Pre-primary Teacher Development in South-East Asia

Project Information Note

Background

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) covers the period below the age of eight, ranging from ensuring good prenatal care to a smooth transition into — and early success in — primary school. As such, ECCE is the foundation of lifelong learning. Research shows that children who participate in ECCE programmes are more ready for school, complete school on time, plan their families better, earn higher incomes, become productive adults and educate their own children more effectively.

South-East Asian countries have made important progress in the field of ECCE:

- Several countries have developed specific national policies or laws concerning early childhood.
- Most countries have developed national ECCE standards or curricular frameworks, including early learning and development standards.
- Enrolment in pre-primary programmes has increased steadily.

Among the many dimensions and factors that affect the quality of ECCE, teacher-child interactions are considered to be the most important. The lack of adequate training, certification and incentives for ECCE practitioners (teachers, caregivers) is a widespread and growing challenge.

Objectives

The Pre-primary Teacher Development in South-East Asia project aims to contribute to the qualitative improvement of pre-primary education by supporting the professionalizing and capacity strengthening of pre-primary teachers. The project has two specific objectives:

1. To strengthen South-East Asian countries’ capacity to comprehensively analyse pre-primary teacher education and professional development policies and systems.
2. To raise the standard of pre-primary teacher qualifications and professional development systems.

The project will result in the creation of South-East Asian guidelines and country-level action plans, which will be submitted to ministers of education for their endorsement and which will guide subsequent country-level actions to improve pre-primary teacher education and professional development policies and systems.

Expected Results

1. South-East Asian countries’ achievements, challenges and good practice as well as recommended future actions in teacher education and professional development have been documented, analysed and discussed.
2. The South-East Asian Guidelines for Pre-primary Teacher Education and Professional Development Systems have been endorsed by ministers of education.
3. Participating countries’ roadmaps to upgrade or improve pre-primary teacher education and professional development policies and systems have been prepared.

Pre-primary gross enrolment ration, 2001 and 2011

Source: UIS data (Comparable data not available for Singapore and Timor Leste)

Nevertheless, participation in and the quality of pre-primary education vary substantially among and within countries, and equitable access to quality ECCE programmes remains a major challenge for all countries. In many low-income countries the majority of children enter primary school without any ECCE experience and comprehensive ECCE is out of reach for many children living in remote areas or vulnerable situations, affecting their development and school readiness.
Project Duration
September 2013 to August 2015 (2 years)

Project Coordination
The project is co-ordinated by the Asia Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) Unit of the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok, in close collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID). APPEAL hosts the expertise in basic education, including ECCE, while APEID has specialization in teacher policies and systems.

UNESCO Bangkok will collaborate with the secretariat of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) for the co-ordination of the project, while working closely with other UNESCO field offices in South-East Asia, namely the UNESCO offices in Hanoi, Jakarta, Phnom Penh, Vientiane and Yangon. The project will also mobilize key ECCE partners, such as the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Through the SEAMEO Secretariat, relevant SEAMEO Centres may also be involved in project implementation. The project will also leverage existing SEAMEO initiatives, such as the Reaching the Unreached Project 5 (Preschool Programme for All).

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Main Activities and Timeframe

Component 1: Country research

1.1 Questionnaire survey from UNESCO-SEAMEO Secretariat to 11 SEAMEO countries
   April-May 2014

1.2 First workshop to discuss the countries’ achievements and challenges and develop a framework for the Southeast Asian Guidelines for Pre-primary Teacher Education and Professional Development
   1-3 July 2014

1.3 Action research in selected countries
   July 2014-February 2015

1.4 Second regional workshop to revise the Southeast Asian Guidelines for Pre-primary Teacher Education and Professional Development and draft country action plans
   Early February 2015

Component 2: Southeast Asian Guidelines for Pre-primary Teacher Education and Professional Development

2.1 Regional & country-level advocacy activities
   March-April 2015

2.2 Presentation of the draft Southeast Asian Guidelines for Pre-primary Teacher Education and Professional Development in the SEAMEO Council Conference (Ministers of Education)
   Last week of April 2015

Component 3: Country roadmaps

3.1 Finalization of country-specific action plans to upgrade/improve pre-primary teacher qualifications and professional development
   May-July 2015