



**ARNEC**  
Asia-Pacific Regional Network  
for Early Childhood

# #ARNECwebinars

ARNEC holds webinars to connect the ECD community in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond on early childhood development

Putting Young Children at the Center of Environmental and Climate Change Actions

17 February 2022, 1:00-2:30 Singapore time

## ARNEC, UNICEF, Save the Children: Young children at the center of environmental and climate change actions

Introducing the linkages among environmental issues, climate change, and early childhood, ARNEC, UNICEF, and Save the Children hosted a webinar on 17 February 2022 focusing on why early childhood development (ECD) is an opportunity to build resilience, adaptation, and mitigation for sustainable development.

“Young children bear the greatest environmental and climate change impacts...but they possess the fewest resources to cope with these impacts,” stressed Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Chair of the

ARNEC Board of Directors, in his welcome message.

The webinar also introduced the Asia-Pacific regional initiative promoting young children’s rights to clean, safe and sustainable environments.

A Community of Practice was also launched as a mechanism to increase awareness, investment and political commitment in the areas of policy, programs, and financing to address the impacts of the environmental and climate crises on young children in the Asia-Pacific region.



The webinar recording is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o06l4s9Jc4>.



### Expert shares views on early childhood development and environmental and climate change actions



Dr. Adrian Cerezo, social ecologist, environmental scientist, and human development researcher, emphasised the complementary relationship between ‘putting young children at the center of environmental and climate change action’ and ‘putting the environment at the center of early childhood development’.

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. These risks have negative impacts on the nurturing care and development of young children.

He also explained how ECD could boost the path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through increased investments on young children. Young children are the most vulnerable, he said,

### The Path of Sustainable Development



Our actions today shape our children's future.



but they also contain the most potential to build healthy, well-educated, socially and emotionally competent, and peaceful communities.

“There is a way to complement strategies of adaptation and resilience with strategies to promote sustainable development,” Adrian said. “More importantly for the ECD community, early childhood policies and programs are a fundamental part of building a path towards sustainable development.”

Adrian also offered practical solutions for the ECD community. First is for the ECD community to increase knowledge on climate change and environmental issues.

The other recommendation is to build networks of collaboration and advocacy on the importance of ECD in the formulation of environmental policies and programs at the community, national, regional, and global levels.

His presentation is available at <https://arnek.net/resource?id=307>.

### ...the role of ECD in boosting the path towards achieving the SDGs



Our actions today shape our children's future.



## ARNEC presents regional initiative on clean, safe, sustainable environments for young children



**Goal.** Ensure that the well-being and development of young children are at the center of environmental and climate change discourses and actions (i.e., policy, financing, and programs).

**Target.** Policy makers, practitioners, communities, parents, caregivers

### Areas of Focus

**ECD and environmental issues.** Impact of environmental issues on young children (e.g. air pollution, exposure to toxins, and clack of clean and protective play and recreational spaces for children)

**ECD and climate change.** How climate change directly and indirectly affects young children and the need to see ECD as an opportunity to achieve sustainable development

Evelyn Santiago, ARNEC Executive Director, outlined the ARNEC regional advocacy for clean, safe, and sustainable environments for young children at the webinar in response to the climate change and environmental issues facing young children in the Asia-Pacific region.

Among the strategies she presented were building and sharing knowledge; increasing awareness; building the capacity of ECD, environment, and climate change stakeholders; and strengthening partnerships across sectors.



<https://arnek.net>



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# Join the Community of Practice on ECD, Climate Change, and Environmental Issues

If you had superpowers, what is a key action you would take to tackle these challenges?



The Community of Practice (COP) aims to provide a structure to promote best practices and build common capabilities and a regional space to co-create, co-produce, and co-deliver knowledge, advocacy and learning. It is also a coalition of advocates for future UN Climate Change Conferences (COPs) to ensure that ECD is part of national plans to address climate change in the lead up to and during COP27.



1 Sign up to ARNEC as a member at <https://ar nec.net>



2 Register to be part of the ECDAN online community



3 Join the COP here: [https://mcusercontent.com/bd0894fcc8781bc7016abf710/files/452c823c-16b6-f264-11ea-0d63773de8b6/Community\\_of\\_Practice\\_information\\_\\_ECD\\_climate\\_change\\_and\\_environmental\\_issues.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/bd0894fcc8781bc7016abf710/files/452c823c-16b6-f264-11ea-0d63773de8b6/Community_of_Practice_information__ECD_climate_change_and_environmental_issues.pdf)



Taken from the webinar presentation of Peckgee Chua, UNICEF EAPRO



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The right to clean, safe, and sustainable environments is key for young children, not only to survive but also to thrive and to live in dignity.

**Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer,**  
ARNEC

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We need to put the environment at the center of child development. Let us be the community that brings real solutions to the table. Let's give our children a strong start in life. Let us give the young children their future back.

**Ana Maria Rodriguez,**  
UNICEF-EAPRO

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I will borrow the statements in the chat box: This is a life-giving initiative. The time is now. This is just the beginning. Join us in the Community of Practice.

**Caroline Dusabe,** Save the Children



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# Q&A

Responses to selected questions in the chat box

## What are the proven good practices of environmental and climate change actions undertaken in some countries?

Integrated programming. We need ECCD to be better integrated with DRR and emergency response, health, nutrition, MHPSS, social protection, caregiver/child protection, etc. We know that integrated programming is very important for children's development, but it is even more important in the context of climate change. The integrated ECCD programs need to be designed to address the risks in those

communities in terms of the environment and climate change.

## In the South and East Asia region, what steps can be taken to make the next generation advocates for protecting the environment?

This is a good question and we should look into this further. We can educate children, but we also need to be the ones to take action now. We can join social movements, hold our governments accountable, create a movement (like the COP) with clear objectives, and raise awareness on our role in reducing climate change, etc.

## How would you empower caregivers to create a safe and secure environment that is protecting children from the

## impact of climate change at home and in the neighbourhood?

We can analyse the risk factors in terms of the environmental health and climate change, and then look at how each level of the socio-ecological system can come together to address these risk factors. Caregivers can have a role to play in the home and community, for example, by keeping the child away from sources of pollution (e.g. cooking stoves) or knowing what to do in the context of a disaster. But in our experience, it is very important for caregivers to be properly supported by the community, holistic services, and policies that are properly implemented.

● **64%** ●  
of the respondents were 'very satisfied' with the webinar



# We speak

Feedback and insights from the webinar participants

Great introduction to a topic that is not yet widely discussed in relation to ECD. An eye opener. Thank you also for opening the COP.

Good opening session. Properly highlights why we should be looking at ECD and the climate change together.

Hope more grassroots application can be discussed in the future

We need to hear more from the Pacific and about the impact and issues for Pasifika children!

It was a good refresher and reminder for teachers to include environmental care and protection in lessons and activities and daily classroom conversations.

Brief webinar but very insightful and comprehensive

