



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
Inter-American Council for Integral Development
(CIDI)



**INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
XI MEETING OF AUTHORITIES
AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

February 22 – 23, 2010
Washington, D.C.

OEA/Ser.W/XIII.6.11
CIDI/CECIE/INF.1/10
23 February 2010
Original: Spanish

WORKING DOCUMENT

**INTER-AMERICAN PROGRAM ON COMPREHENSIVE ATTENTION
TO EARLY CHILDHOOD**

The purpose of the Inter-American Program on Comprehensive Attention to Early Childhood is to consolidate and make further headway on fulfilling the Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education adopted in 2007 and ratified by the Ministers of Education of the Americas in August 2009. The program works to promote the activities, projects and technical assistance that the OAS, UNICEF and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation are sponsoring, heading up and executing within the hemisphere, in partnership with government institutions, civil society and businesses.

Early childhood is a critical phase in the life of every human being, and the investment made in quality comprehensive care in this decisive phase of life is an opportunity to conquer or mitigate some of the major challenges that the OAS member states face: chronic poverty, inequality, an elevated school dropout rate, nagging unemployment, crime and social violence. Affording all the children in our countries a good start is one of the keys to shaping and developing human beings capable of living together in society as affective, cognitive, communicative and creative individuals. A veritable chorus of economists, scientists, physicians and policy-makers have concluded that the investment in attention to early childhood is perhaps the most important that a society can make to induce the most positive social and economic results. The research also finds that to be effective, the attention administered in early childhood must be of good quality and comprehensive; in other words, it must involve a variety of strategically articulated services in areas like nutrition, health, education, welfare, labor measures, etc., all in order to actually achieve an optimum, equitable impact. This kind of comprehensive attention requires discerning public policy, which in turn demands enormous political commitment, especially in times of economic crisis and political change.

1. BACKGROUND

The Inter-American Program on Comprehensive Attention to Early Childhood (hereinafter “the Program”) strives to accelerate the pace at which the OAS member states comply with the “Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education” (2007 and 2009); the Millennium Development Goals; the Dakar Framework for Action – Education for All; various resolutions adopted by the OAS General Assembly and ratified by the Summits of the Americas (1998 – 2001 – 2008); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its General Comments 7, 11 and 12 (2005 – 2009).

The Program specifically draws on **General Comment No. 7**,¹ approved in November 2005, “Implementing child rights in early childhood”; **General Comment No. 11**, “Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention,” approved in February 2009; and **General Comment No. 12**, “The right of the child to be heard,” approved in July 2009. Other international instruments that exist for the sake of the child’s protection and comprehensive attention are also taken into account, as they use solid argument to explain how states are to comply with the obligations they undertake and the scope of these mandates in combination with other international human rights instruments.

The Program comes under the Statutes of the CIDI, whose Chapter V is titled Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development. Article 30 reads as follows: “The purpose of the inter-American cooperation programs shall be to facilitate inter-American dialogue on integral development, strengthen the national programs and promote cooperation with emphasis on multinational activities that take into account the participation of the relatively less-developed countries.” It also states that the inter-American cooperation programs shall include the purposes, goals, strategies, approaches, and spheres of action, as well as guidelines and mechanisms for their evaluation.

Since 1991, the Organization of American States (OAS) has played an important and critical role in formulating, developing and implementing hemispheric initiatives on the subject of early childhood, and it is that history that formed the basis of this Program. The OAS enjoys a comparative advantage over other international organizations and institutions, as it is working with its 34 member states on regional, subregional, national and local actions. This process produced a history of shared experiences and lessons that has created synergies with other organizations like UNICEF, the OEI, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, UNESCO, the World Bank, the IDB, civil society organizations and businesses with which it shares a common philosophy. The Program has worked on multiple, interrelated issues of vital importance, such as: policy design and evaluation, heightening social awareness and advocacy, research, improving the quality of teaching practices, sharing information, professional training and development of teachers and educational actors, monitoring/ evaluation, and others. Taken together, these issues formed the core that spurred efforts to modernize and strengthen policies in early child development in many countries of the region.

The Program is confirmation of the fact that the OAS’ most recent policy commitments have taken a firm, consistent and important position vis-à-vis the challenge of attention to early childhood. The following are among the Program’s features: a common conceptual base, intersectoral, inter-institutional and interdisciplinary responses and a concept of education as involving family and community alike in order to open up the child’s learning environment. The most recent commitments are spelled out in the following documents:

- **The Declaration of Scarborough** approved at the Fourth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education, held in Trinidad and Tobago, August 10 to 12, 2005, recognized “...the need to broaden the structure of education beginning with early childhood education, given its very positive impact on the quality of education and on the reduction of inequality”.
- The “**Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education**” and the “**Guidelines for Early Childhood Education Programming**,” approved at the Fifth Inter-American Meeting

¹ General Comment No.7 (2005). Committee on the Rights of the Child, 40th session, Geneva, September 12 to 30, 2005. Implementing child rights in early childhood, 2006.

of Ministers of Education, held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, November 14 to 16, 2007, and ratified by the OAS General Assembly in June 2008.

- **The Declaration of Quito**, adopted by the Ministers of Education at their Sixth Inter-American Meeting held in Quito, Ecuador in August 2009. At that meeting, the governments of Chile, Colombia and Trinidad and Tobago reported on the progress the governments of the 34 member states had made with their activities. In the Declaration, the Ministers reaffirmed the... *“Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education adopted at the Fifth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from November 12 to 14, 2007, in which we undertook to increase quality comprehensive early childhood education coverage, in accordance with each member state’s possibilities and with the long-term goal of universalizing its integral care for the very young. We express our satisfaction at the progress in implementing the mandates that we set on that occasion and, in the inter-American framework, under the coordination of the CIE.² In order to give this greater impetus and visibility, we have agreed to entrust CIE to develop an Inter-American Program on Comprehensive Attention to Early Childhood, to which we will give firm support.”³*

In furtherance of the Hemispheric Commitment and the Guidelines for the Early Childhood Education Programming, the following are among the initiatives that the OAS has developed in cooperation with other strategic partners:

- The Project on *“Policies and Strategies for Young Children’s Successful Transitions toward Socialization and School,”* the focus of which is building up the institutional capacity of the offices in the member states in charge of initial education, preschool education and nursery school education. It also features research, publication and organization of two hemispheric symposia that brought together government delegates and representatives of international organizations to agree upon activities to be conducted jointly (Washington, D.C. May 2007 and Valparaíso, Chile, May 2009).
- The Project on *“Trends in Transition Policies in Rural, Indigenous and Border Communities,”* which includes research and publication of country reports on the policies, statistics, and case studies in rural, indigenous and border communities; socialization and advocacy workshops; two Declarations of Indigenous Peoples; and an International Symposium on Early and Basic Education for Children from Rural and Indigenous Populations (Mexico, January 2010). The Symposium’s results included a proposal on training materials and diversified curriculum design, prepared jointly with the Ministry of Education of Peru.
- The Project on *Expanding the Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education through Technology and Communication Networks*, which involves sharing and promoting experiences in advocacy and social mobilization in early childhood care; development of workshops and forums with journalists; preparation of 5 guides to delivering information on early childhood through the mass media; preparation of specialized bulletins; introduction of a portal on early childhood, which involves developing three databases: experts, success stories and links to other Web sites and networks.

² The CIE is the Inter-American Committee on Education, a policy organ of the OAS.

³ Declaration of Quito. “Better Opportunities for the Youth of the Americas. Rethinking Secondary Education,” OAS 2009

- **The Project on “Improving Early Childhood Education in the Caribbean through Cooperation with Chile,”** which is intended to advise on and reflect upon policies relating to early childhood, managing and building collective curriculum; working with families, alternative modalities of child care, and establishing networks in Chile and in the Caribbean countries by conducting workshops and visits (Valparaíso, Chile, May 2009; Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, January 2010), in collaboration with CARICOM and UNICEF.
- The Project on **“Quality-oriented Evaluation of Education: Following up the Commitment to Early Childhood Education,”** which conducts subregional workshops at which representatives of the member states study how best to evaluate a child’s development and the quality of programs and services. Two such workshops were held (a Central American workshop held in San José, Costa Rica in June 2009; and a workshop for the Mercosur countries, held in Asunción, Paraguay, in December 2009). The workshop for the Andean subregion is slated for Medellín, Colombia in May 2010; one workshop is also planned for North America and will be on the design, adaptation, application and evaluation of the EDI (Early Development Instrument). It will be held in Ontario, Canada, in June 2010. The Caribbean subregional meeting will be held in partnership with CARICOM in Guyana in July 2010. The “World Congress on Early Childhood Evaluation” will be held in Asunción, Paraguay, in November 2010.
- On-line course: **“Introduction to early child care strategies: zero to three years”**, which is geared to social science professionals and is in response to the growing appreciation of the importance of the child’s development at this stage of life and the need to expand the capacity to provide children in this age bracket with quality care and attention.
- The Program is supporting the holding of multiple technical and policy meetings throughout the region, such as the **Second World Congress and Ninth International Meeting on Early Childhood and Preschool Education: Professional Training and Development of Teachers and Educational Actors** (Monterrey, Mexico, September 23 to 25, 2009), convened by the Government of the State of Nuevo León, the Secretariat of Education, the Monterrey Centers for Child Development (CENDI), and the Office of Education and Culture. Participating were some 1700 delegates. The World Congress was broadcast live to 48 countries. Another such meeting was “Early Education Today”, held in Guanajuato, Mexico in July 2009 with the World Association of Early Childhood Educators (AMEI-WAECE).

This Inter-American Program builds on the progress that the member states of the hemisphere are making with the help of the OAS, UNICEF, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, the OEI and other international organizations and institutions, as well as the achievements and lessons learned by the social protection systems like “Chile Crece Contigo.”

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The work done by the OAS and its strategic partners has been built upon the evidence, scientific research and records of the last 20 years, from a variety of perspectives (cultural, psychological, economic, educational, political, and neuroscientific) concerning childhood development. All the **empirical** evidence points to the importance of early childhood development,

care and education, even during the prenatal period, encompassing all dimensions of child development: health, nutrition, education, recreation, affective and emotional interrelationship, and a quality environment.

Scientific building blocks:

The studies done by the Carnegie Corporation⁴ since 1994 point out that the brain development that takes place during the prenatal period and in the first year of life is more rapid and extensive than in later years and that brain development is much more vulnerable to environmental influence than ever suspected. They also find that the influence of early environment on brain development is long lasting, and the environment affects not only the number of brain cells and number of connections among them, but also the way these connections are "wired."

The research done by neuro-scientist Fraser Mustard⁵ (2006) has produced unmistakable evidence of the fact that brain development is much more rapid during the first two years of life, when the connections (synapses) among neurons are formed to establish pathways for the different hierarchies of the brain that govern or control our intellectual, emotional, physical, immunological and social responses to stimuli in future life. The brain is a master organ that controls the main functions necessary for good health, learning and emotions; it regulates temperament, social development, language, literacy skills, cognitive skills, perceptive skills, physical and mental health, and the bases of the sensorial functions and experiences.

The early periods of development (including in utero) are critical and sensitive phases for development of many of the brain's functions. As Mustard reports, it is the stimuli (experience) that these sensing neurons are exposed to in the critical, sensitive early periods of development (including in utero) that affect the formation of the connections (synapses) among neurons to establish pathways for the different hierarchies of the brain that govern or control emotions, behavior, language, etc. The apex of synapse production for the senses is at three months; for language, at six months, and for cognition, two years. The first years of life are the first step in a life-long learning process. The foundation for development of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are formed at these ages.

From the many studies conducted, Mustard and other researchers have also concluded that participation in quality early child development programs can improve school performance, reduce the dropout rate, increase income and reduce levels of violence and criminal behavior. Thus, integral development in the first years of life is a decisive factor in an individual's growth and development.

The participation of the family and the influence of the socio-cultural milieu on human development are powerful influences in a child's first years of life and affect the quality of that person's affective and cognitive interactions and social behavior for the rest of his or her life. It is important to point out that quality early child care and attention can be delivered in a variety of contexts, which includes helping families and communities with in-home child care.

⁴ Carnegie Report (1994). The report of the Carnegie Task Force. "*Starting Points. Meeting the Needs of our Youngest Children*".

⁵ Mustard, F. (2006) ECD AND. *Experience-based brain development. The scientific underpinnings of the importance of Early Child Development in a Globalized World*. Washington: Brookings Institution.

The conclusion from multiple professionals is that the investment in quality early child care programs can “make the difference,” especially where poverty is a problem.

In the High/Scope Perry Preschool longitudinal study⁶ conducted in Ypsilanti, Michigan in the United States (2004), J. Schweinhart (2004) shows that comprehensive care programs, with quality teachers using child-centered strategies, continue to return benefits to the children, their families and their communities as much as 40 years later. The studies also show that the return on every dollar invested is over sixteen dollars, although the programs also serve to reduce the school dropout rate, promote greater productivity and higher social, emotional and intellectual skills.

In his studies, James Heckman of the University of Chicago (2007), a 2000 Nobel Laureate in Economics, concludes that the return on a dollar invested in early education is much greater (eight to one) than the return on a dollar invested in secondary and higher education programs (three to one).

For Daniel Goleman⁷ (1998), emotional intelligence is vital to a child’s future affective and social development. A kind of ticket for achieving the academic standard, emotional intelligence can be learned individually and cultivated, and equips the child with the emotional skills and tools that help him or her live in society. The messages or response that parents –and most especially the mother– give to the child shape the emotional expectations about what that child’s future sense of self will be.

For Howard Gardner⁸ (1987), children have a strong sense of self, which necessitates their exposure to a variety of quality experiences. This means an acceptance of the fact that interactions in specific contexts play a key role in developing the individual’s capacities in early childhood, as it is these capacities that, in various experiences (of sense of self and in differing contexts), enable the individual to learn the values, norms, customs, standards of behavior and symbols through which he or she is recognized as a social, inter-subjective being with a past and a future and in constant change.

In Latin America, educators like Maribel Córnick of Peru, María Victoria Peralta of Chile, Vital Didonet of Brazil, and Guadalupe Rodríguez of Monterrey, Mexico; pediatricians like Mary Eming Young of the World Bank; psychologists like Sara Victoria Alvarado with CINDE, Colombia, and others, have underscored the point that with integral attention in early childhood, from a very early age, those children who have the benefit of some early education service may see more favorable results than those children who unfortunately do not have access to such a service. Recently published studies⁹ demonstrate the results: children who do have some early education service are less likely to have to repeat a grade, are less likely to drop out of school and tend to be less aggressive and violent; these services are preparing the human and social capital needed for a country’s development and economic production.

Summarizing, neuroscientists have established the following: 85% of the basic structure of the brain is formed before the age of 3; the investment made in these first years of life pays a greater dividend

⁶ *The Perry Preschool Study* (Berrueta-Clement, L. Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein & Weikart, Ypsilanti, Michigan, 1984 – 2004)

⁷ Goleman, D. (1998), *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam-Dell, a Division of Random House, New York, 2005.

⁸ Gardner, H. (1987) *Frames of Mind. The theory of multiple intelligences*, Perseus Books, New York, 2004.

⁹ UNESCO, OREALC and LLECE (Latin American Bureau for the Assessment of the Quality of Education), (2010) *Factores asociados al logro cognitivo de los estudiantes de America Latina y El Caribe [Student Achievement in Latin America and the Caribbean]*.

than the investments made at later stages in life; and the malleability of the child's brain has to be used to advantage, to forge a solid foundation for the future.

Policy building blocks

The world has gradually awakened to the vital importance of the first eight years of a child's life and the factors that shape or are conducive to his or her growth and development. The gradual awareness of these fundamental truths has come about in stages and at moments that have become milestones in shaping the policy agenda so that it includes decision-making on matters related to early childhood development, care and education.

In 1990, following the approval of the Convention, a process of consulting the countries was launched that culminated in March 1990 with the holding of the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. At the meeting, the countries reviewed what the basic educational needs of the human being are and made children a priority. One of the most positive conclusions that the 155 states, 200 intergovernmental organizations and 150 NGOs reached was the world consensus on an **expanded vision of basic education, i.e., education that begins when the child is born.** Jomtien and this renewed vision paved the way for wider political acceptance and preparation of specific legislation on the importance of early childhood development, care and education.¹⁰

The achievements, lessons and challenges of Education for All, approved at Jomtien in 1990, were reaffirmed in Dakar in April 2000. This was an unprecedented undertaking on the situation of education in the world and included national evaluations of the progress made and problems encountered by 183 countries. Recommendations for future undertakings were approved.

The Jomtien Declaration on Education for All and the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (April 2000) explicitly approve the commitment to *"expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education."*

The Fifth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education under the framework of CIDI, OAS:

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, was the venue of the Fifth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education, held November 14 through 16, 2007. Its central theme was "Lessons Learned and Hemispheric Commitments for Early Childhood Education." There the ministers of education of 25 member states reflected upon, examined scientific evidence and practices, and held a dialogue. As a result of their deliberations, they undertook to join forces with international organizations and civil society and approved the *Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education*.

The following are among the most important conclusions and mandates that the plenary approved: 1) early childhood is a decisive phase in the human life cycle; ii) early childhood education is fundamental in the process of comprehensive development of children from birth to eight years of age; iii) equitable and timely access to quality and integral education adapted to

¹⁰ Fujimoto, Gaby (2009) "*La Educacion Inicial hoy: desarrollo integral de la primera infancia,*" [Early Education Today: integral early childhood development]. Essay written for the Conference; Building a Good Education for Children, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

global and local contexts and global realities is a human right; iv) the family is the first and irreplaceable medium for educating and taking care of girls and boys, and communities and governments are to promote policies of equitable access to quality early childhood education and its effective incorporation into each country's educational system; v) professional preparation and ongoing development for early childhood education staff, teachers, and technical personnel will be promoted; vi) governmental, international, and civil society institutions will work together to achieve the Commitment's objectives.

The international instruments signed by the majority of the countries of this hemisphere, such as the **Convention on the Rights of the Child and its General Comment No. 7. Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood**, recognize that young children are rights holders and that early childhood is an essential period for implementing these rights. General Comment No. 7 proposes a working definition of early childhood as the period below the age of 8 years and suggests that the right to education during early childhood begins at birth and is closely related to the young child's right to maximum development. It urges States Parties to develop rights-based, multisectoral strategies in order to ensure that children's best interests are always the starting point for service planning and provision. These should be based around a systematic and integrated approach to law and policy development in relation to all children up to 8 years old.

In General Comment No. 7, the Committee on the Rights of the Child stresses that the services provided must be appropriate to the circumstances, maturity and individuality of young children, which requires that all staff be trained to work with the age group. The Committee calls on States parties to ensure that all young children receive education in the broadest sense, which acknowledges a key role for parents and is organized in cooperation with them, professionals from other disciplines and others; to support early childhood development programmes, including home- and community-based preschool programmes, that feature empowerment and education of parents and that use methods appropriate to local circumstances and changing practices, while respecting traditional values and devoting particular attention to the most vulnerable groups; and to adopt strategic and general plans on early childhood development from a rights-based approach, and at the same time increase the human and financial resources earmarked for policies, services and professional development.

III. THE SITUATION TODAY

A better education not only improves individual income, but is also a necessary though not sufficient condition for long-term economic growth. Investment in education needs a long time to produce dividends, so that the education of children may translate into better prepared human capital in the work force.

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007, prepared by UNESCO, states that 7.4% of children in Latin America and the Caribbean (9.2% in Latin America) repeat the first grade. This situation is of particular importance when one considers that the world average for repeating the first grade increased from 2005 (3.9%) to 2007 (4.7%). Hence, one of the fundamental challenges is to strive for early childhood education services that help children transition from one level in the educational system to the next.

A hefty investment in early childhood education means persistent, effective, and quality parental involvement, which is vital to get children off to a good start; it also means that the personnel working with the parents must be properly trained in the dynamics of that process; it requires input from other sectors of society, people knowledgeable in neuroscience and capable of grasping the importance of these discoveries for human development and for the child. Education is a long-term investment involving immediate costs, but also long-term payoffs, making it one of the best investments a society can make in its future.

Despite the international commitments, the scientific discoveries, and the significant progress made in some countries, the region is far from fulfilling these commitments. The most recent data in UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007 show that in Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 62% of the population is covered in the preschool years (generally from 4 to 5 years of age), but only 5% of the population under the age of four. It is worth noting that reliable quantitative and qualitative data on this topic are not available, especially about children under the age of four. However, the information that is available reveals that the problem of equity is very serious in rural, indigenous and border communities and marginal urban populations; the coverage and quality of early child care and attention is very much lower compared to the services in the major cities; also, there are questions about how efficiently the educational system is being run, since the standards should be applied with sufficient flexibility to respond to the challenges that diversity poses. In addition to these challenges, the majority of the countries do not have quality standards and the competence of the professional and nonprofessional personnel charged with the care and education of the children in centers, programs or other services is not up to the demands of the twenty-first century.

Given the facts on the ground, the present Program is of the view that: in order to develop a child's potential, society must shoulder its share of the responsibility. For that reason, this Program includes not just the governmental sector, but also social actors, including the children themselves. According to the General Comments on the Convention, children must be given a "window of opportunity" to have their rights to protection, attention, care, education and child development observed; training and leadership programs must be conducted with parents and the community; efforts must be made to put into effect laws that protect children, mothers and families; students and teachers at universities and institutions that prepare professionals in education, health, welfare and other social areas and early childhood specialists in various disciplines must be enlisted to develop programs that reflect the progress made in the sciences and technology, to review and update the training curriculum and the training programs, along with decision-makers from various social sectors involved in early childhood, members of civil society, businesses in the private sector, social communicators and the media, and international organizations and institutions.

IV. OBJECTIVES

The Program's general objective is to contribute to the protection, development and care of children. It will serve as a tool for alleviating poverty, inequality and violence committed against and among children. Its actions will endeavor to increase the human capital engaged in a global strategy of social protection. Therefore, in keeping with the Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development 2009 and in furtherance of the Plan of Action of the IV Summit of the Americas and the Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education, the Program's specific objectives are as follows:

- Support and advocate for the creation of clear legislation that governs and regulates protection and preservation of the rights of children and their families, while monitoring to ensure that those rights remain intact, transcending the political ebb and flow inherent in democracy.
- Highlight the positive impact of quality intervention in early childhood using economic, policy-related, social, psychological, and pedagogical arguments to build consensus, enable access to information, mobilize public and political support, and thereby expand the investment in early childhood education, care and development.
- Support formulation of public policies governing the activity of the school system, with a view to providing universal, quality comprehensive education to children from the prenatal period to eight years of age, with particular attention to at-risk groups.
- Increase cooperation among governments, researchers, academics, those who craft policy, civil society organizations and institutions and businesses, in order to intensify multidisciplinary and intersectoral measures to benefit children.
- Help to improve, strengthen and/or create a new awareness of inter-institutional undertakings in the sectors of education, health, welfare and other social sectors in order for them jointly to gradually develop a planned system of activities whose driving principle is to develop the child's potential to the maximum, with the emphasis on his or her integral attention from the prenatal period to the age of eight. In that connection, support the development of policies for initial training and preparation of teachers and educational agents with a view to achieving the levels of competence necessary for an inclusive, relevant, quality education that respects diversity.
- Promote projects, programs and experiments in comprehensive early childcare that are innovative and progressive, and involve the partnered participation of institutions of the state, civil society and business.
- Expand the coverage and quality of educational services to provide more and better opportunities to children from the most vulnerable sectors, while developing and articulating diverse modalities of early child care and support mechanisms for children and their families. Taken together, these modalities and support mechanisms should serve to level the playing field of development opportunities.
- Support integration of and/or special services for children who have a specific need; foster tolerance and instill democratic values through an inclusive education; and develop a policy of encouraging respectful and polite behavior so as to reduce the levels of violence and abuse committed against children.
- Enable teen mothers to continue their studies and encourage women to enter the work force as a factor driving development.
- Promote the creation of social networks and networks of social communication at the public and private levels that serve to support the work being done on behalf of early childhood.

V. LINES OF ACTION

In this context, the Program is proposing four lines of action intended to protect and ensure children's rights to quality, comprehensive attention and to foster equal opportunity. Those four proposed lines of action are based on the sectoral structure of the national early childhood programs in each member state and take into consideration the advances made in science and technology. These proposed lines of action are in response to the political commitments that the governments have confirmed or supported and feature strategies and working goals that can be evaluated. The four proposed lines of

action are as follows: communications, policy, knowledge and information, and institutional strengthening. They will be executed over a five-year period. Their progress will be assessed at the VII Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education to be held in 2011, and at ministerial meetings held thereafter.

Under each line of action, activities like those listed below will be conducted and promoted. Preparation of the Program's plan of execution and follow-up will be the job of the CIE, with support from its Technical Secretariat and representatives of appropriate international and civil society organizations that have an interest in becoming involved in the Program.

LINE OF ACTION: COMMUNICATIONS

This line of action will feature measures such as the following:

- Continued execution of the activities under the project on “*Expanding the Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education through Technology and Communication Networks*,” which was launched in 2008, moving forward with execution of the strategy of communication and creation of a network of networks involving persons, institutions and experiences in early childhood care and education.
- Promote the establishment of donor campaigns in at least five member states, to help improve and diversify the quality of the attention and early education that children should receive from birth to three years of age. For example, one such campaign might feature the slogan “Make your pennies work for comprehensive care for all children,” and be conducted in grocery stores and stores that sell products for infants and children and that might want to contribute (diapers, talcum powder, children's clothes, common medicines, toys, educational materials, etc.); ii) a 1% tax on the sale of vehicles and other innovative ideas.
- Preparation of an Advocacy Plan in no fewer than 10 member states. The strongest partners would be identified, and clear and coherent messages would be sent to political and public authorities in general about issues related to, *inter alia*: the critical role that the first years of a child's life play in the country's human, social and economic development; the importance of transitions; the situation of children in indigenous communities; the physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and affective development of the child and the child's health; the role that parents, the community, teachers and various other professionals, decision-makers, and other social actors play in ensuring a child's optimum growth and development.
- Intensive dissemination of messages in the print media, radio and television, and by way of product labels featuring reminders of the importance of comprehensive care of the child starting in the prenatal period, policies promoting kindness toward and protection of children, windows of opportunity to take into account children's experiences; promoting communication and affection during the prenatal period and thereafter; development of the child's brain and its potentials; care of the environment, and others, as determined by the circumstances in the places where the programs are carried out.
- Organization of marketing campaigns in at least five member states, targeted at the personnel offices of businesses, in order to get them more involved and ultimately to decide to make a greater investment in programs for children of company employees.

- Throughout the hemisphere, preparation and dissemination of key messages, radio and television spots, interviews and articles in the newspapers on issues related to early childhood, all for the purpose of waging an aggressive media campaign promoting comprehensive early childhood care and attention; support in preparing journalists to be able to properly cover early childhood issues.
- Release of at least two publications each year (books) and multiple essays about the lessons learned on such issues as: non-violent physical spaces and environments for learning; announcement of training workshops and publication of results, and specialized information and reports disseminated, *inter alia*, via an OAS-hosted Early Childhood Portal, Web pages specializing in early childhood in at least 10 countries and in international organizations and institutions such as: UNICEF, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, the World Association of Early Childhood Educators (AMEI-WAECE) and others.
- Release of one CD each year, or a DVD containing specialized publications and high-quality content that reinforces the information on early human development and is distributed to universities, normal schools or training institutions, the media, businesses and social development institutions.

LINE OF ACTION: POLICY

The following are examples of the kinds of measures to be carried out under this line of action:

- Continued execution of the projects on “*Policies and Strategies for Young Children's Successful Transition toward Socialization and School*” and “*Trends in Transition Policies in Rural, Indigenous, Afro-American and Border Communities*,” under the coordination of the CIE and with the support of its Technical Secretariat.
- Promote consistent application of the “*Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education*” and its programming guidelines; also, follow-up implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and its General Comment No. 7, “*Implementing child rights in early childhood*”; General Comment No. 11, “*Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention*”; and General Comment No. 12, “*The right of the child to be heard*.”
- Using the “*Chile crece contigo*” experience as a point of reference, promote measures, throughout the hemisphere, to advance the establishment of state policies that offer quality, comprehensive attention and care to children from zero to eight years of age, and support the establishment of networks of actors that shape and make policies that advocate budget increases to improve infrastructure and provide healthy learning environments in children’s services.
- Support the creation or expansion –to reach the highest levels of government- of mechanisms, strategies, laws, regulations and directives for better and more efficient strategic planning, that ensures equality and equity, diversity, increased coverage and better quality, administrative efficiency, the intersectoral and multidisciplinary nature of the comprehensive early child care services from before birth to eight years of age.

- Promote the establishment and strengthening of intersectoral committees at the national, state or municipal level, to intensify, foster and support multidisciplinary and intersectoral services, coupled with pedagogical support from the education sector to any sector having a role in the child's first two years of life.
- Technical support to establish flexible standards for "going to scale", moving away from pilot projects and into broad programs to increase coverage and improve quality in the corresponding sector(s), to organize alternative modalities of child care in the zero to three age bracket. The goal is to enlist mothers and families, and to provide the same benefits in terms of protection, education, health, nutrition, technical support and educational materials and the same quality of care provided under formal programs for other age groups
- Support the design, execution and evaluation of policies for development of programs for the first two years of basic education, the goal being to reduce the percentage of children who have to repeat these grades and the dropout rate among children in these grades.
- Support the institution of policies related to the salary or seniority system for the teaching career or in other sectors (health, social development, welfare, and others), to justify the additional points that can be awarded to in-service professionals based on the studies they have pursued (better preparation, additional training and specialization). This same inducement can be used in the case of staff in normal schools or agents in other specialized areas of social development, journalists or personnel in communications who work to support comprehensive early childhood care and attention.
- Promote a significant increase in resources to equip social sectors with technological tools in order to improve administrative management and intersectoral undertakings.
- Signing of memorandum of understanding and inter-institutional agreements between international organizations and institutions, to conduct joint or related activities and avoid duplication.

LINE OF ACTION: KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

The kinds of activities conducted under this line of action would be as follows:

- Continue the project on "*Quality-oriented Evaluation of Education: Following up the Commitment of Early Childhood Education.*" Consideration might also be given to the possibility of developing regional indicators of early childhood development education, in coordination with the Regional Education Indicators Project (PRIE) and other existing initiatives; develop methods to assess the quality of programs and services and methods to evaluate child development.
- Continue to train teachers and other professionals through projects that stimulate cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean, such as the project on "*Improving Early Childhood Education in the Caribbean through Cooperation with Chile and other countries.*"
- Execute the on-line course titled "*Introduction to early child care strategies: zero to three years,*" targeted at professionals –policy shapers and makers, educators, pediatricians, social workers, sociologists, psychologists, nutritionists, program administrators, professors who train

teachers- aimed at increasing their knowledge and understanding of the child's growth and development from birth to three years of age.

- Organize and execute at least two hemispheric courses each year, to publicize the advances in the neurosciences, modern methods to incorporate into teaching practices, evaluation, the dynamics of working with families, other alternative methods of education and care and more frequent use of information and communications technologies.
- Establish or help strengthen networks and consortiums of professional and nonprofessional personnel who work in child development programs, with a view to sharing innovations, policies, case studies, experiences in evaluation and monitoring, research, etc.
- Continue studies and research and support policy decisions.

LINE OF ACTION: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

The following will be the kinds of activities conducted under this line of action:

- Organize, execute and evaluate annual hemispheric meetings of national directors of early and basic education and other areas of social development related to early childhood; with teachers of teachers and communications specialists, promote establishment of national institutional-strengthening plans that work to increase coverage with equity and quality, and a significant undertaking calculated to "go to scale" in the case of children under the age of three; combat violence against and among children, and provide healthy learning environments.
- Promote collaborative intersectoral initiatives and experiences at the national, state and municipal levels and cultivate alliances with: i) national and international institutions and organizations: AMEI-WAECE, OMEP (World Organization for Early Childhood Education), ALAS, Save the Children, the World Bank, UNICEF, the OEI, and others; ii) private businesses and centers; iii) civil society and universities, and others.
- Promote and strengthen initiatives aimed at engaging significant private enterprise support for early childhood development, at their places or work or in their communities.
- Support that businesses and civil society provide to governments to organize services "to scale" (rather than pilot experiments and projects) for children under the age of three, using alternative child care models in the more sparsely populated areas or rural areas with a specific ethnic or indigenous group or in impoverished urban areas, providing healthy learning environments and intensive programs on preventing child abuse and violence.
- Support the member states with the execution of programs to prepare and train nonprofessional education agents, preferably recognizing studies completed within the educational system so as to increase their years of schooling.
- Support the member states with execution of nonformal programs in which mothers, parents and the community participate, the goal being to cover more children from before birth up to the age of three, with the intention of "going to scale"; create healthy learning environments and combat violence against and among children

VI. MONITORING, FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), with the support of its Technical Secretariat in the Office of Education and Culture (OEC-DHDEC-SEDI) will be in charge of monitoring the Program's implementation and filing annual reports on its progress with CEPCIDI, CIDI and the General Assembly of the OAS, by way of the established channels. The Inter-American Meetings of Ministers of Education held within the framework of CIDI will also be informed of the progress made and the challenges encountered. This will include information on the headway made with relevant policies, programs, projects and activities under each Line of Action and their performance in the member states. At the end of the Program's fifth year, in 2015, an evaluation report will be prepared and presented to the political bodies. Based on the results, the report will also address the issue of the Program's renewal.

VII. FINANCING

The present Program will be financed with resources forthcoming from sources other than the Regular Fund. As of now, the Program's activities have support from the Reserve Subfund, under the terms of Permanent Council resolution CP/RES. 831 (1342/02), and the counterpart resources forthcoming from the contributions made by the international organizations associated with the Program; donations from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation of the Netherlands, which will begin the second phase of its support to childhood development projects in June 2010; resources that the member states provide for the activities they routinely organize; and from civil society and business.