



# ARNEC

Asia-Pacific Regional Network  
for Early Childhood

# 2023

## Annual Report



## About the photo

Prak Kosal of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia interacts with a child in a school for indigenous communities in the Philippines. Doing school visits was one of the methodologies for the 2023 ARNEC Learning Forum held in Cebu, Philippines in August.

# Message

The year 2023 was very meaningful for ARNEC. It was a period of **renewal, reconnecting, and rediscovering**, in many ways.

This year saw ARNEC's renewed commitment to our advocacy priorities including responsive caregiving, working with national networks and partners in advancing multi-sectoral approaches to ECD, addressing the impacts of climate change on young children, and promoting the capacity and wellbeing of the ECD workforce.

It was also an opportunity to reconnect at a deeper level with partners and stakeholders. ARNEC takes pride in being a platform for sharing and learning across countries not only on different ECD issues

and challenges, but also good ECD practices and innovative strategies.

Through webinars, convening, training priorities, and forums, ARNEC was able to bring together ECD policy-makers, advocates, champions, and practitioners from different countries to facilitate knowledge-exchange and learning.

The Learning Forum hosted by the ECCD Council of the Philippines in Cebu in August 2023 brought together 17 countries sharing their ECD achievements and challenges, providing opportunities to connect with their peers, and strengthening their commitment to advance inclusive and holistic ECD in the region.

ARNEC also rediscovered better opportunities for collaboration with the countries and how this could facilitate ARNEC's network impact. Through the engagement of country-level partners including national ECD networks, we were able to demonstrate the power of working together, especially in research, advocacy, and capacity-building.

The year 2023 also saw ARNEC's strength in generating knowledge and evidence to support advocacy. The launch of ARNEC Connections on playful parenting, production of micro-research studies on ECD and climate change, development of fact sheets on specific climate risks relevant to the region, publication of SEL Handbook for ECCE teachers, and documentation of good ECD practices and innovations in

pandemic context were among those we co-developed with partners to support the ECD agenda in the region.

As ARNEC welcomes 2024 and the remaining years in our Network Strategy, we continue to put young children at the center of our learning, advocacy, and agenda.

We commit to strengthen our relationships with partners and explore new ones to widen the support for ECD in the region, especially to address; if not reverse, the impacts of multiple crises facing young children in the region, as much as in other parts of the world.

We invite you to read the 2023 Annual Report, celebrate the gains of the network of partners for young children in the region, and move you to support advocacy priorities and ECD agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Evelyn D. Santiago**

Executive Director

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# In 2023, ARNEC...

## **renewed**

*our advocacy priorities*

ARNEC used evidence and insight to co-develop knowledge products with partners and advance targeted advocacy to influence system-level and behavioural change at the country, regional, and global levels, for:

- responsive caregiving and playful parenting;
- multisectoral approaches to early childhood development (ECD);
- clean, safe, and secure environments to support ECD.

## **reconnected**

*with key stakeholders*

Advancing the ECD agenda in the Asia-Pacific region meant rekindling relationships with partners and making new ones in the network post-pandemic.

Beyond virtual means of keeping connections, such as holding webinars, ARNEC held its first face-to-face convening post-pandemic in the Philippines with the theme *Connecting and collaborating for holistic ECD agenda in the Asia-Pacific region* in August 2023.

## **and rediscovered**

*potential for country-level collaboration*

ARNEC's advocacy priorities provided opportunities to work with partners at the country-level demonstrating our network advantage to connect through evidence-based ECD agendas responsive to country contexts and needs.

ARNEC's emerging network impact is demonstrated by partners, such as the HI ECD Coalition in Indonesia and the Philippine Normal University, who contextualised ECD agendas in these countries informed by ARNEC's advocacy priorities.



# On promoting responsive caregiving and playful parenting

# ...ARNEC in 2023

## launched

### *the 2023 ARNEC Connections*

ARNEC generated knowledge from ECD practitioners on evidence-based playful parenting programs and featured innovations and good practices in the ARNEC Connections.

ARNEC Connections is a publication for ECD practitioners by ECD practitioners and is meant to provide space for individuals and organisations to reflect on ECD practice and share to a wider ECD audience in the region.

## documented

### *good practices and innovations of key partners in the context of COVID-19*

ARNEC worked with the University of Wollongong to do case studies of pandemic-adjusted ECD programs by the following partners:

- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS), Cambodia;
- Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council, Philippines;
- ChildFund International, Indonesia; BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University, Bangladesh;
- Save the Children Country Office, Philippines;
- Pratham Education Foundation, India;
- Mobile Creches, India;
- Ummeed Child Development Centre, India;
- Plan International, Bangladesh; and
- OneSky for All Children.

A Policy Brief was also prepared in addition to case studies.

## and completed

### *the advocacy support the Save the Children Bhutan's Prescription to Play (P2P) project*

ARNEC collaborated with Save the Children's evidence-based P2P program introducing system-level change in the Ministry of Health and behavioural change among caregivers and Health Assistants in Bhutan.

The role of ARNEC was to harvest knowledge from P2P experience and use knowledge platforms to amplify gains in the Asia-Pacific region.



# ARNEC CONNECTIONS

Issue No. 14 – October 2023



The 2023 ARNEC Connections have showcased a range of different approaches taken in the region to introduce playful parenting or play-based interactions in ECD programs in the context of COVID-19. Authors shared their experiences in adapting their programs to the diverse contexts at the country level during the pandemic, including the formative and mature evidence from program development, adjustment, and implementation.

Available here: <https://arnec.net/resources/arnec-resources/2023-arnec-connections-unleashing-power-playful-parenting-support-early>

## Unleashing the power of playful parenting in support of early childhood development outcomes

# INTEGRATION REPORT

## Documentation of good ECD practices and innovations in the context of COVID-19



The report involved review and analysis of ten case studies of early childhood care and development (ECCD) programs that were developed or adapted to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across seven ARNEC partner countries. Analysis of programs prioritised responsive caregiving, early learning, and playful parenting, which is aligned with the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) and provided the primary lens through which the case studies were reviewed. Available here:

<https://arneck.net/resources/arneck-resources/integration-report-documentation-good-eecd-practices-and-innovations>

### ARNEC Policy Brief

#### Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic for Early Childhood Development and Nurturing Care

Priority Areas for Policy Consideration and Development to Support Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Nurturing Care (NC) in Times of Persistent and Profound Disruption to Children's Lives in the Asia-Pacific Region

Authors: Marc de Rosnay, Ellie Taylor, Karel Strooband & Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett  
Early Start, University of Wollongong, Australia (contact: marcd@uow.edu.au)



A 4-page Policy Brief was also prepared for policy-makers and other partners drawing lessons from the pandemic and key considerations for advancing child-focused interventions in times of similar severe disruptions. Scan the QR code to access the knowledge product.





**ARNEC**

Asia-Pacific Regional Network  
for Early Childhood

# The ARNEC Learning Forum

Connecting and Collaborating for holistic  
ECD agenda in the Asia-Pacific Region

August 9-11, 2023 | Tambuli Resort, Cebu, Philippines

## Completion Report Prescription to Play (P2P)

Submitted by ARNEC to Save the Children  
in fulfillment of its commitments under the  
P2P Project, October 2023



ARNEC showcased the evidence of emerging system-level and behavioural change arising from the P2P project in Bhutan to partners and stakeholders in the region during the 2023 ARNEC Learning Forum in the Philippines.

## Asia-wide Convening to Support Parents and Caregivers



© UNICEF/UN567452/Fauzan Ijazah

In the last quarter of 2022, ARNEC was sought to lead the Asia Convening of the Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP) on behalf of WHO, UNICEF, ECDAN, End Violence Against Children, and Parenting for Lifelong Health.

ARNEC facilitated the selection of evidence-based parenting programs from the region to showcase in the GISP learning forum.

In early 2023, the documentation report was prepared with inputs from ARNEC. Available here: <https://support-parents.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Summary-Report-GISP-Asia-Regional-Webinars-Nov-Dec2022.pdf>

**On strengthening the capacity of national ECD networks and supporting multisectoral approaches to ECD**



# ...ARNEC in 2023

## led and facilitated

*capacity-building for eight national ECD networks in the region*

ARNEC invested in improving capacities of national ECD networks after doing a baseline survey in 2021-2022. A network of national ECD networks is a primary cohort of ARNEC to influence the scope and direction of network impact at the country level. The target partners were:

In South Asia:

- Bangladesh ECD Network;
- Bhutan ECD Network;
- Alliance for Early Childhood Development Nepal (AECDN); and
- Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood;

In Southeast Asia:

- Network on Early Childhood Care and Development in Cambodia;
- Holistic-Integrated ECD Coalition in Indonesia; and
- ECCD Council of the Philippines

In East Asia:

- Mongolia National ECD Network.

## developed

*the regional guidance document on building and strengthening national ECD networks*

ARNEC formulated a set of principles and guidance notes for national ECD networks responsive to country context and informed by the assessment of network health in each jurisdiction.

The guidance document has remained one of ARNEC's key references in assessing areas of development and opportunities for improvement in country-level ECD networks to progress the ECD agenda with national and local partners.

## and supported

*national ECD networks with emerging network impact at the country level, particularly in Bhutan, Indonesia, and Nepal fostering improved multisectoral coordination for ECD*

- In Bhutan the ECCD network has fostered and mobilised partnerships across 20 districts to co-develop the country's first multisectoral strategic plan for ECCD.
- Meanwhile, AECDN went local by establishing ECD management committees to provide technical support to develop integrated local ECD plans and programs.
- HI ECD Coalition worked with partners in Indonesia to influence government to consider the inter-linkages of climate change, environmental degradation, and ECD and is now actively engaged in raising community consciousness and support.





**ARNEC was also  
at the forefront of  
influencing ECD  
policy in the region**



Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Chair of the ARNEC Board of Directors, addressed policy-makers, senior government officials, and partners in the Southeast Asia Policy Dialogue on ECCE held in Jakarta with the support of the Government of Indonesia, ARNEC, and the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN), among other partners.

ARNEC provided inputs to the drafting of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Early Childhood Care and Education in Southeast Asia. Final Declaration available here: <https://asean.org/asean-leaders-declaration-on-early-childhood-care-and-education-in-southeast-asia/>





**On ensuring clean,  
safe, and secure  
environments to  
support ECD**

# ...ARNEC in 2023

## developed

*knowledge products and tool kits to support advocacy emphasising the inter-linkages of climate change, environmental degradation, and ECD targeting specific audiences at the country, regional, and global levels*

ARNEC produced the following in collaboration with partners:

- four micro-research reports in Bhutan, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines;
- ECD-Climate Resource Kit, particularly on air pollution and young children, done in collaboration with Vital Strategies; and
- COP28 ECD-Climate Resource Pack.

## organised and led

*influencing priorities at different levels and capacity-building at the country and regional levels*

On influencing priorities, ARNEC advanced the need for investment in young children as one of the effective pathways to resilience-building, targeting policy-makers and key stakeholders at the regional and global levels through:

- the Pacific Forum in Fiji;
- Southeast Asia Policy Dialogue on ECCE in Jakarta, Indonesia, on July 26, 2023, focusing on *Resilience Building in ECCE: A Fundamental Tool to Reach SDG4 and Beyond*; and
- APCCA Brown Bag Session on September 27, 2023, discussing resilience building in ECD.


ARNEC participated in COP28 in Dubai, co-hosting side events to highlight nurturing care in ECD as a cost-effective investment for climate resilience and sustainable development in the climate-vulnerable Asia-Pacific region.

## and facilitated

*ECD-climate learning events*

ARNEC also designed and facilitated country-level ECD and climate learning events in Indonesia in collaboration with HI ECD Coalition, as well as for a development partner (USAID).


ECD-Climate Micro Research Report  
November 2023



## Climate Change and Young Children

A Perception Survey of Children, Parents, and Early Childhood Educators in Bhutan


Authored by: Karma Gayleg, ECCD Specialist, Ministry of Education, Bhutan



The Bhutan study gauged the awareness levels of children, parents, and early childhood educators in Bhutan regarding climate change and its effects on young children.

Available here: <https://arnec.net/resources/arnec-resources/bhutan-climate-change-young-children-micro-research>


ECD-Climate Micro Research Report  
November 2023



## Smokeless Kitchens

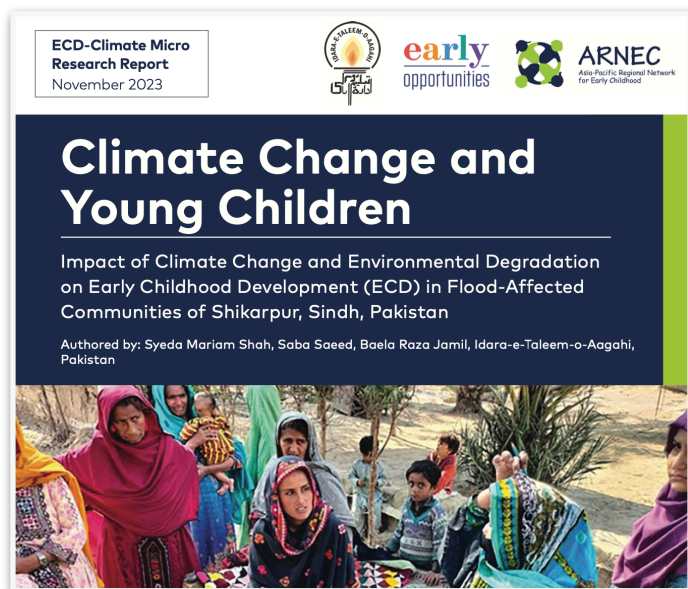
Assessing the Willingness to Adopt Cleaner Cooking Fuels among Migrant Labor Families in the National Capital Region of India

Authored by: Bhavreen Kandhari, Co-Founder, Warrior Moms, India



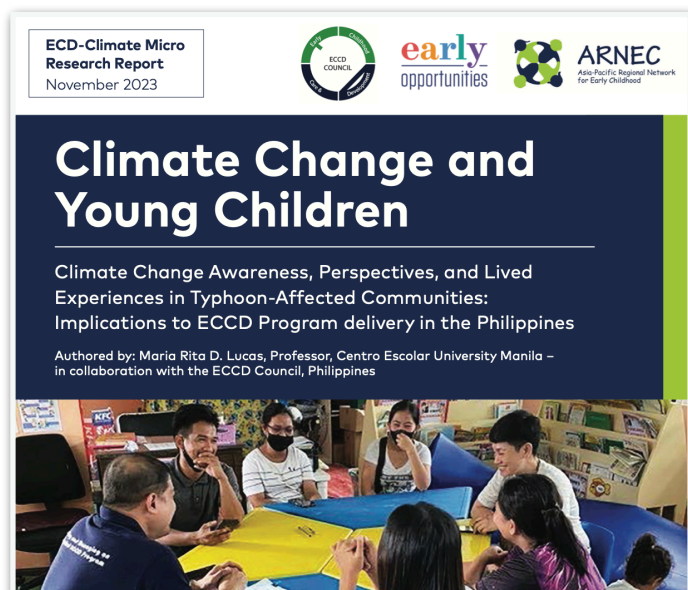
The India study examined the impacts of household air pollution on young children and women's health. The study also raised effective policy interventions and awareness campaigns for promoting clean cooking practices.

Available here: <https://arnec.net/resources/arnec-resources/india-climate-change-young-children-micro-research>



The Pakistan study investigated the impact of climate change on Early Childhood Development (ECD) in flood-affected communities by analysing the risks and challenges.

Available here: <https://arnec.net/resources/arnec-resources/pakistan-climate-change-young-children-micro-research>



The Philippines study examined perceptions and attitudes of local leaders, parents, and teachers on climate change, as well as their preparedness in responding to crises.

Available here: <https://arnec.net/resources/arnec-resources/philippines-climate-change-young-children-micro-research>

# A call to action: Air pollution in early childhood

**The evidence is clear:** Air pollution is harmful in early childhood, and can also lead to lifelong health and developmental impacts. In this brief, we provide more information about this issue and suggest a list of actions that we can take, whether as individuals or collectively. If you would like to learn more and get in touch, please email [ecdclimate@gmail.com](mailto:ecdclimate@gmail.com).

Air pollution is deadly, estimated to kill an average of 7 million people every year. And even when it doesn't kill, it affects every organ in the body and increases the risk of many diseases, including stroke, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and depression. Even at low levels invisible to the naked eye, air pollution can cause measurable differences in the health of populations. Air pollution affects not just young children's health: The ripple effects prevent them from realizing their full potential in life.

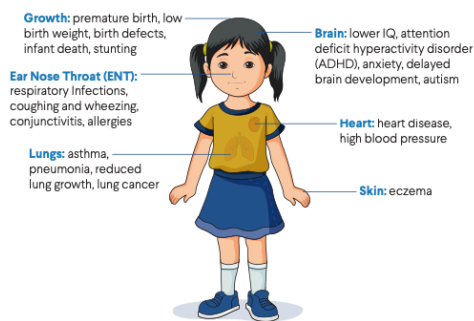


Figure 1: The health impacts of air pollution on a child. The list in this diagram is not comprehensive.



Figure 2: Components of the nurturing care framework. Source: <https://nurturing-care.org>

**A clean, healthy, and sustainable environment<sup>1</sup> underpins the Nurturing Care Framework, influencing health and development of young children.**

**Young children in the Asia-Pacific bear the highest burden of air pollution**

Advancing the ECD and climate change agenda requires a collective effort to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the rights of young children.

It is essential to amplify their voices regarding the impacts of climate change on their health, well-being, and development, and to position ECD at the forefront of the fight against climate change and in achieving sustainable development goals.

To support this initiative, ARNEC developed the ECD-Climate Resource Kit in collaboration with Vital Strategies.

The first fact sheet focused on air pollution, which poses significant risks during early childhood and can lead to lasting health and developmental issues.

In partnership with Vital Strategies, ARNEC created the Air Pollution Factsheet to provide detailed information on this critical topic and to propose a range of actions that individuals and communities can take to address it.

Available here: <http://www.vitalstrategies.org/wp-content/uploads/A-call-to-action-Air-pollution-in-early-childhood.pdf>



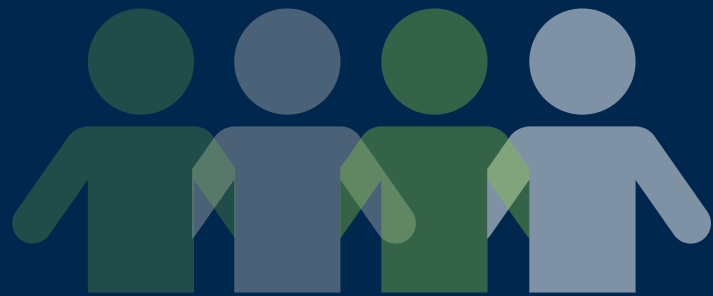
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ARNEC participated in influencing activities at COP28 and prepared a resource pack for stakeholders at the global level containing:

- ECD-Climate COP28 Brief;
- ECD-Climate Framework for Action;
- Advocacy Brief; and
- ECD Climate micro research reports

Available here: <https://arnec.net/resources/arnec-resources/cop28-ecd-climate>

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# On championing the capacities and well-being of the ECD workforce



Asia-Pacific  
Early Childhood Care  
and Education  
Teacher Training Handbook  
for Social and Emotional Learning



Scan the QR code to access UNESCO's Teacher Training Handbook for Social and Emotional Learning, which was prepared with technical inputs from ARNEC.

Education 2030

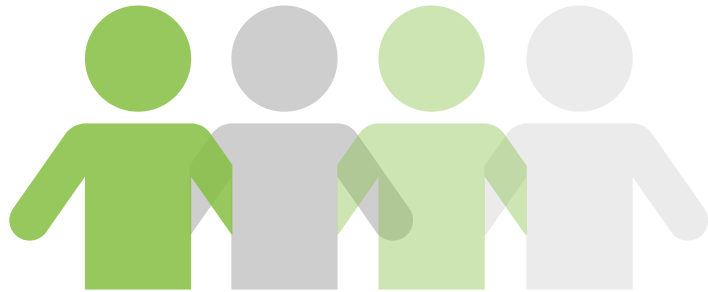
ARNEC moved to do training for early childhood teachers on building Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, following the finalisation of UNESCO Bangkok's Asia-Pacific Early Childhood Care and Education Teacher Training Handbook for SEL.

ARNEC in partnership with UNESCO Bangkok and AECES, hosted a 4-day regional training for trainers on SEL in Singapore in November 2023.

The overall objective was to build the capacity of the selected countries to expand inclusive quality ECCE and enhance teachers' ability to effectively deliver SEL to young learners.

A total of 21 participants from 7 countries, representing various organisations and government bodies, took part in the training.





**ARNEC has continued to be a key implementing partner in the Asia-Pacific region to support the global Early Childhood Workforce Initiative (ECWI)**



## Content submission for ECWI Channels

ARNEC contributed content in the form of news, reports and resources to highlight the workforce initiatives efforts under the ECW Initiative



## Regional Pool of Trainers

ARNEC trained key partners in the region to support the adoption of the SEL Handbook at the country level and system-level mainstreaming based on national context and need



## Country-level Action Plan

ARNEC in collaboration with country partners developed comprehensive action plans for Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Malaysia., all of which aim to integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into their ECCE programs and policy frameworks



## Learning Community

ARNEC created a learning community to share experiences and foster cross-country learning, particularly on mainstreaming and system-level integration of SEL at the country level



# On sustaining network health and impact



**We continued to connect partners and stakeholders in the network to advance the ECD agenda in the region...**



# ...through a face-to-face learning forum



ARNEC convened its Learning Groups on Responsive Caregiving and Playful Parenting and Multisectoral Approaches to ECD, Institutional Members, and National Representatives (NatReps) to take stock of ECD gains and challenges post-pandemic and what the ECD community in the Asia-Pacific region could learn from each other from noteworthy practices through country-level contextualisation and adaptation.

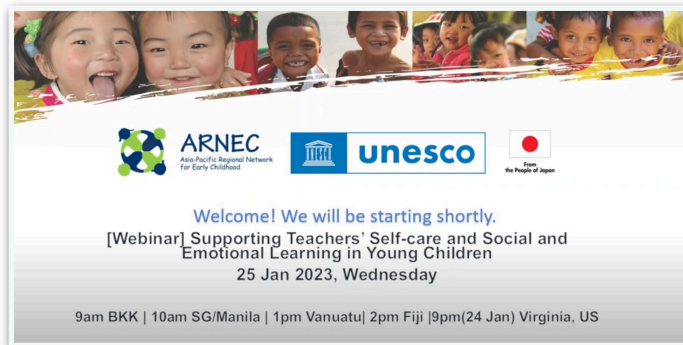
This was the first face-to-face learning forum convened by ARNEC after the pandemic

focusing on the theme *Connecting and collaborating for holistic ECD in the Asia-Pacific region.*

With 70 delegates from 17 countries in the region, the Learning Forum used diverse learning methodologies encompassing site visits, paper presentations, small group discussions and workshops, plenary sessions, and cultural appreciation.

For more information, click here: <https://arnek.net/news/arnek-partners-host-learning-forum-philippines>

# ...and virtual learning events like webinars



Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljuyG2LnDvc>



Available here: <https://arniec.net/events/arniec-and-kiael-joint-webinar>



Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-noce6S3k>





## Earth Day and Early Childhood

Country insights for climate resilience in ECD across Asia Pacific

19 April 2023



Our actions today shape our children's future



## Diverse entry points for playful parenting programs

Learning from evidence-based design, delivery, and scale in Australia, Bhutan, and India

Case presentations by:

- Plan Australia



Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBrAUYI8rd4>

4

Available here: <https://arnec.net/events/webinar-promoting-playful-parenting-through-remote-modalities-sharing-evidence-challenges>

5

Available here: <https://arnec.net/events/diverse-entry-points-playful-parenting-programs-learning-evidence-based-design-delivery-and>

6

Available here: <https://arnec.net/events/pollution-solution-clean-air-young-children-asia-pacific>

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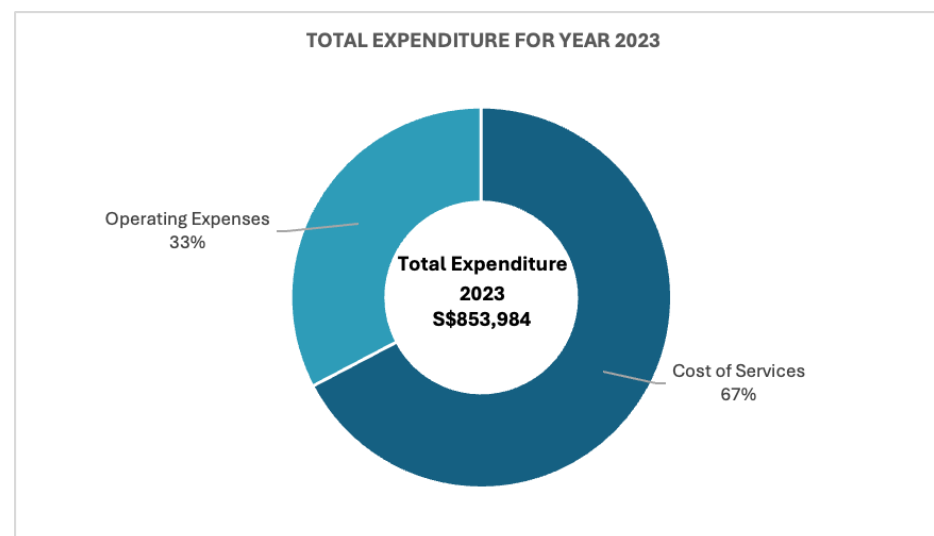
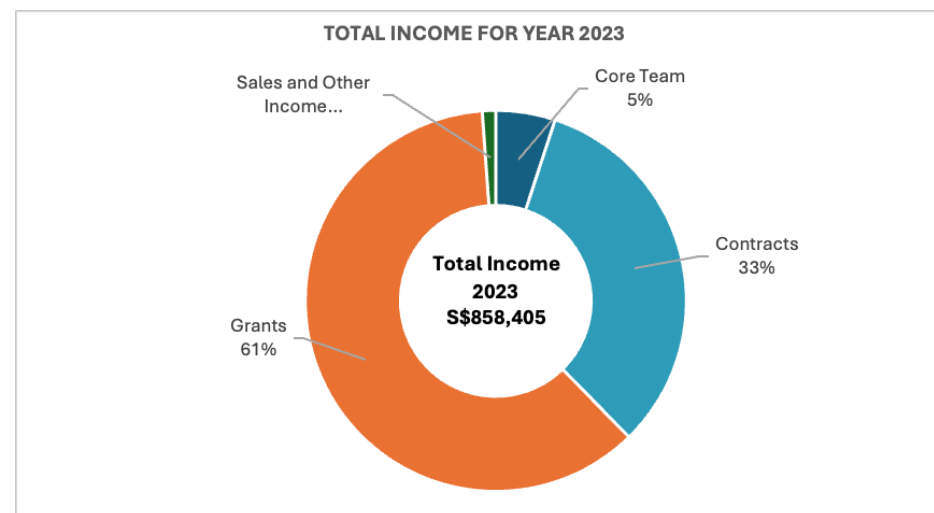


**We also kept  
within standards  
of financial health**

<b>Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood Limited</b>		
<b>Audited Financial Statement For The Financial Year Ended 31st December 2023</b>		
<b>Expressed in Singapore Dollars</b>		
<b>STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITIONS</b>		
	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Assets</b>		
Fixed Assets	28,155	49,270
Trade Receivables	378,093	172,339
Contract Assets	6,961	58,951
Other Receivables	11,973	6,441
Cash and Cash Equivalents	330,731	535,409
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>755,913</b>	<b>822,410</b>
<b>Equity &amp; Liabilities</b>		
Revenue Reserve	297,958	293,537
Contract Liabilities	418,171	452,999
Other current and non current liabilities	37,784	75,874
<b>Total equity and liabilities</b>	<b>753,913</b>	<b>822,410</b>
<b>STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>		
	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Core Team	43,236	56,532
Contracts	280,204	444,942
Grants	525,132	411,440
Sales and Other Income	9,833	17,567
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>858,405</b>	<b>930,481</b>
Cost of Services	574,695	603,192
Operating Expenses	279,289	318,983
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>853,984</b>	<b>922,175</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>4,421</b>	<b>8,306</b>

ARNEC was able to sustain its financial health in 2023 with income generated from grants, contracts, and core team contribution.

While there was a slight decrease in income, ARNEC was still able to post a positive net income.



# We could not have done ARNEC's agenda for young children in the region without your support



The ARNEC Secretariat

## Core team:

Save the Children  
Plan International  
ChildFund

## Regional strategic partners:

UNICEF  
UNESCO

## Sub-regional partner:

ASEAN Secretariat

## Global partners:

ECDAN  
WHO

AfECN, ANECD, ISSA  
Harnessing Global Data for Young  
Children - [https://  
globaldata4kids.com/about-us/](https://globaldata4kids.com/about-us/)  
Vital Strategies

## Supporters:

Early Childhood Regional  
Networks (ECRN) Fund  
Van Leer Foundation  
Bainum Foundation

Institutional Members and National  
ECD Networks in the countries



**ARNEC**

Asia-Pacific Regional Network  
for Early Childhood

## **Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)**

ARNEC is a network established to build strong partnerships across sectors and different disciplines, organisations, agencies, and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region to advance the agenda on and investment in Early Childhood.

<https://arnec.net>

Email: [secretariat@arnec.net](mailto:secretariat@arnec.net)

1 Commonwealth Lane 03-27

Singapore 149544