

المؤتمر الإقليمي لرعاية وتربية الطفولة
المبكرة في الدول العربية - الشارقة 2023


REGIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION
CONFERENCE IN THE ARAB STATES - SHARJAH 2023



SHARJAH RECOMMENDATIONS

Regional Early Childhood Care and Education Conference in the Arab States

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
June 4 - 5, 2023



Organized by the UNESCO Multisectoral Office in the Arab States, the Sharjah Private Education Authority, Federal Agency for Early Education, Sharjah Education Academy, and the Sharjah Child-Friendly Office, and under the patronage of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, a regional conference was held in the Emirate of Sharjah on **“Early Childhood Care and Education in the Arab States”** on 4-5 June 2023, in the presence of about 200 participants representing 14 Arab countries and 6 international and regional organizations.

The participants in the conference discussed important themes on quality, equality, and equal opportunities - innovation in programs - workforce and parenting programs - governance, financing, and advocacy. They discussed documents and good practices presented to the conference.

In line with the commitments of countries at the Transforming Education Summit 2022 and the Tashkent declaration on early childhood care and education, and the discussions that took place during the two days of the conference, the participants recommend the following:

In the field of early childhood services and programs:

- Develop a comprehensive framework for early childhood education and care with the aim of enhancing children’s well-being, social skills, creativity, and a sense of independence and providing them with a strong foundation for lifelong learning.
- Design flexible curricula, activities, and programs that allow family and community participation.
- Increase the level of awareness of the importance of early childhood in achieving sustainable development among the public, and among the decision makers in the ministries and higher councils for childhood or family.
- Enhance mechanisms for early detection of learning difficulties and disabilities among children to facilitate their inclusion.
- Focus on the importance of multilingualism in addition to the Arabic language as a hub language.
- Ensure that early childhood programs enhance the level of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that are friendly to the environment and to sustainable development.
- Bridge the gap and disparity between the public and private sectors in terms of quality and availability of various services and programs through:
 - Increasing public sector investment in infrastructure, programs, and services.
 - Encouraging the private sector and NGOs to invest in early childhood programs and services through tax exemptions, credit programs and direct support.



Adopting Quality Assurance Frameworks with focus on

- Monitoring and Evaluation
- ECCE workforce preparation
- Curriculum, learning strategies, and teaching.
- Nurseries and kindergartens Licensing.
- Standards for ECCE non-formal education programs.

In the field of early childhood workforce

- Develop a policy for professionalizing ECCE staff in various fields of early childhood care and education as to include Employment qualifications - salaries and incentives.
- Develop legal and administrative frameworks that define the qualifications required for ECCE caregivers and kindergarten teachers.
- Adopt a specialized diploma in early childhood development and care in universities.
- Include ECCE workforce preparation and professional training both a theoretical and practical education.

Develop the capacities of ECCE Workforce

- Establish training centers and network with universities to ensure continuous training during the service: training new trends and methods, especially on the skills of dealing and intervention with children in emergency situations, cases of violence and abuse, early detection, ...).
- Develop training manuals and educational curricula for workers: (Child Rights - Child Protection - Life Skills - Peace - Environment ...).
- Adopt an academic accreditation system based on achieved competencies and the supervision of the Quality Authority.
- Early intervention and focus on psychosocial support and social emotional learning.

- Increase the support for scientific research and foster collaboration with academic institutions to encourage research and academic papers from students across various university majors that focus on early childhood issues.
- Provide children's access to enabling information technology.
- Enact legislations to ensure comprehensive protection for childhood in the digital environment, while also educating parents and children for responsible and safe use of modern means of communication. This includes raising awareness on preventing harassment, exploitation, promoting values of non-violence and countering extremism, and on promoting ideas of extremism and terrorism. Top of FormBottom of Form
- Valorize initiatives and interventions that stem from identified needs, utilizing flexible and rapid work methodologies. This includes programs that involve child to child - youth to child - mother to mother...
- Identify successful experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Share and disseminate successful innovations with the stakeholders.
- Enhance parenting programs on topics such as: positive discipline - nutrition - play – and dialogue.

In the field of governance, policies and finance

Early Childhood Governance

- Establish a central coordination body comprising representatives from relevant ministries responsible for early childhood, civil society organizations, expert academics, and representatives from the private sector and trade unions.
- Strengthen multilateral partnerships both horizontally and vertically at the local and national levels. This includes collaboration among the public sector, municipalities, community organizations, the private sector, universities, and other stakeholders involved in providing early childhood development services.
- Provide financial and technical support to civil society organizations, enabling their active participation in coordination, planning, follow-up, and evaluation frameworks at both central and local levels. Additionally, involve them in policy and program formulation, advocacy campaigns, and garnering support for early childhood initiatives.

Data collection, monitoring, and evaluation

- Enhance the collection and analysis of detailed, coordinated, and reliable quantitative and qualitative data and information across the different stages of early childhood.
- Establish enrollment indicators for early childhood care and education, disaggregated by gender, age, and location, to ensure the implementation of appropriate interventions that address the specific needs of targeted children.

- Provide training to caregivers and field workers on how to collect and apply these indicators in their daily monitoring activities.
- Create opportunities for children and youth to participate, based on their developmental capabilities, in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of policies and intervention programs. This includes involving them in studies to identify needs, monitor violations, and propose solutions.

National policies and strategies for early childhood development based on participatory principles

- Develop national policies based on a holistic and integrated approach that encompasses education, health, care, protection, nutrition, legislation, and culture. These policies should be guided by a human rights approach and employ participatory methodologies, in alignment with the principles outlined in the Tashkent Declaration.
- Formulate a comprehensive Arab strategy for early childhood development and establish effective coordination, follow-up, and evaluation mechanisms supported by accurate indicators to ensure successful implementation and adequate funding.
- Conduct an analytical study on early childhood conditions in the Arab world to assess the current situation and propose unified intervention plans to address gaps and challenges.
- Organize a regional ministerial conference on early childhood in collaboration with the League of Arab States and UNESCO.
- Develop training programs for policymakers and implementers that focus on integrating child rights perspectives and early childhood components, as well as implementation, follow-up, and evaluation mechanisms.
- Design appropriate programs and intervention plans for emergencies based on the principles of preparedness and readiness.

Financing

Increase spending on early childhood facilities, services and programs

- Increase the allocation of public and educational spending towards early childhood, ensuring adequate resources are provided and distributed equitably at the national and sub-national levels, with a priority given to marginalized children.
- Mobilize new financial resources, including tax revenues, contributions from the private sector, and zakat.
- Direct donors to invest in early childhood within the nationally defined priorities.
- Enhance support and funding initiatives from within the Arab world, fostering collaboration between Arab countries.