



ARNEC
Asia-Pacific Regional Network
for Early Childhood

Full webinar series report

Young children amidst COVID-19

ARNEC webinar series, April-July 2020



About the webinar series

'young children amidst COVID-19'

Holding the ARNEC webinar series on *young children amidst COVID-19* is one of the priorities in the ARNEC COVID Response Strategy, which was developed in March 2020 to amplify the role of ECD in responding to the conditions of young children in the Asia-Pacific region in the context of the pandemic.

The webinar series was aimed at mobilising and connecting the ECD community in the region, particularly practitioners, policy makers, and advocates at the country level, to share practical strategies and innovations to address the needs and challenges of young children and their families, especially those whose conditions might have worsened as a result of COVID-19.



ARNEC for young children amidst pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, and its impact is far-reaching and long-term. The overall impact of COVID-19 on young children is significant in terms of child protection, exposure to domestic violence, challenges to health and nutrition, as well as access to early learning opportunities, all of which affect their social-emotional development.

According to UNICEF, children are adversely affected in multiple ways:

- possibility of falling into extreme poverty;
- exacerbating the learning crisis;
- threats to child survival and health;
- and
- risks for child safety, particularly heightened risk of children witnessing or suffering violence and abuse.



ARNEC hosted eight webinars on young children amidst COVID-19 from April-July 2020.

UNESCO has estimated that about 1.5 billion learners are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic arising from unprecedented closures of schools and day care centres, and the 'stay-at-home' directive by most governments to halt the spread of the virus.

ARNEC has raised the impacts of the pandemic on young children and continues to advocate the critical role of

ECD in risk mitigation, response and recovery.

ARNEC has also amplified the voice of the ECD community through the webinars, not only to uphold the well-being of young children and their families, but also to keep the ECD community resilient and to rise above pandemic-induced challenges.

The webinar series

at a glance

8
webinars

705
minutes

12
weeks

30
country
presentations

42
speakers

9
moderators

4,039
registrants

from the Asia-
Pacific region
and the rest of
the world

The eight webinars

Webinar No. 1. Practical strategies for the most vulnerable young children and their families

Webinar No. 2. Caring for the caregivers: practical experiences and resources for parents and caregivers of young children

Webinar No. 3. How young children cope with anxiety, fear and stress

Webinar No. 4. Distance learning approaches for young children

Webinar No. 5. Ensuring the safety and security of young children during and beyond the pandemic

Webinar No. 6. Exploring the power of play in building the resilience of young children and their families

Webinar No. 7. The ECD workforce matters, too: profiles, impacts, and support measures during and beyond the pandemic

Webinar No. 8. Post-pandemic transitions: addressing disparities in policies and programs for young children

The recording of each webinar and the set of presentation materials and learning resources are available in the ARNEC website. Download from <https://arnec.net>.



Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Chair of the ARNEC Board of Directors, Singapore



Dr. Yvonne Becher, Executive Director of the Child Development Centre, Hong Kong



Sumitra Mishra, Executive Director of Mobile Creches, India



Joy Sampang, ECCD Advisor Save the Children Philippines



Catherine Manzano, Project Manager, Save the Children Philippines



Evelyn Santiago, ARNEC Executive Director, Singapore

Practical strategies for the most vulnerable young children and their families

ARNEC Webinar No. 1, 13 April 2020

Key questions

1. What practical strategies are in place for the most disadvantaged young children and their families at a time when governments enforce strict measures to stop the spread of COVID-19?
2. What ECD measures are being implemented targeting children with special needs, children of migrant workers in urban centres, and children in ethnic, rural, peri-urban and urban communities?

Disparity, exclusion and
inequity to increase

Photo source: UNICEF, n.d. in
Shaeffer, 2020

INDIA EFFECT

Millions on the road to home. Except there is no home **COVID19**

MC
Mutual Childhood Sowing Change

Photo source: Mishra, 2020

Recording of webinar no. 1, copies of speakers' presentations, other related learning resources, and the webinar-specific full narrative report are available in the ARNEC website using this link: <https://arnec.net/publication/practical-ecd-strategies-for-the-most-vulnerable-young-children-and-their-families>.

ARNEC says...

Response to webinar insights



In the early days of lockdown, the webinar discussions boldly exposed the adverse impacts on young children of vulnerable, poor families, who were already in precarious conditions pre-pandemic, in most parts of the Asia-Pacific region.

The clarion call was made in the first ARNEC webinar: the poor would disproportionately bear the heavy burden of COVID-19, particularly young children. The pandemic-induced disparities might have worsened conditions of vulnerability of young children and their families and should be exposed and addressed with urgency.

We cannot fail our young children. Neither should we allow more to be left behind. Together we work for equitable and resilient ECD now more than ever.



Dr. Pablo Stansbery, ECD
Regional Advisor for UNICEF's
East Asia and Pacific Regional
Office (EAPRO)



Dr. Jamie Lachman, University of
Oxford and University of Glasgow



Dr. Rumaya binti Juhari, Universiti
Putra Malaysia



Fitriana Herarti, Child
Development Specialist,
ChildFund Indonesia



Aparajita Chaudhary, ECD
Specialist, UNICEF India



Margaret Sims, Honorary
Professor, Macquarie University
NSW Australia

Caring for the caregivers: practical experiences and resources for parents and caregivers of young children

ARNEC Webinar No. 2, 23 April 2020

How should families and caregivers care for the young children and for themselves during prolonged periods of home quarantine as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among the most disadvantaged families in the Asia-Pacific region?

Key question



Photo source: UNICEF, n.d. in Lachman, 2020



Photo source: Herarti, 2020

Recording of webinar no. 2, copies of speakers' presentations, other related learning resources, and the webinar-specific full narrative report are available in the ARNEC website using this link: <https://arnec.net/resource?id=197>.

ARNEC says...

Response to webinar insights



Caring for caregivers was the spotlight of the second ARNEC webinar, recognising the critical role caregivers play in nurturing and protecting young children.

But under an environment where routines and social realities have been disrupted creating pandemic-induced stress, it is equally important to care for the caregivers.

They, too, need to be supported.

We cannot fail them, as they are our front liners in the home ensuring that no more young children are left behind.



Professor Marc de Rosnay, University of Wollongong, Australia



Thian Ai Ling, General Manager of My First Skool, NTUC First Campus, Singapore



Dr. Connie Lum, Director, Mother Tongue Languages Officer of NTUC First Campus, Singapore



Nguyen Hai Thuong, Technical Lead for Health and Nutrition of Plan Viet Nam



Nikki Reyes, Planning Officer, ECCD Council of the Philippines



Dr. Neelima Chopra, ARNEC National Representative for India

How young children cope with anxiety, fear, and stress

ARNEC Webinar No. 3, 30 April 2020

Key questions

1. What changes in behaviour among young children are apparent or emerging under prolonged periods of home quarantine?
2. What practical strategies can parents and caregivers provide their young children to address adverse changes in behaviour, while also looking after their own well-being?



What is our conception of the young child?

Why it matters *how* we think about young children and their capacities



Photo source: De Rosnay, 2020

Recording of webinar no. 3, copies of speakers' presentations, other related learning resources, and the webinar-specific full narrative report are available in the ARNEC website using this link: <https://arnec.net/resource?id=201>.

ARNEC says...

Response to webinar insights



The third ARNEC webinar provided theoretical and practical strategies to identify and manage fear, anxiety, and stress of young children at home at a time when COVID-19 disrupted routines and structures most familiar to and intimate with them and their families.

In these challenging times, caregivers play an important role in creating positive interactions with young children and to reestablish new routines and structures for the social-emotional development of young children.



Dr. Venita Kaul, Ambedkhar
University Delhi, India



Baela Raza Jamil, CEO of Idara-e-
Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) Centre for
Education and Consciousness, Pakistan



Dr. Alice Wong, Chief Programs
Officer at OneSky for all children,
Hong Kong



Psyche Vetta Olayvar, ECCD-ECE
Programme, UNICEF Philippines



Jyoti Dhingra, ARNEC National
Representative for India

Distance learning approaches for young children

ARNEC Webinar No. 4, 12 May 2020

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning for young children especially those provided through digital platforms?
2. What guidance can be provided to parents and caregivers who may not be educated or literate to support distance learning of their young children? How can they be supported to engage their young children amidst the many pressures they are facing during this crisis?
3. How can 'play' be transformed into meaningful interaction and learning between young children and their families and caregivers during this time of crisis?
4. How can local NGOs or CSOs support families and parents to ensure continued learning of their young children? What type of activities can be undertaken by parents with their young children to ensure their continued learning?

Key questions



Photo source: Olayvar, 2020



Photo source: Wong, 2020

Recording of webinar no. 4, copies of speakers' presentations, other related learning resources, and the webinar-specific full narrative report are available in the ARNEC website using this link: <https://arnec.net/resource?id=205>.

ARNEC says...

Response to webinar insights



As communities and societies all over the world adjust to and recover from the impacts of COVID-19, ARNEC continues to stand with the ECD community in the region and all over the world in promoting early stimulation and early learning at home with the involvement of parents, families and caregivers.

But ARNEC advocates for inclusive learning approaches in the home (i.e. 'no tech', 'low tech', and 'high tech' approaches), especially because COVID-19 might have worsened divides that have long characterised our social realities. We cannot fail our young children, especially those in precarious conditions pre-pandemic. Neither should we allow more to be left behind.

Ensuring the safety and security of young children during and beyond the pandemic

ARNEC Webinar No. 5, 21 May 2020



Rachel Harvey, Regional Adviser, Child Protection, UNICEF's East Asia and Pacific Regional Office



Anita L'Enfant, Senior Education Advisor for the Early Years Online Safety Program, eSafety Commissioner, Australia



Erum Mariam, Executive Director, BRAC IED (Institute of Educational Development), BRAC University, Bangladesh



Peta Gaye Bookall, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Office



Suhany Zaimah, Communications and Advocacy Manager for BRAC IED, Bangladesh



Tata Sudrajat, founder of Save the Children Indonesia and lead advocacy in country



Talat Mahmud, Play to Learn Sesame Workshop, Bangladesh



Jessica Hampton, Education Adviser of ChildFund Australia

1. What are the major safety risks and threats faced by young children during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How does the pandemic affect vulnerable populations, such as displaced families, refugees and migrants differently?
3. What can we learn from organisations which have put in place child protection mechanisms and services to support young children in vulnerable situations?
4. What needs to be done to ensure that child protection mechanisms and services are retained, expanded and prioritised even after the COVID-19 lockdown measures are lifted?
5. What child protection investments need to be 'protected' from the government budget cutback and therefore mobilised as the economy is being gradually opened up?

Key questions



A young girl with dark hair is covering her eyes with her hands, looking distressed. She is wearing a striped shirt with a cartoon duck on it. The background is a bright blue wall.

Challenges in containment

- Disruption or closure of services
- Reduced opportunity to seek help
- Reduced opportunity for signs of abuse to be identified
- Data gaps

Source: Harvey, 2020

Recording of webinar no. 5, copies of speakers' presentations, other related learning resources, and the webinar-specific full narrative report are available in the ARNEC website using this link: <https://arnec.net/resource?id=207>.

ARNEC says...

Response to webinar insights



ARNEC and the ECD community in the Asia-Pacific region and all over the world call for the protection and safety of all young children and to secure their well-being now more than ever. Young children are most exposed to protection risks as a result of the pandemic and are caught up in processes and conditions of deprivation and exclusion arising from social divides that COVID-19 might have worsened.

Child protection needs to be part of the overall social protection strategy of governments, not only to mitigate overall risks, but also to recover, reverse development losses, and move towards a world that protects, nurtures, and allows young children to realise their full potential.



Dr. Jill Popp, Senior Researcher at
The LEGO Foundation



Caroline Essame, CEO of
CreateCATT, Singapore



Samyukta Subramanian, Program
Head at Pratham Education
Foundation, India



Marlene Floresca, Education
Program Specialist, ChildFund
Philippines



Dr. Phuong Thi Mai Nguyen,
Education Technical Advisor, Save
the Children, Vietnam Country
Office



Meenakshi Dogra,
ARNEC National
Representative for

Exploring the power of play in building the resilience of young children and their families at home

ARNEC Webinar No. 6, 28 May 2020

1. What is the role of play in early learning and the holistic development of young children and how can families and caregivers optimise play-based interactions for young children at home?
2. How can play be transformed from a passive activity into an engaging, purposeful interaction between young children and their families and caregivers?
4. What can we learn from country experiences that have put in place play as a resource for ensuring continuous learning and meaningful engagement of young children during the pandemic? How do play-based interventions help in promoting good hygiene practices for children and families?
5. What are partners in the region doing differently or better to mobilise home-based resources for play to be developmental for young children and meaningful for families?

Key questions



Photo source: Subramanian, 2020

The LEGO Foundation

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY



Photo source: Popp, 2020

Recording of webinar no. 6, copies of speakers' presentations, other related learning resources, and the webinar-specific full narrative report are available in the ARNEC website using this link: <https://arnec.net/resource?id=208>.

ARNEC says...

Response to webinar insights



ARNEC is committed to promote playful parenting and responsive caregiving to unleash the power of play, not only to support early learning, but also to build the bonds between young children and their families and caregivers.

Play unleashes opportunities to develop the social-emotional well-being and resilience of young children, especially with meaningful, positive, and purposeful engagement from parents, families, and caregivers during and beyond the pandemic.



Maki Hayashikawa, Chief of Section for Inclusive Quality Education, UNESCO Bangkok



Dr. Chiam Heng Keng, President of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Council, Malaysia



Samantha Page, CEO, Early Childhood Australia



Lee Tan Jee, Assistant Chief Executive, PAP Community Foundation, Singapore



Jessica Hampton, Education Advisor of ChildFund Australia

The ECD workforce matters, too: profiles, impacts, and support measures during and beyond the pandemic

ARNEC Webinar No. 7, 9 June 2020

1. What is the role of the ECD/ECE workforce in fostering access to quality of early childhood education and childcare services?
2. What is the impact of COVID-19 on early childhood educators (pre-school teachers, childcare professionals and daycare workers) in government-supported and privately-run pre-schools and childcare centres in the region?
4. What interventions are necessary for the ECE workforce as pre-schools and ECD centres prepare to re-open and transition to blended learning approaches, including use of online platforms, among others?
5. What can we learn from institutions supporting the ECD workforce to address the impacts of COVID-19 on early childhood educators?

Key questions

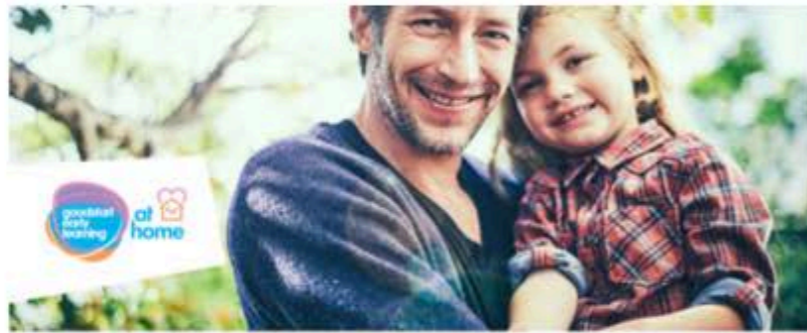


Photo source: Hayashikawa, 2020



Playgroup at Home





New Goodstart@Home provides parents with access to world leading online learning.

Parents with young children at home now have access to world's best practice online learning, packed with fun, play-based learning activities. **Goodstart@Home** is an extraordinary new way to learn for children who can't attend early learning centres.

Provided free to Goodstart families and for just \$1 per month for other families, the website provides resources created by some of the world's leading early childhood practitioners.



Exploring the benefits of sensory play

Providing opportunities for sensory play can help... [read more](#)



Helping your child get in touch with...

Creating opportunities for children to take part... [read more](#)



Welcome to The Goodstart

Hi there! Need help? Speak to our friendly family support team... [read more](#)



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Photo source: Page, 2020



Recording of webinar no. 7, copies of speakers' presentations, other related learning resources, and the webinar-specific full narrative report are available in the ARNEC website using this link: <https://arnec.net/resource?id=212>.

ARNEC says...

Response to webinar insights

ARNEC recognises the importance of the ECD/ECCE workforce in the overall design and delivery of critical ECD services to young children.



We cannot ignore the full range of psychological, material, technological, professional and even spiritual needs of the ECD/ECCE workforce to overcome the challenges of COVID-19. They matter in the overall provision of quality ECD/ECCE for young children.

They, too, are in the frontlines working for equitable and resilient ECD/ECCE now more than ever.

**Post-pandemic ECD
transitions: addressing
disparities in policies and
programs for young
children**

ARNEC Webinar No. 8, 21 July 2020

Speakers



Keynote

H.E. Minister Hang Chuon Naron
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Cambodia



ECD Expert and Lead Discussant

Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer
Chair, ARNEC Board of Directors

Panel



H.E. Prak Kosal
Deputy Secretary General of NC-ECCD
and Director, ECD Department
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Cambodia



Mr. Sherab Phuntshok
Chief, Special Education Needs
and ECCD Division
Ministry of Education
Bhutan



Dr. Tulashi P. Thapaliya
Director General
Ministry of Education, Science
and Technology
Nepal



Ms. Maki Hayashikawa
Chief, Section for Inclusive
Quality Education
UNESCO Bangkok



Dr. Teresita G. Inciong
Executive Director and Vice Chair
ECCD Council
Philippines



Mr. Jiantuo Yu
Deputy Secretary-General
China Development Research
Foundation China



Dr. Muhammad Hasbi
Director, Early Childhood Education
Ministry of Education and Culture
Indonesia



Moderator

Margaret Sims
Honorary Professor, Macquarie University
NSW Australia
Member, ARNEC Steering Committee

1. What are the plans, approaches and strategies of the countries in re-opening pre-schools and ECD centres?
2. How have the disparities and vulnerabilities faced by disadvantaged, marginalised young children before COVID-19 likely increased as a result of the pandemic and the containment and mitigation measures enforced by government?
4. What can be done to identify such children and assess the nature and extent of their increased vulnerability?
5. What actions are being taken or can be taken to mitigate these increased disparities especially for the disabled and the poor, for those who might have been excluded on account of location, refugee status, gender, ethnicity, faith, and/or language? How can governments address their needs to ensure that they are not further left behind?

Key questions



Photo source: CDRF, 2020



Photo source: CDRF, 2020

Recording of webinar no. 8, copies of speakers' presentations, other related learning resources, and the webinar-specific full narrative report are available in the ARNEC website using this link: <https://arnec.net/resource?id=235>.

ARNEC says...

Response to webinar insights



Early childhood education and development has been largely invisible in the response strategies of governments, despite suffering more because of its already fragile state in most countries even prior to the pandemic.

Evidence continues to support the need for addressing equity in ECD to ensure that no more will be left behind, especially among the poor and marginalised, who disproportionately carry the burden of COVID-19.



way forward for ECD

#equitynow

Overall, the impact of COVID-19 on young children is significant in terms of child protection, exposure to domestic violence, challenges to health and nutrition, as well as access to early learning opportunities, all of which affect their social-emotional development. There is a need to address short- to long-term impacts on early childhood development.

ARNEC is in solidarity with the whole ECD community in the Asia-Pacific region in prioritising the needs of young children and their families and emerging from this crisis.

There is a need to amplify the role of ECD in the multi-sectoral and whole-of-society response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to develop context-specific advocacies and

interventions for young children and their families and caregivers at the sub-regional and regional levels.

ARNEC calls on governments and partners to address the social divides that have been widened as a result of the pandemic. Young children and their families have been worse off with job losses and economic contraction, among other adverse impacts, which have exposed them to processes and conditions of human poverty, deprivation and exclusion.

The ARNEC webinar series has ended with a clear call. Together we need to address COVID-induced disparities and their impacts on young children and support equitable and resilient ECD now more than ever.



Thank you

for your support

ARNEC would like to thank all speakers and moderators, webinar registrants and participants from all over the world, and the ARNEC Board of Directors, Steering Committee, Core Team, Institutional Members, National Representatives, and partners for your support in holding the webinar series on young children amidst COVID-19.

The ARNEC webinar series was held with the assistance of:



Photo source: ECCD Council Philippines, n.d.

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be an ARNEC member



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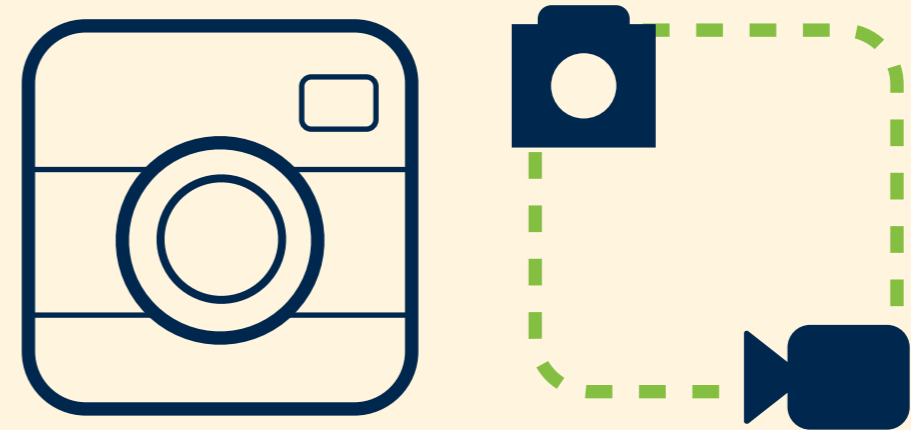
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Our photo

sources



Cover page and page 2 photos were sourced from ARNEC files. Photos in pages 7 and 8 were taken from the presentations of Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer and Sumitra Mishra, respectively, during the first ARNEC webinar on 13 April 2020.

Photos featured in the second ARNEC webinar were from the presentations of Dr. Jamie Lachman (page 11) and Fitriana Herarti (page 12) on 23 April 2020. For the third ARNEC webinar, photos were borrowed from the presentations of Nguyen Hai Thuong (page 15) and Professor Marc de Rosnay (page 16) on 30 April 2020.

For the fourth ARNEC webinar, we used the photos from the presentations of Psyche Vetta Olayvar (page 19) and Dr. Alice Wong (page 20) on 12 May 2020. The photos in pages

24 and 25 were from the presentations of Erum Mariam and Suhany Zaimah, and Rachel Harvey, respectively, during the fifth ARNEC webinar on 21 May 2020.

The presentations of Samyukta Subramanian and Dr. Jill Popp on 28 May 2020 were the source of the photos in pages 28 and 29, both from the sixth ARNEC webinar. Photos from the presentations of Maki Hayashikawa and Samantha Page during the seventh ARNEC webinar on 9 June 2020 were used in pages 32 and 33.

Photos in pages 37 and 38 were from the CDRF presentation of Jiantuo Yu during the final ARNEC webinar on 21 July 2020. The photo in page 40 was from ARNEC files and the last one was from the ECCD Council of the Philippines.



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