

ARNEC would like to thank all of you for supporting the 2022 Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Early Childhood Development (virtual edition).

Conference Partners, namely, UNICEF, UNESCO, Plan International, Save the Children, ChildFund Alliance, and Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Honourable Ministers, namely, H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Cambodia; H.E. Mrs. Fazilatun Nessa Indra, Bangladesh; H.E. Dr. Efereimi Waqainabete, Fiji; H.E. Dasho Dechen Wangmo, Bhutan; H.E. Wilbur Heine, Marshall Islands; H.E. Jai Bir Rai, Bhutan; and Hon. Dr. Bimala Rai Paudyal, Nepal.

Conference Guests and ECD Champions, namely, Deputy Regional Director Myo-Zin Nyunt, UNICEF EAPRO; Nyi Nyi Thuang, UNESCO Bangkok; and Noala Skinner, UNICEF ROSA.

Keynote and plenary thematic speakers, namely, James Cairns, Harvard Center for the Developing Child; Dr. Erinna Dia, UNICEF Headquarters; Prof. Benjamin Horton, Singapore Earth Observatory; Cecilia Vaca Jones, BVLF; and Bernadette Daelmans, WHO Geneva.

Master of Ceremonies Lia Guerrero and plenary moderators, namely, Sara Dang, Save the Children International; Jessica Hampton, ChildFund Alliance; Margaret Sims, ARNEC Steering Committee; Paul Mitchell, Save the Children Australia; and Nicole Rodger, Plan International.

Speakers, presenters, moderators, and rapporteurs in all Concurrent Sessions.

ARNEC Board of Directors, namely, Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Dr. Cliff Meyers, and Dr. Christine Chen.

All members of the ARNEC Steering Committee, Executive Committee, and Core Team.

All ARNEC Institutional Members, National Representatives, and partners in Bhutan and India for holding an on-site national conference.

Conference platform provider, HUBILO.

Snapshot: The ARNEC Conference (virtual edition)

The 2022 Asia-Pacific Regional Virtual Conference on ECD aims to bring about strong awareness among policy makers and practitioners of the substantial threats young children are facing due to the multiple crises affecting them, i.e., COVID-19, climate change and environmental degradation. The conference provides a platform to generate opportunities in the region around cross-sectoral and cross-country collaboration to strengthen ECD programmes as a whole and highlight context-specific ECD and multisectoral responses to localised impacts of these environmental crises on young children and their communities.

Sub-theme 1 (ECD and COVID-19) focuses on how COVID-19 pandemic threatens young children's development in unparalleled ways, particularly possibility of their families falling (back) into extreme poverty, as well as threats to child health and survival and risks to child safety, all of which exacerbate the learning crisis and affect their social and emotional development.

Sub-theme 2 (ECD and climate change) tackles how climate change is becoming a child rights crisis and the transformative power of ECD as a foundational building

block for sustainable human development.

Sub-theme 3 (ECD and environmental degradation) stresses how young children are particularly vulnerable to physical environmental influences due to their uniquely sensitive periods of development.

Impacts of environmental degradation, such as air pollution, are raised to inform how communities could be transformed into safe and nurturing environments from the viewpoints of the child and the caregiver.



5–8 JULY 2022

Young Children in Crisis

ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Conference Highlights

10:00AM-5:00PM Singapore time

Young children facing 'perfect storm'

Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Chair of the ARNEC Board of Directors, cited the 'perfect storm' facing young children in the Asia-Pacific region. The perfect storm he defined as a seriously critical state of affairs arising from a number of negative and unpredictable factors, such as COVID-19, climate change, and environmental degradation that continue to put young children and their families and communities at risk. Dr. Shaeffer stressed that predictable and adequate investment in early childhood development (ECD) and nurturing care remains a sound strategy for overall resilience and sustainable human development. (**Video link for Day 1:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUg7rjk01vs>)

Enabling environment, ECD investment essential

Deputy Regional Director Myo-Zin Nyunt of the UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office asked participants to help raise the awareness of policymakers on the impacts of COVID-19, climate change, and environmental degradation on young children.

Children are exposed to extreme climate change risks and negative impacts, such as hunger and malnutrition, learning loss, disruption in ECD services, displacement, and reversal of SDG gains, among others. Under extraordinary and unprecedented times, partnerships around ECD and young children are essential, he stressed.

Nyi Nyi Thuang, Chief of Section for Inclusive Education at UNESCO Bangkok, clarified that

the benefits of early childhood programmes are not limited to the individual.

Evidence shows that investment in early years is a cornerstone of human capital and contributes significantly to sustainable economic and social development, he said.



Without a stimulating and enabling environment, and also without freedom from adversities, the growth, physiology and behaviour of a child would be seriously affected leading to potential issues in learning and development, emotional adjustment, and behaviour in later years, he remarked. (See **video link for Day 1** above)

Ministers go for ECD budgets despite fiscal constraints

H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport in Cambodia sought the need to address the crises facing young children through inclusive, accessible, and affordable ECD services for all children.

Minister Naron emphasised building an ECD system based on the nurturing care framework.

This covers, he said, having inclusive pre-schools and home-based learning and development arrangements, training the early childhood workforce, and protecting ECD budgets, especially under tight fiscal space in the region.

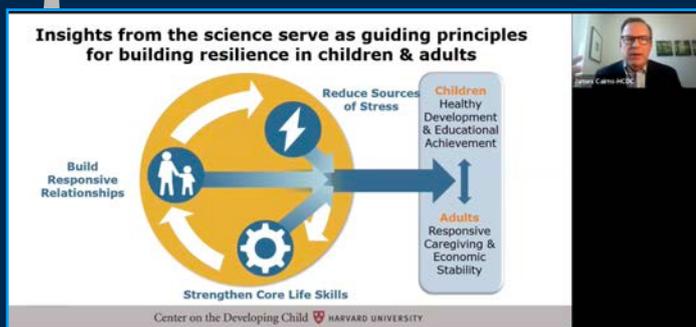
On the other hand, **H.E. Fazilatun Nessa Indira**, State Minister of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in Bangladesh said that the impact of changing climate poses greater risks for the Asia-Pacific region, particularly on vulnerable children and their families.

Minister Indira recommended the following measures to address risks to young children: (a) child-friendly climate investments; (b) urgent actions to reduce emissions for a sustainable world for children; and (c) rehabilitation program for children who have been affected by natural calamities. (See **video link for Day 1** above)





Keynote speakers push for building resilience of young children; nurturing care important in times of crisis



Drawing from science, **James Cairns**, Senior Director for Strategic Engagements and Organizational Learning at the Harvard Center on the Developing Child, said that resilience is not a trait, but a capacity that can be developed over time.

He identified ways to build resilience of young children amidst adversity. These include (a) facilitating responsive relationships; (b) strengthening adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities; (c) increasing mastery/agency; and (d) drawing on

faith and cultural traditions, all of which are reinforced by community support.

Meanwhile, reflecting on studies showing positive returns from ECD investment and nurturing care, **Dr. Erinna Dia**, Associate Director for ECD at UNICEF New York, said “The sooner we start, the better the results.” Dr. Dia presented measures on how to build back better addressing the impacts of the pandemic on young children: (a) strengthen enabling environments for

integrated services (b) raising levels of awareness and empowering parents and caregivers; and (c) capacity-building.

(Video links: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNV2H97YkfU&list=PL3QOwHmTC_UAdG3nzWF2okLa6Vts6a-FA&index=1 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-fFm4o6icI&list=PL3QOwHmTC_UAdG3nzWF2okLa6Vts6a-FA&index=2)



Young children: from most vulnerable to most valuable in times of crisis

Early childhood development a building block to resilience, sustainable human development

Dr. Adrian Cerezo, social ecologist, environmental scientist, and human development researcher, reframed the narrative from young children being seen as the most vulnerable to becoming the most valuable during crises.

Adrian stressed that young children are among the most vulnerable in the context of environmental and climate change risks affecting access to potable water, quality nutrition, healthy ecosystems, efficient energy systems, and sustainable communities, among others.

However, he also explained how ECD could boost the path to achieving the SDGs through increased investments on young children. Young children are the most vulnerable, he said, but they also contain the most potential to build healthy, well-educated, socially and emotionally competent, and peaceful communities. **(Video link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRGsU9NOILQ&t=118s>)



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Voice of youth amplified for children's right to safe environment

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Children's problem is an intergenerational problem. We need to ensure that all parties recognise children's rights to a healthy and safe environment.

Setyaki Kusumadireja

Youth4Climate Champion and Indigenous Youth Advocate



Asia profiles for 'Countdown to 2030' shared



Claudia Cappa presented the country profiles of the Asia-Pacific region under the Countdown to 2030 initiative of UNICEF. Using the nurturing care framework (NCF) as basis for the indicators for the Countdown, Claudia cited the demographic indicators and those that cover threats to ECD and the components of the NCF, such as health, nutrition, early learning opportunities, responsive caregiving, and child safety and security.

Professor Linda Richter of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg participated in the conversations with the participants on the Countdown to 2030 initiative. (Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIGO3ERVXiM&list=PL3QOwHmTC_UAdG3nzWF2okLa6Vts6a-FA&index=3)

Concurrent sessions held



On addressing learning loss among young children, the role of formative assessment was discussed by **Mita Gupta**, UNICEF ROSA; **Dr. Dipu Shakya**, UNICEF Nepal; **Dr. Venita Kaul**, Ambedkar University Delhi; and **Meenakshi Dogra**, UNICEF ROSA.



On supporting parents and caregivers in nurturing young children in pandemic context, the session had **Prof. Marc de Rosnay**, UOW; **Dr. Teresita Inciong**, ECCD Council Philippines; **Tim Huang**, Onesky for all children; **Samyukta Subramanian**, Pratham India Foundation; **Ramjan Ali**, Plan International Bangladesh; and **Dr. Neelima Chopra**, HCL Foundation.



On the power of play in addressing the learning and development needs of young children, the session had **Tshedhar**, MOH Bhutan; **Karma Dyenka**, Save the Children Bhutan; **Deki Pem**, KGUMSB; **Sukhna Sawhney**, Sesame Workshop India; and **Ma. Katrina Libron**, ECCD Council Philippines.





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Day 2

Creating healthy planet for children, building back better ECD system amidst crises, priority for Ministers



H.E. Dr. Eferemi Waqainabete and **H.E. Dasho Dechen Wangmo**, both Ministers of Health in Fiji and Bhutan, respectively, opened the second day of the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on ECD (virtual edition).

“We are working to build back better our ECD system for our young children in Fiji,” said Minister Waqainabete.

He also shared the initiatives of the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development (PRC4ECD) prioritising national ECD plans,

investments, and monitoring frameworks and pursuing multisectoral approaches to ECD with whole of society engagement in the Pacific.

For Bhutan, Minister Wangmo stressed the need to work together to create a safe and healthy planet earth for children.

“We must keep our promises to young children and future generations, she said. (See **video link for Day 2**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=St58jqeWKUE>)



Expert: Sea level rise happening now, likely to continue in the next 100 years

Professor Benjamin Horton of the Earth Observatory in Singapore explained the scientific evidence supporting the global and regional driving processes of sea level rise as a result of the dynamics of ice sheets affected by global warming and other factors, and the consequence of water being redistributed spatially across regions.

“Sea level rise is happening whether we like it or not,” he said. Some countries and regions will be more adversely affected than others, he added. Professor Horton explained that sea level rise is inevitable and is expected to continue through the year 2100.

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Global Driving Processes

Sea levels are driven by a variety of **global**, regional and local processes that vary spatially and temporally

Global response to an increase in ocean mass and volume

- +7m
- +60m

Ice sheet loss, Sea level rise, Global Water Contracts, Temperature Decrease

ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

(Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7c1u4brKivg>)



quotable quotes

Insights from the Intergenerational Panel

In response to the presentation of Professor Benjamin Horton and the commitments of Ministers, several realities were presented on ECD and climate change to trigger conversations among members of the Intergenerational Panel: Children and youth are least responsible for climate change, yet they bear the brunt of impacts over time. What can we do to build adaptive capacity and resilience over time? Young children are not visible in the climate change agenda, how do we make their rights and well-being integral to global, country, and local resilience action? How do we make the case for ECD in the climate agenda?



Children who do better, also do better under emergencies and adversities. If we take care children now, we are creating conditions for long-term resilience and sustainable development.

Climate Expert Adrian Cerezo



The young generation is at a disadvantage because we are inheriting environmental degradation. The Pacific is at the forefront of the impacts of climate change: If islands disappear, what happens to our sovereignty?

Youth Advocate Alisi Rabukawaqa-Nacewa, Pacific Climate Warriors Council of Elders



The challenge is not the cost of ECD, but the priorities of government. The evidence on ECD returns has not been translated to political commitment and action. We have been short at lobbying and advocacy based on evidence.

Dr. Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson, Gothenburg University, Sweden



Climate change is no longer an issue. It is an era. The evidence is clear: children flourish in safe and nurturing relationships and environments.

Joe Waters, CAPITA



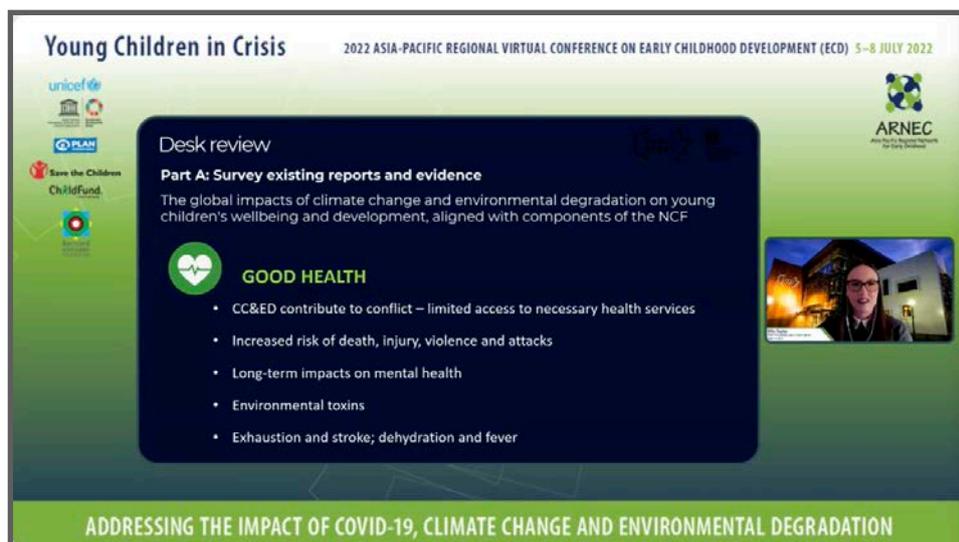
Either we transform or be transformed: where do we start making those changes? How do we include young children in the climate change discourse?

Paul Mitchell, Save the Children Australia

University of Wollongong presents ARNEC review of climate change impacts on young children; sub-regional discussions held

Dr. Ellie Taylor of the University of Wollongong in Australia walked through the impacts of climate change in the Asia-Pacific region using the Nurturing Care Framework as analytical lens in the ARNEC desk review.

The findings of the UOW review were used to trigger breakout discussions at the sub-regional level on the nexus between ECD and climate change in Southeast and East Asia; South Asia; and The Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand.



Childcare emerging priority in the Asia-Pacific region; policy recommendations, program models shared



The first panel discussion focused on program models for childcare in the region following the Dr. Deepta Chopra's presentation of childcare practices and issues in the region.

Chavi Vohra of Mobile Creches India shared the partnership with the Haryana State Government for the design, delivery, and monitoring of a community-based childcare program.

Tim Huang of Onesky for all children introduced a home-based childcare program as an essential component of COVID-19 recovery targeting industrial areas in Viet Nam. Finally, **Bimbika Sijapati Basnett** of Prospera discussed public-private partnership arrangements for childcare in Indonesia.

Mahmuda Akhter moderated the session.



Moderated by **Sumitra Mishra**, the second panel shared policy recommendations in support of childcare in the region.

Amanda Devercelli of World Bank said that the Bank is exploring competitive selection of low-income countries seeking assistance to support childcare programs.

Jay Weatherill of Minderoo Foundation bared the importance of political engagement at the national level for childcare.

Keiko Nowacka of the Asian Development Bank, meanwhile reiterated ADB's commitment to support childcare as part of its gender equality initiative.





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Day 3

Ministers open Day 3, reiterate commitment to young children’s well-being amidst crises

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The world our children live in today is reeling from COVID-19, climate change and environmental degradation. We commit to nurture our children to flourish.

H.E. Wilbur Heine
Minister of Education, Republic of Marshall Islands



H.E. Wilbur Heine, Minister of Education, Republic of Marshall Islands, cited the challenges facing young children in the country and the region as a result of climate change and environmental degradation worsened by the pandemic.

Minister Heine explained what the government is doing to uphold the development and well-being of children in the Marshall Islands amidst the crises they are exposed to.

Reflecting on Bhutan’s experience, **H.E. Jai Bir Rai**, Minister of Education of the Royal Government of Bhutan admitted the difficulties responding to the needs of young children, particularly those who benefit from ECCD centers, pre-primary, and primary schools in the beginning of the pandemic.

Minister Rai cited the importance of partnerships in the development community that helped the government in adjusting to the needs of the ECD community at the height of COVID-19.

(See **video link for Day 3**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jV8-0SzaIQ>)

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It is time for us to recreate the future of our children: right time, right place, right platform for us to work together.

H.E. Jai Bir Rai
Minister of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan



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BVLF: Build cities, communities from the viewpoint of the child, caregiver

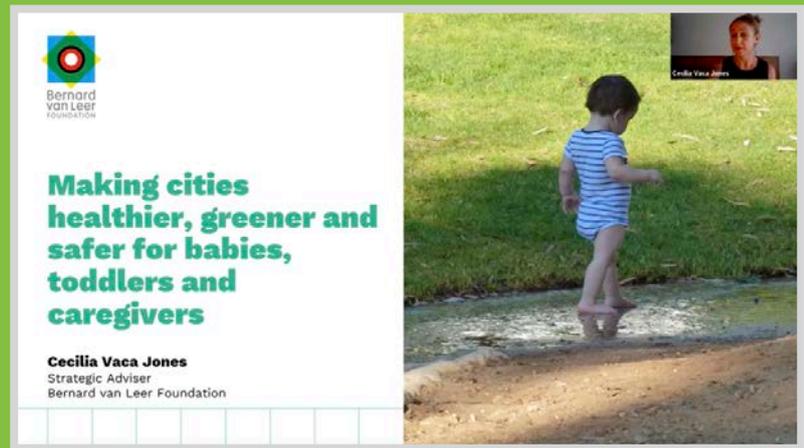
Cecilia Vaca Jones, Strategic Adviser of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, premised the keynote presentation with the reality that babies born today would face major climate and environmental risks and stressed the need to make cities and urban spaces healthy, green, and safe for young children and their caregivers.

She offered the power of inclusive design for the well-being of young children in urban communities, where access to nature is important. “If you could experience the city from 95cm—the height of a healthy 3-year old—what would you change?” she asked.

Cecilia stressed that babies and caregivers experience spaces in unique ways and planning the city to make healthy interconnections between young children, caregivers, and nature; providing a balance of green and blue spaces; and linking public transport systems are important factors in changing public behaviours in support of the child and the caregiver.

It is important, she reminded, to take into consideration the viewpoint also of the caregiver as he or she is the decision-maker where to go and how long to stay with a young child.

(Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AGH6VoYzq0&list=PL3QOwHmTC_UAdG3nzWF2okLa6Vts6a-FA&index=4)



ARNEC partners: ECD and climate change interlinked



Baela Raza Jamil, CEO of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), shared how the interlinkages of climate change and early childhood development (ECD) could be addressed through opportunities in ECD policy and curriculum in Pakistan.

Presenting a policy scan, Baela said that climate change and ECCE are hardly at the margins of policy and curriculum in Pakistan. She considered this an opportunity for improvement, especially after presenting rising cases of climate change emergencies in the country and how these affected the early years.

On the other hand, **Dr. Mugyeong Moon**, Director, Korea Institute of Child Care and

Education (KICCE), shared Korea’s environmental education for young children.

Every five years a Comprehensive Environmental Education Plan at the national level is formulated and implemented and this has been in place in Korea since 2011.

The third national plan covering 2021-2025 is now being implemented, an integral component of which is environmental education based on the life span approach starting with early childhood. Dr. Mugyeong shared how environmental education is integrated in ECD in Korea.



Concurrent sessions held



Bring back nature into play



Virtual visits to preschools in Singapore and Viet Nam



Safer and more inclusive environments for young children and caregivers

Caroline Essame of CreateCATT Singapore led a workshop on Nature Play. She shared theories and practical ways to bring nature back to play, especially in urban areas.

The virtual visit to a **preschool in Viet Nam** showcased the 'Eduplay Garden in Ha Noi' where children are taught to appreciate and respect nature.

Meanwhile, the **virtual tour of Creative O Preschoolers' Bay in Singapore** was premised on a learning experience for the young child age 3-6 years old with their teachers and parents and focused on its green programmes. The approach is to expose young children to arts education, environmental awareness, and multicultural awareness, including physical education and disposition.

Therese Tan moderated the virtual visits to preschools in Viet Nam and Singapore.

Moderated by **Dilini Vipulaguna** and **Melissa Bartolome**, the session on



safer and more inclusive environmental for young children and caregivers delved on the program-based experiences of several partners.

Mita Gupta of UNICEF ROSA and **Dr. Renu Singh** of Young Lives India presented the the Regional Guidance to support the learning and wellbeing of young children with disabilities at home. **Namrata Edwards** and **Priyamvada Das** of Ummeed Child Development

Reduce use of plastic bags to keep things such as dirty clothes

ARNEC would like to thank **Tan Beng Luan** and **Axel Berthome**, Principals of Creative O Preschoolers Bay in Singapore and Eduplay Garden School in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, respectively, for sharing their good practices and opening their doors to ECD practitioners and stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region.

Center in India shared the integrated approach to ECD and disability.

Nicole Rodger and **Meena Narula** of Plan International discussed ECD in humanitarian settings. Finally, **Deki Pem** and **Philip Erbele** of the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan presented the implications of the emerging evidence on the exposure of children to lead in Bhutan.





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Day 4 Closing Program

MP cites access to ECD a constitutional right of children in Nepal, enabling governance arrangements for ECD created

Hon. Dr. Bimala Rai Paudyal, Member of the National Assembly in Nepal, shared how policymakers mobilised political and legal support for early childhood development in Nepal.

MP Paudyal explained how the Parliament succeeded in making access to ECD a constitutional right of all children in the country.

“MPs established a loose network to work as advocates for young children’s wellbeing. Once the right was ensured, we continued lobbying for national policies, strategies, and investments to ensure that the constitutional provisions is translated into practices,” Dr. Paudyal said.

The national mechanism called ECD Caucus was decentralised from federal to provincial governments to ensure that oversight for ECD at the subnational and local levels is exercised in Nepal.

At the moment, ECD networks have been established in five out of seven provinces in the country.

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The ECD Caucus worked not only in raising awareness but also advocated to include access to early childhood development as a fundamental right of children. We succeeded. Access to ECD is now one of the rights of children recognized by the constitution .

Hon. Dr. Bimala Rai Paudyal
Member of the National Assembly, Nepal

The ECD Caucus in Nepal is able to:

Raise awareness on ECD among policymakers

Share knowledge, tools, and innovations for scale

Strengthen multisectoral partnerships

See **video link for Day 4**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vn9SM9s1xSA>



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Bernadette Daelmans
Unit Head, Child Health and Development

Children's health and wellbeing

IMPACT OF AIR POLLUTION: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS



WHO: Air pollution high risk to young children; negative impacts across life stage

Dr. Bernadette Daelmans, Unit Head, Child Health and Development of the World Health Organization stressed that key environmental exposures start in the womb and can have effects throughout life.

Dr. Daelmans said that there are many environmental factors affecting children. These include climate change, air pollution, and exposure to

hazardous chemicals, among others. Minimising these risks, she emphasised, are key to protecting children and achieving the SDGs.

She focused her presentation on the effects of ambient air pollution on children's health, which result in adverse birth outcomes, increased infant mortality, respiratory illness, impaired neurodevelopment,

childhood cancers, and increased risk of noncommunicable diseases.

She shared practical ways to combat children's exposure to outdoor and indoor air pollution.

She also presented WHO's policy and program agenda to advance children's health and well-being at the global, country, and local levels.

Protect children from outdoor pollution by:

1. Stopping burning household and agricultural waste
2. Reducing children's exposure to air pollution from vehicular exhaust emissions
3. Keeping children healthy (nutrition, play, immunisations, etc.)
4. Monitoring air quality where you live and taking protective measures, as necessary
5. Raising awareness in the community

Source: Modified from the presentation of Dr. B. Daelmans, Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on ECD, 8 July 2022

Protect children from indoor pollution by:

1. Not smoking indoors or near children
2. Using cleaner fuels and technologies to cook, heat, and light your homes
3. Using ultra low emission stoves
4. Cooking in a well-ventilated area
5. Avoiding kerosene lamps
6. Not burning candles or using air fresheners

Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMDA1IAPyv0&list=PL3QOwHmTC_UAdG3nzWF2okLa6Vts6a-FA&index=5



Community-based initiatives for safe, green, nurturing environments for children in the Asia-Pacific region amplified

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Recognising the importance of community-based initiatives for creating safe, clean, and nurturing environments for young children, the final session presented program cases from Nepal, India, and Viet Nam.

Bhushan Tuladhar of the USAID Clean Air Program presented the mechanism for engaging the community and the people to participate in the program through 'citizen science', a bottom-up approach to accessing, using, and monitoring air quality in Nepal.

Shwetha Bahri, co-Founder of Earth Warriors in India, introduced age-appropriate



climate education for young children.

Kim Duc and **Quoc Dat**, co-Founders of Think Playgrounds, inspired with how public spaces in Viet Nam are being renovated for

Approach

Community as experts.
TPG share and discuss experiences, knowledges solutions...
Low carbon.
Urban vulnerable groups



Think Playgrounds' (TPG) Kim and Quoc share community approach

young children through community involvement approaches.

Samita Kaur and **Manorama Ekka** of the Warrior Moms in India shared grassroots-level

collective of mothers organised to protect and uphold children's right to breathe clean air in India.

Caroline Dusabe of Save the Children Australia facilitated the session.

Bhutan, India hold face-to-face satellite workshops to support ARNEC regional conference



ARNEC partners in Bhutan and India convened face-to-face to participate in the virtual edition of the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Early Childhood Development.



The Ministries of Education and Health as well as Save the Children Country Office in Bhutan co-designed and implemented a parallel national conference convening stakeholders from the education and health sectors to advance the ECD agenda at the country level aligned with the ARNEC theme at the virtual conference.

The Bhutan Conference also had learning workshops on building brains facilitated by Save the Children in support of its Prescription to Play (P2P) project being implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Health with the support of The LEGO Foundation.

Meanwhile, a similar approach was done in India under the auspices of HCL Foundation convening its ECD partners during the virtual ARNEC regional conference. Dr. Neelima Chopra of the HCL Foundation, one of the National Representatives (NatReps) for India, facilitated the learning activity.

Country-level feedback shared

We are delighted to convene partners of the HCL Foundation in India to participate in the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Early Childhood Development. Thank you, ARNEC, for bringing us all together.

Dr. Neelima Chopra, HCL Foundation, India, and NatRep for India



We consider ARNEC as a center for excellence in moving the agenda for early childhood development in Indonesia and the region.

Widodo Suhartoyo, Tanoto Foundation, Indonesia, NatRep for Indonesia



Thanks to ARNEC and our close partnership in the Bhutan ECCD Network, we were able to discuss strategies for multisectoral coordination for ECCD.

Karma Gayleg, Ministry of Education, Bhutan, and former member of the ARNEC Steering Committee



UNICEF calls for greater investment for young children in the Asia-Pacific region; ARNEC thanks partners, participants



Noala Skinner, Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, gave the final message during the closing program of the 2022 ARNEC Conference.

“Young children are paying the price for something not of their making,” she said with reference to the combined impacts of COVID-19, climate change, and environmental degradation on young children in the Asia-Pacific region.

“Investing in ECD is even more urgent. Children’s optimal development is what will prepare them for the future,” she assured.



Meanwhile, **Dr. Cliff Meyers**, member of the ARNEC Board of Directors, shared the insights of participants on what they were most concerned about these crises affecting young children and what could be raised to policy makers to address these.

He concluded emphasising the need to elevate ECD as a fundamental and overarching platform for human development, climate resilience and adaptation, and sustainable development.

next steps

Resources to be packaged by ARNEC and shared to all participants in <https://arnek.net>

Conference highlights to feed into the World Conference on ECCE happening in Tashkent, November 2022

Partnership with youth groups to bring ECD to the COP27 agenda and to include children’s voices in advocacy campaigns

ARNEC to continue working with stakeholders to address the impact of COVID-19, environmental degradation, and climate change

ARNEC to support the countries in their advocacy campaigns on addressing crises affecting young children

ARNEC to follow through with webinars, learning forums, and other knowledge-sharing and advocacy priorities



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Thank you for joining the 2022 Asia-Pacific Conference on Early Childhood Development (virtual edition).

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