some cases such training programs could “piggy back” on World Bank projects (e.g., Mauritania). However, even there the mandate is only for training teachers for preschool education at national and regional levels.

Subsequent to helping develop national training programs, the most promising of the national training centers could be selected as a “regional” training center that would be registered with UNESCO, UNICEF and other donors. These regional programs should be linked also with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the ADEA WGEFA.

Parent education should be given priority for future program investment in the region.

After reviewing the status of children, parents and community services in the three nations we assisted, the development of at least one national system for parenting education is essential. This national system should include basic prenatal and primary health care, child assessments, and support for high-risk and developmentally delayed children. It could serve as a source of inspiration and training for other nations in the region. Upon viewing the program and its results, it is likely that other nations will want to adopt similar initiatives. Each of the current three draft policies includes the development of national parent education systems to meet the needs of young children.

It should be noted that in some countries, small pamphlets for parenting education are being prepared as the basis of a national parent education program. However, more extensive planning efforts for developing integrated programs will be required to truly improve parenting skills and early childhood development.

Excellent experience is available for developing comprehensive low-cost, high-impact systems. Such knowledge should be utilized to help meet the dramatic needs of children and families in these countries.

Selected topics for the next meeting of the WGECD

The next meeting of the WGECD might focus on some of the recommendations included in this report as we build upon past achievements to meet prevailing needs for expanding and improving early childhood development in sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, a prioritized list should be drawn up, including the following points:

- ∞ Follow up activities should be designed with nations that have completed their IECD Policies in order to help them achieve their goals.
- ∞ Policy planning support should be offered to other nations that have declared their intention to develop policies.
- ∞ Policy advocacy should continue to be conducted in nations that have not participated in policy planning activities as yet;
- ∞ National indicators in IECD Policies and national experiences in using the indicators over time should be shared. This work would include: indicators, measures, baselines, trends and target setting and assessment. The results of this dialogue should be shared with other nations in Africa and the world.
- ∞ The functioning of policy evaluation and monitoring systems should be assessed and supportive help should be provided, upon request.

Comparative studies could be of value to the region.

A host of comparative studies could be conducted on topics such as:

- ∞ Parenting practices in different cultures.
- ∞ Case studies on national policy planning processes and their results.
- ∞ Standards setting.
- ∞ Experiences with and actions undertaken to achieve improved juridical protection, by age range.
- ∞ Evaluations of integrated and collaborative inter-sectoral program planning and implementation.
- ∞ Parent-led IECD activities and parent participation in IECD programs.

VII. Conclusion

The participatory policy planning processes conducted in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal have assisted each Country Team to consider new collaborative and integrated approaches for improving parenting skills and early childhood development. These processes have proven to be very valuable for the participants. In each nation they have motivated and stimulated national specialists to begin making major contributions. New leaders and promising young professionals have been identified, and early childhood is considered more seriously by many national decision makers. Various promises have been made already to increase national investment in early childhood development. It will be important to review actual budgetary flows in future years.

The three IECD Policies are not fully completed as yet, but they have already made an impact upon existing strategies and programs. Once they are completed in mid-2004, it

will be important to support them generously and actively, and to track their results over time.

Finally, as a result of this policy project, many new partnerships have been developed within nations and between national institutions and international donors that promise to yield positive results for improving the status of young children in West Africa.

A major step forward has been taken by courageous leaders in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal. They and the children and families they serve deserve our strong and continuing support.

Annex I

List of Documents, Reports and PowerPoint Presentations Prepared by the Consultant from June 28, 2002 to October 29, 2003

Following is a list of Documents and PowerPoint Presentations prepared by the Consultant to meet the objectives of this ADEA WGECD Project:

Mission to Mauritania, June 28 to July 13, 2002

Documents:

- ∞ Notes pour la Politique Nationale pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance, 2 juillet 2002
- ∞ Projections, 5 juillet 2002
- ∞ Statistiques Nationales et pour les Régions, 5 juillet 2002
- ∞ avec Eby Ould Cheikh, Plan de Présentation : Projet de Politique Nationale pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance en Mauritanie, 8 juillet 2002
- ∞ Présentations dans la consultation nationale: Programmes Intégrés pour le Développement d'Enfants Zéro –36 Mois, 9 juillet 2002
- ∞ Rapport de Mission en Mauritanie, 26 juillet 2002
- ∞ Guidance for the Regional Consultations in Mauritania, July 18, 2002
- ∞ Recommendations : Processus pour la Formation de la Politique pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance, 26 juillet 2002
- ∞ Table de Stratégies Pour le Développement de la Petit Enfance en Mauritanie, 28 juillet 2002
- ∞ Plan pour le Plan Financiere Annuel, 28 juillet 2002
- ∞ Conseils Concernant les Contenus de la Politique pour le Developpement de la Petite Enfance, 28 juillet 2002

Eritrea, Second International Conference on Early Childhood Development, 28 – 31, August, 2002

Documents:

- ∞ Presentation: Policy Planning Process Underway in Three Countries of West Africa, August 28, 2002
- ∞ Recommendations, Workshop #1: Working Group on Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, Planning and Research, August 31, 2002

Mission to Burkina Faso, 1 to 14 September 2002, and

First Regional Workshop for National Policies for Early Childhood Development, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 9 - 11 September 2002

Powerpoint Presentations :

- ∞ Planification Participative des Politiques Nationales pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance, 8 septembre, 2002
- ∞ Participatory National Early Childhood Policy Planning, September 8, 2002 (version in English)

Documents:

- ∞ Programme pour l'Atelier Regional
- ∞ Format, Plan d'Travail
- ∞ Guide des consultations régionales
- ∞ Sommaire de la Politique pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance
- ∞ Les Phases Générale de la Planification Participative des Politiques Nationales pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance
- ∞ Recommandation aux Ministres d'education, Delegates de Gouvernements et Participants a Minedaf VIII
- ∞ Rapid visit report prepared for Jeannette Vogelaar, September 13, 2002
- ∞ Rapport de Synthese sur l'Atelier Regional a Ouagadougou, 24 septembre 2002
- ∞ Programme de Sejour, 31 aout a 14 septembre 2002
- ∞ Operational Report on Regional Policy Planning Project for the Development of ECD in West Africa, September 20, 2002

**Mission to Senegal, 25 January to 8 February, 2003, and
Second Regional Workshop for National Policies for Early Childhood Development, Senegal, Dakar, 6 to 7 February 2003**

Documents:

- ∞ Agenda et objectifs de l'Atelier Regional
- ∞ Report on Mission to Senegal, January 25 to February 8, 2003
- ∞ Programme de Sejour, 5 fevrier 2003

PowerPoint Presentation:

- ∞ Consultations Régionales
- ∞ Planification Participative des Politiques Nationales pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance (version bref)

WGECD Consultation at The Hague, Netherlands, 14 to 16 April, 2003

PowerPoint:

- ∞ IECD Policy Challenges: *The Inter-Agency Project with West African Nations*, April 13, 2003

Document (draft for preparation of PowerPoint):

- ∞ IECD Policy Challenges: The Inter-Agency Project with West African Nations

**Mission to Mauritania and
Third Regional Workshop for National Policies for Early Childhood Development,
Mauritania, July 21 – 23, 2003**

Documents Prepared

- ∞ Workshop agenda and documents
- ∞ Indicators for National IECD Policies
- ∞ Troisieme Atelier sur les Politiques Nationales pour le Developpement de la Petite Enfance au Burkina Faso, Mauritanie et Senegal, 21 a 23 juillet 2003
- ∞ Rapport de Mission

PowerPoint Presentations prepared on:

- ∞ Indicators for National IECD Policies
- ∞ Introduction to the World Bank costing model
- ∞ Final comments on the workshop and guidance for Country Teams

Mission to Burkina Faso, September 7 to 13, 2003

Documents:

- ∞ Rapport de Mission, Planification des Politiques Nationales pour le Developpement Integree de la Petite Enfance, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, (7 – 13 Septembre 2004) 4 octobre 2003
- ∞ Guide pour la Preparation du Plan pour la Communication Sociale
- ∞ Plan pour les Ateliers Regionaux
- ∞ Programme Ateliers Regionaux
- ∞ Plan pour les Ateliers Communautaires
- ∞ Programme Ateliers Communautaires
- ∞ Sommaire Revise pour la Politique de Burkina Faso
- ∞ Premier Plan Multisectoriel pour l'Education Parentale

Mission to Senegal, September 13 to 20, 2003

Documents:

- ∞ Mission Report, Technical Support: National Policy Planning for Integrated Early Child Development, Burkina Faso (8 – 13 September 2003) and Senegal (September 13 – 20, 2003), September 19, 2003
- ∞ Plan de Communication Sociale de la PNDIPE, 9 septembre 2003
- ∞ Senegal – Decisions, 19 septembre 2003
- ∞ Elements pour le Sommaire, 19 septembre 2003

UNICEF Regional Conference on IECD, Dakar, Senegal, October 21 – 23, 2003

PowerPoint Presentations:

- ∞ Coopération Tripartite :Elaboration des Politiques Nationales pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance en Trois Pays, 20 octobre 2003
- ∞ Indicateurs pour les Politiques Nationales pour le Développement Intégré de la Petite Enfance, 20 octobre 2003
- ∞ Eléments essentiels pour la définition d'une Politique Nationale pour une Approche Intégrée du Développement de la Petite Enfance, 21 octobre 2003

Documents:

- ∞ Dakar Recommendations, *Regional Conference on National Policy Planning for an Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Development*, Dakar, Senegal, 21 – 23 October 2003 (prepared in French and translated to English)
- ∞ Recommandations sur le Dessin du Programme pour L'Education Parentale en Sénégal, 21 Octobre 2003

Dakar Recommendations

Regional Conference On National Policy Planning for an Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Development

Dakar, Senegal
Hotel Sofitel Teranga
21 – 23 October 2003

Representatives and teams from fourteen countries of West and Central Africa met in Dakar to move forward national policy planning for an integrated approach to early childhood development.

During three days of discussion, country representatives and teams considered the following themes:

- ∞ National policy as a global response to children's rights
- ∞ The situation of children in the region and the use of an integrated approach to development for the period from prenatal to eight years of age
- ∞ The achievements of three countries, Burkina Faso, Mauritania et Senegal, through conducting participatory planning processes for the drafting of national policies for the integrated early childhood development
- ∞ The relationship of integrated ECD policies with national Poverty Reduction Plans, Education for All Plans, SWAPs and UNDAF
- ∞ The national ECD policy experiences of Malawi, Ghana and Guinea
- ∞ The model for cost simulation prepared by the World Bank
- ∞ Indicators for the implementation of an integrated approach to National ECD Policy
- ∞ The use of communications to support the process of drafting and implementing a national policy
- ∞ The achievements, challenges, lessons learned, next steps, and needs of each nation to advance in formulating and implementing their national policies or national strategies for an integrated approach to early childhood development, from the prenatal period to eight years of age

Many participants emphasized that investments in the integrated approach for early childhood development are essential in order to:

- ∞ Ensure that children's rights are respected
- ∞ Attain the goals of Education for All and the Millennium Goals
- ∞ Achieve the results of National Plans for Poverty Reduction
- ∞ Improve school achievement, eliminate grade repetition and drop out and free up a percentage of national education budgets for increasing the size of investment in early childhood development
- ∞ Have productive and fulfilled citizens and achieve the objectives of poverty reduction
- ∞ Develop a healthy, well-nourished and well-developed child, not only with regard to mental and physical development but also social and emotional development
- ∞ Achieve a child who is well-balanced with respect to social and emotional development to help achieve peace and to develop a solid base for the reconstruction of nations enduring conflicts
- ∞ Attain long-term national security

Discussions held during the Regional Conference resulted in the following recommendations:

National Policies

The current situation of the young child affected by poverty and living in difficult situations is dramatic and of great concern. For this reason, most of the nations of West and Central Africa need to develop and implement a national policy using the integrated approach to early childhood development. To achieve this goal, we recommend that each nation in the region:

- ∞ Consider formulating, completing and implementing a national policy to ensure the good development of all children, with special attention to young children living in poverty or especially difficult circumstances.
- ∞ Encourage the preparation of policies with an integrated approach that includes the period from prenatal to eight years of age, with emphasis upon the critical period of child development from infancy to three years of age, parent support and education, and with priority given to children who live in extreme poverty or are malnourished, chronically ill, developmentally delayed or have difficult situations (conflicts, domestic violence, HIV/AIDs orphans, children with disabilities, etc.)
- ∞ Prepare a Policy through developing the following or similar types of groups constituted by citizens at all levels in order to ensure it will be an adequate response to the needs and cultures of the country:
 - A National Council including the highest leaders and appropriate ministers and directors of the nation

- A Planning Team that represents all of the sectors, ministries, national and international NGOs, and concerned civil society institutions
- A Drafting Team
- A National Forum including all sectors and levels within the country
- ∞ Include in the policy planning process, representatives of communities, regions, different ethnic groups, and others to ensure their participation and their support for the Policy, with special attention to the following aspects:
 - Needs assessment
 - Mapping of local resources
 - Ideas for the national Vision for early childhood development
 - Suggestions regarding the types of programs, objectives and indicators to be developed in the Policy
- ∞ Prepare a Work Plan for preparing the Policy as rapidly as possible because children cannot wait
- ∞ Ensure that the Policy has strategies for each developmental period: pre and perinatal, zero to 3 years, 3 to 6 years, 6 to 8 years and for special populations (children affected by conflicts, children with disabilities, HIV/AIDS orphans, beggar children, street children, children affected by domestic violence, etc.)
- ∞ Establish a structure for the organization and national coordination of programs for promoting early childhood development, specifying the roles and responsibilities of organizations at each level
- ∞ Develop in each Policy:
 - A Social Communications Plan for Policy Advocacy
 - A Plan and a structure for the implementation of the Policy, and
 - A Plan for the evaluation and follow-up of the Policy
- ∞ Forge a consensus on the strategies, programs, objectives, indicators, targets, and human, financial and material resources required, in order to achieve the rapid approval and adoption of the Policy
- ∞ Prepare an Operational Plan each year at every level: community, district, provincial/departmental/state, national with provision for coordination at each level
- ∞ Establish a permanent and multi-sectoral National Council for coordination with representatives from all relevant ministries, civil society institutions including leading national and international NGOs, religious groups and ethnic groups.
- ∞ Explore the possibilities for establishing integrated programs at provincial, district and especially community levels
- ∞ Establish a Committee of Partners (multi-lateral and bilateral agencies and national and international NGOs) to develop a "mosaic" of support for priority programs of the Policy

- ∞ Consider the possibility of creating some “letters of intention” between ministries, NGOs and agencies in order to support Policy implementation
- ∞ For certain countries with many existing policies and plans that support the development of the young child, they may wish to:
 - Prepare, at a minimum, a document on their ***National Strategy for an Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Development***
 - Consider the status, needs, and problems of young children and their parents as yet unaddressed and the gaps in current policies and plans
 - Establish or reinforce existing coordination systems
 - Develop plans, to the extent possible, for an integrated approach to young child development at various levels in the country
 - Consider the formulation of a complete Policy in the future

Sensitization of National Leaders and Directors

Nations require assistance with their work to sensitize national leaders and decision makers especially because the good development of young children is necessary in order to achieve the goals and indicator targets of national plans and also to achieve national security, essential human rights, poverty reduction, and national socio-economic development. We recommend that nations

- ∞ Develop arguments regarding the importance of policies for early child development and increasing investments in children
- ∞ Directly link Policies for Early Childhood Development to plans for Poverty Reduction, Education for All, Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAPs), and to sectoral policies and plans (education, health, nutrition, sanitation water, etc.)
- ∞ Help nations to reinforce their sensitization activities with presentations on the importance of investing in early childhood development in regional conferences such as the following:
 - ∞ Biennale of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)
 - ∞ Ministers of Finance of the Monetary Union for West Africa
 - ∞ Customs and Economic Union of Central African States (UDEAC)
 - ∞ Economic and Monetary Community of the Central African States (CEMAC)
 - ∞ CEDEAO
 - ∞ African Union
 - ∞ Others

Children in Conflict Situations

According to UNICEF studies, children and women are the persons most affected by conflicts. Children suffer in many ways: development, education, nutrition, health and the lack of essential children's rights. To achieve this, it is necessary to protect children and to ensure that integrated local services always are provided. To do this we recommend that:

- ∞ UNICEF offer to hold a Summit Meeting with the World Bank and United Nations for the leaders of West and Central Africa, their security directors and leaders of opposition groups, to discuss the impact of conflicts on the survival and development of young children and implications for the national and regional development

Increasing Investments in Early Childhood Development

Each country should increase its investments in early childhood development. We recommend that each nation implementing the following measures:

- ∞ Conduct a detailed study for preparing the budgets and costs for each National Policy that will be required to develop and implement programs that take an integrated approach to early childhood development.
- ∞ Review annually investments in young children and their results
- ∞ Conduct a review and reallocation of financial and human resources in order to maximize their use and to attain Policy results
- ∞ Consider the use of financial targets such as the following:
 - Devote 2% of the national budget to early childhood development
 - Commit 4% to 6% of the Education Budget to community education for early childhood development and parent education
 - Allocate 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for child health and nutrition
 - Increase budgets for children in difficult situations, according to needs (children with disabilities, street children, beggar children, children affected by conflicts or domestic violence, children in abusive child labor, HIV/AIDS orphans, etc.)
 - Create a National Fund for Early Childhood Development for innovative programs that integrate two or more sectors

Partnership

Partnerships and the national coordination of international and regional investments in early childhood development should be developed in accord with Policy priorities. Countries should:

- ∞ Develop partnerships at all levels between government agencies and communities, national and international NGOs, religious groups and other civil society institutions

- ∞ Establish a National Committee for Partnerships with international agencies, NGOs and national and international foundations on the following points of agreement:
 - Support the priorities in the Policy
 - Increase investments for young children
 - Protect and increase national budgets for early childhood development
 - Develop national coordination for the development of programs to assist young children

The Exchange of Experiences

The exchange of experiences regarding the preparation and implementation of national policies for early childhood development is of fundamental importance. The support of regional and international agencies and NGOs for developing these exchanges will be essential. We recommend:

- ∞ National workshops convened each six months to consider the achievements, challenges and next steps in each country of the regions regarding the preparation, implementation and evaluation of Policies for an integrated approach to early childhood development.
- ∞ A brief report on each national workshop sent to the respective UNICEF Country Offices and afterward to the Regional Bureau (UNICEF/WACARO), to ADEA, and to the other countries of the regions in order to keep them well-informed of progress in each nation.
- ∞ Convene the Third International Conference on Early Childhood Development in a country of West Africa during the first semester of 2005, and afterward, convene an annual regional conference.
- ∞ Promote and encourage exchange visits, study visits or inter-country activities in order to make maximum use of lessons learned in pioneering countries such as Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal.
- ∞ Put in place a group of national policy leaders (one representative per country) to prepare an annual agenda and activities to promote the exchange of information on the policies, including both their preparation and implementation.
- ∞ Convene within one year a Regional Workshop on National Policy Indicators for early childhood development.

Support to Nations of West and Central Africa

The best specialists in the fields of health, nutrition, sanitation, education and juridical protection in each nation are currently engaged in preparing policies for an integrated approach to early childhood development, but the costs and

technical requirements for policy development are special, and the countries need the support of different international agencies and NGOs.

During the conference, several delegations stated their urgent need for the following types of support to prepare and implement their Policies:

- ∞ Technical assistance
 - National and regional consultants
 - International consultants
- ∞ Financial assistance
 - Costs pertaining to the Planning Team
 - Planning and convening community, regional and national consultative workshops
 - Travel to regional and national workshops
 - National Forums
- ∞ Exchange visits between countries and other activities of the early childhood development network
- ∞ Training workshops on the integrated approach and many other themes
- ∞ Exchanges and support through the use of the Internet

The participants from institutions and countries present at this conference express their commitment to continue the fight for early childhood development with the goals of guaranteeing child rights and of ensuring children are healthy, well-nourished, stimulated, safe, happy and able to achieve success at school and become a productive and fulfilled citizens.

End Notes

ⁱ Kate Torkington, WGECD Policy Project: A Synthesis Report, ADEA/Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 1, 2001.

ⁱⁱ Dakar Framework for Action “Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments”, World Education Forum, April 28, 2000.

ⁱⁱⁱ Report of the Seventh Conference of Ministers of Education of African Minister States, MINEDAF VII, April, 1998.

^{iv} Basic education is defined herein to include early childhood development, primary and secondary education, youth and adult literacy and teacher training.

^v UNICEF, *State of the World’s Children*, 1999.

^{vi} Education is operationally defined to include both formal and non-formal learning systems that have central purposes and goals, an organizational structure, teachers or learning facilitators, declared contents, methods and media, and significant population coverage.