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The Salzburg Statement

Quality Early Childhood Development and Education for all Girls and Boys

A CALL TO ACTION

All children deserve the best start in life. Without commitment to human development, there can be no sustainable development.

Investing in young children is critical for communities to flourish and nations to prosper. This calls for political will, public demand, adequate funding, and the active engagement of families, communities, business and government.

Children's ability to survive and thrive depends on the well-being and competence of those who care for them. Holistic frameworks for the period of development from prenatal to 8 years of age require public-private coordination on poverty reduction, maternal and child health, education, social protection, gender equality, workforce policies, water, sanitation, energy and housing.

We, the participants at Salzburg Global's strategy session on *Designing a Social Compact for the 21st Century: Early Childhood Development and Education* (ECDE) (April 15-18, 2015), therefore urge the international community to address the needs of young children and families across the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and commit to coordinated planning between sectors and adequate financing. Building on the health and nutrition goals, we call for adoption of the proposed Learning Goal target:

"By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education".

Principles and Recommendations to Accelerate Progress for Children

Studies from neuroscience, psychology and economics show the lifelong benefits of ECDE investments for individual wellbeing, realized potential, and society as a whole. Yet hundreds of millions of children worldwide still have no access to early childhood services. Disparities exist within and between countries, with the most disadvantaged least likely to access critical health, nutrition and education supports. Although global enrolment of pre-primary (3-5 years) rose from 33% in 1999 to 54% by 2013, rates for low-income countries average below 20%.

We need to pay special attention to children whose development is at risk. These include the extreme poor, migrants, refugees, those in conflict zones, children with disabilities, and vulnerable populations like the Roma.

Quality matters as much as access. A coherent framework for early childhood and family support services is needed for children from prenatal to 3 years, continuing through pre-primary and early primary years. Research underpinning the economic case for high-quality ECDE shows that access to quality services is essential to maximize return on investment: access without quality often compounds marginalization.

Perceptions of early childhood needs should go beyond health and nutrition to recognize the importance of early brain development and learning even before birth. Quality frameworks should ensure a focus on play throughout childhood and promote activities to foster positive development across key domains. These include social and emotional development, language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), approaches toward learning (including through the arts), physical well-being and motor development, including adaptive skills.

Guidance for designing and implementing quality ECDE systems 2015-2030

We applaud the efforts of international agencies, regional and national initiatives to bring forward a collective definition of quality ECDE. This can guide the design and implementation of systems adapted to national and subnational contexts, with priority actions determined by local stakeholders. It is critical to ensure that we finance quality services and systems in order to assure country-level implementation, especially in least developed and fragile environments.

To accelerate progress for all children following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations, we urge consideration of the following recommendations:

LEADERSHIP & COORDINATED GOVERNANCE

- Designate leadership to develop coordinated ECDE governance and accountability across sectors, and guide processes of ECDE policy and program development;
- Build political and public demand for high-quality ECDE through campaigns adapted to the local context, supported by an evidence- and rights-based agenda;
- Develop and fund SDG country implementation plans to address the needs of young children and families across relevant Goals and targets;
- Build strategic partnerships, and leverage formal and informal networks for coordination and delivery;
- Define a common understanding of “quality programs” and “children on the margins” in national contexts.

QUALITY

- Ensure that all early childhood services (pre-natal to 8 years old) are of high quality by:
 - providing adequate funding (see **FINANCE**);
 - sufficiently training qualified, diverse and representative staff (see **WORKFORCE**);
 - establishing and monitoring quality standards (see **DATA AND MEASUREMENT**);
 - developing early learning guidelines that support all areas of development including physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language, and approaches to learning or executive function;
 - affirming family engagement as a core part of quality provision (see **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY**);
- Examine the role of culture and language in national settings to reach a common, context-specific understanding of children at risk and develop information systems at national and local levels to identify regions, population groups, and individuals excluded from ECDE services;
- Design interventions that prioritize the early years including prenatal and infancy (0 to 3 years old);
- Promote a seamless continuum of care, development, and education across ECDE programs (daycare, kindergartens, early primary grades) by ensuring that their curricula and pedagogy are culturally, developmentally and contextually appropriate;
- Give equal weight to reducing disparities in ECDE access and quality within each country (urban-rural, rich-poor, majority-minority ethnicity, etc.) as well as to improving the national average.

FINANCE

- Increase and sustain national, bilateral and multilateral funding to support early childhood and family services and meet SDG indicators across education, health, nutrition, and poverty reduction;
- Prioritize funding for those children and families most at risk, recognizing their diverse needs and the importance of assuring quality;
- Mobilize a cadre of influential leaders across sectors to underscore the reason for investment in early childhood health, nutrition and education as an economic and social imperative in both the short and longer term.

The Salzburg Statement of shared principles and recommendations is to be accompanied by a comprehensive report on the conversations and topics addressed at the Salzburg Global Seminar session “Designing a Social Compact for the 21st Century: Early Childhood Development and Education”

The views expressed in this Statement are those of session participants individually and should not be taken to represent those of any organizations to which they are affiliated.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

- Support ongoing research to identify the key components of successful interventions;
- Develop and employ child development measures to track development at national, regional and international levels as well as measures to evaluate, scale-up and improve quality and practice at both macro and micro level;
- Design and implement system- and program-level measurements and indicators that are specific to components of quality;
- Promote use of open-source data approaches and tools to optimize access to quality evaluation across the international community, ensuring that data are transparent, accessible and relevant to end-users;
- Design and implement developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate child-level measurements that can be used with all children, including children with disabilities;
- Create data systems that track progress of children across programs and throughout their development, and which incorporate indicators from other sectors such as health, social support, gender, childcare and education health, to understand full effects of interventions.

WORKFORCE

- Build a well-qualified early childhood workforce by defining competencies, strengthening capacity in higher education, requiring decent working conditions and compensation, and ensuring parity with other teaching positions;
- Develop support systems that include on-site, in-classroom mentoring and professional development; expertise in public agencies responsible for programming; streamlined linkages to health and family services; and user-friendly data systems, standards and monitoring;
- Raise the status of the caregiver within and outside formal settings by recognizing the skills required for their work, including practice-based competencies, and making available relevant and accessible training and information, and opportunities for professional advancement if desired;
- Ensure that early childhood staff are diverse and representative of the communities they serve by examining, within national contexts, the role of gender, race and/or ethnicity in the ECDE workforce, including common under-representation of males in the profession.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

- Affirm family engagement and wellbeing as a fundamental component of quality ECDE provision;
- Recognize the diverse nature, contexts, and needs of families, with special attention to vulnerable populations, and develop ECDE programs that leverage family resources and positive practices;
- Promote strategic community partnerships and networks to coordinate ECDE service delivery and practical collaboration across relevant SDGs;
- Design interventions to address the psycho-social vulnerabilities of primary caregivers, especially those of children at risk.

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About Salzburg Global Seminar

The mission of Salzburg Global Seminar is to challenge current and future leaders to solve issues of global concern. To do this we design, facilitate and host international strategic convening and multi-year programs to tackle systems challenges critical for the next generation.

Originally founded in 1947 to encourage the revival of intellectual dialogue in post-war Europe, we are now a game-changing catalyst for global engagement on critical issues in education, health, environment, economics, governance, peace-building and more. From the start, Salzburg Global Seminar has broken down barriers separating people and ideas. We challenge countries at all stages of development and institutions across all sectors to rethink their relationships and identify shared interests and goals.

Today, our program framework has three cross-cutting clusters and addresses the underlying questions that hold keys to human progress: **Imagination, Sustainability and Justice.**

Our exclusive setting at Schloss Leopoldskron enables our participants to detach from their working lives, immerse themselves in the issues at hand and form new networks and connections. Participants come together on equal terms, regardless of age, affiliation, region or sector.

We maintain this energy and engagement through the Salzburg Global Fellowship, which connects our Fellows across the world. It provides a vibrant hub to crowd-source new ideas, exchange best practice, and nurture emerging leaders through mentoring and support.

FOR MORE *info.*

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