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SUBSTANTIVE REPORT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY EDUCATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES IN THIS FIELD

OUTLINE

Source: 28 C/5 Approved, paragraph 01110.

Background: In accordance with paragraph 01110 of document 28 C/5 Approved, the present report is presented to the twenty-ninth session of the General Conference.

Purpose: The report outlines the main issues in early childhood and family education and includes an overview of the situation in the world regions and a brief review of UNESCO activities. Among the major issues discussed are: the importance of early child development and family programming in social development planning; the specificity of early education which by its nature requires child-centred approaches; the solutions proposed by several developing countries to create cost-effective, community-based programmes so as to help families develop and prepare young children for schooling. A final section contains some orientations and recommendations on appropriate strategies in this field.

Decision required: The present document does not require a decision.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Paragraph 01110 of the Approved Programme and Budget for 1996-1997 provided that 'A report on family and early childhood education will be submitted to the twenty-ninth session of the General Conference'.

1.2 In the preparation of this report, contributions were received from many partners in the early childhood field: ministries of education, UNESCO National Commissions, UNESCO regional and field offices; United Nations agency field offices in different countries and major NGO partners - the assistance of all of whom is gratefully acknowledged.

II. WHAT IS MEANT BY EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY EDUCATION

2.1 **Early childhood education:** Early childhood is the period of a child's life from conception to age eight. For educational purposes, this period is often divided into three stages: *the infant stage* from conception to the end of the second year; *the early childhood stage* from three to six years and *the transition stage* from six to eight years. These ages are approximations only. Close observation of behaviour and knowledge of culture are also necessary for assessment of the child's actual stage of development.

What is important to understand is that each of these stages has its own particular needs and opportunities, which are truly important for the future development of the person. Early childhood is, in fact, the period of greatest development in the human cycle and the period of greatest vulnerability. We know that education is lifelong and that the child is extremely resilient, but there is also little doubt that opportunities lost in the early childhood period - particularly in basic health, language development and social attitudes - are extremely difficult to recuperate in later years. Other than the all-important nutrition, health and psycho-social needs of children, certain developmental goals must be ensured for all children in this period, viz. the growth of positive, deep attachment relationships with family members, the development of the social and communication abilities of the child within the family or early childhood setting and the successful transition and integration of the child into wider societal institutions, such as public education.

Programmes that improve the home environment of the child and the child-rearing skills of families have, therefore, a highly beneficial impact on child development. Likewise, policies that improve the social environment such as the provision of adequate nutrition and health to infants and mothers or that guarantee basic social services and security to disadvantaged families are extremely helpful. The responsibility of States to provide such programmes is recognized in the Preamble to the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

The family as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.

2.2 **Family education:** Fathers and mothers have the primary responsibility for meeting the needs of young children. They are the child's first and most consistent teachers. Because of their crucial contribution to the child's development in the earliest years of life, close attention should be given by both statutory and voluntary bodies to developing programmes which strengthen their child rearing capacities. Such education should begin early in life, both in the home and school. The Jomtien Conference on *Education for All* recommended that life skills education should be a much more central feature of school curricula and be relevant to the needs of specific environments. In the parts of

the developing world where survival is a daily concern, many kindergartens and education centres consider it a central task to bring life skills education to both children and parents, that is, information and behaviours necessary for survival and development, such as, knowledge of reproductive health and family planning, information about primary health and child-rearing, the basic skills of food production, environmental conservation, etc.

2.3 *A gender perspective:* The UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy promises that ‘in expanding basic education, UNESCO will strengthen programmes reaching out as a first priority to girls and women, especially in rural areas, as they form the largest group of excluded people’. Women’s equality and full participation in family and society is a basic human right and their education is an essential foundation for economic and cultural development. When intelligently conceived, early childhood and family programming can be very significant in the lives of excluded women, giving them new knowledge (including knowledge of reproductive rights and health), a pride in their role as providers and teachers and a first step towards paid work and wider community responsibilities. Such programmes also underline the responsibilities of fathers as parents.

2.4 *The supportive role of the community:* Innovative programmes in early childhood and basic education from all over the world show the real importance of community support for education. While national economic and social goals are necessary aspects of education systems, the sustainability of high-quality education depends to a great extent on community demand and parental interest. Millions of children - more girls than boys - never go to school. In economies in which there is little correlation between basic education and subsequent employment, education systems must be extremely sensitive to the question of relevance and offer a diversity of programmes and educational management which respond to community concerns. Such measures help to focus education on essential knowledge or skills and to build up social consciousness, self-reliance and support for education within local communities.

2.5 *The early childhood period has particular importance in the preparation of children for education in the more formal sense:* Learning in the early childhood period is essentially informal and takes place, first of all, within the family circle. Children construct knowledge themselves through social interaction with adults and other children. They learn much through play and are highly motivated to understand, acquire and use knowledge. High levels of family attention, care and education obviously enhance the learning of young children. Many countries have developed, in addition, explicit educational programmes for young children from ages three to seven, as a major strategy for their subsequent integration into primary school. Countless studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of such programmes in enabling young children - in particular, those from culturally deprived backgrounds - to stay and succeed at school. In these programmes, whatever the excellence of the curriculum, both family support to the child and community demand for education are essential supportive factors.

2.6 *The specificity of early education:* Seen in educational terms, *early childhood programming, though a fundamental part of basic education, has distinctive qualities which differentiate it from primary education.* The planners and administrators of early education need to be more sensitive to the total well-being of children - their health, nutrition, general care and family environment as well as their learning - and hence, to the importance of inputs from other social partners. Curriculum planning is more flexible, offering a child-centred pedagogy which privileges autonomy, expression, social competence and the active discovery of meaning. Teachers in the early development setting are trained to work with parents as well as with children: it is a waste of valuable resources when early education centres do not support parents - fathers as well as mothers - to take on their role as the primary educators of their children.

When working with children, early educators, rather than being proactive teachers of content or skills, are attentive to the child's needs, psychological and social as well as cognitive. Through appropriate pedagogical method and the provision of an attractive learning environment, they will respond to the child's learning needs, keeping in mind the child's innate desire for active learning and the construction of meaning. They must have a wide understanding of several key areas of child development: e.g. of motor, perceptual and psychological processes, of language acquisition and social learning.

2.7 *Relatively poor countries can afford early development and education systems:* For many education ministries, this is the crux of the matter, for with education budgets already over-stretched and growing numbers of children entering primary school, the question arises whether funding and personnel can be found to begin the task of establishing early childhood systems. The answer given by many specialists in educational planning is not only affirmative but would also suggest that education systems cannot function to their best capacity unless investment in the potential users, that is young children and families, takes place. The arguments can be summarized as follows:

The catastrophic drop-out and failure rates in early primary school in many countries can only be stopped if a number of internal school reforms take place and, in addition, attention is given to community attitudes and to the improvement of child quality at the induction stage, especially in health, nutrition, social skills and preparation for education. Put simply, this means that schools must be prepared for children and children for schools.

Again, families and communities need preparation and education themselves if they are to support the education of their children. Paragraph 2.4 above outlined why community support to education is essential, especially in low employment economies.

Third, a great deal of early child development programming exists already in almost all countries. Its extension to all children, in particular to children from disadvantaged families or groups, does not necessarily require a great increase in budget. To achieve widespread coverage of parents and young children, governments do not need to invest in buildings, high technology or formal structures. The experience of many countries shows that inexpensive strategies can be highly effective, e.g. the creative use of existing structures, such as mass media (especially radio), schools and health clinics to educate parents and care-givers, and/or the mobilization and support of community groups and the voluntary sector (NGOs, women's groups, churches, private entrepreneurs, etc.). In funding terms, therefore, pilot programming in early development and education is relatively inexpensive, especially when communities are entrusted with programme management and existing public structures are used intelligently to disseminate life-skills information. Obviously, costs increase as national coverage grows. For relatively small sums, however, agencies and donor countries can assist ministries in developing countries to fund useful projects or parts of programmes, in particular, those that strengthen national capacity to manage complex programmes.

Fourth, expenditure on early childhood and family development can be shared among several partners. In fact, effective programming in this domain is broad and integrated. If taken in charge at national level by one particular ministry, early development and family education programming requires inputs and co-operation from other ministries and partners, e.g. from education ministries but also from health, social affairs and ministries of labour, the latter having responsibility for ensuring that employment and work practices do not discriminate against either children or parents, in particular, against women with the care of young children. Again, in many developing countries, the participation of non-governmental and community partners is essential if rural and disadvantaged urban populations are to be reached. In all circumstances,

the involvement of parents and communities in programming is fundamental, if the child is to receive active home support and if the cultural sensibilities and priorities of local communities are to be respected.

Investment in families and children has important cost benefit results. Apart from the avoidance of human suffering, the costs to the public exchequer of responding to the health and education needs of families with young children is far less than social welfare and health programmes which attempt to palliate chronic health and disability problems in later years. Early childhood and family education programmes are highly preventive in social terms and if properly conducted, help society to avoid the far greater costs of remedial education, delinquency and unemployment. Again, experience from all over the world shows that early childhood programmes are a rich source, not only of training in basic health, nutrition and child-rearing skills but also of income generation for women and the creation of credit schemes.

Lastly, the early childhood education period from three to seven years offers to ministries of education a ready field for innovation in pedagogical method and for decentralized management of education. As seen in 2.6 above, many aspects of the early development approach can be carried upward with profit into the first years of primary schooling which, in many countries, are characterized by high failure and drop-out rates. Again, the community nature of much early childhood programming offers the nucleus of a decentralized system which certain countries, both industrialized and developing, have been able to operationalize. The essential functions which the state maintains are: the enforcement of minimum norms and standards within a legislative framework, partial funding, curriculum development, training of trainers, monitoring and evaluation, further policy development.

III. THE EXPANSION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN THE DIFFERENT WORLD REGIONS

3.1 *Inadequate data collection but the trends are clear:* At the present time, there are no systems in place to gather data on the numbers of children and their parents involved in early childhood and family programmes. Hence, it is extremely difficult to estimate coverage accurately. Statistical research carried out by UNESCO shows, however, that trends in early childhood programming are clearly positive. On the other hand, it is plain that great disparities exist between different countries and between urban and rural areas. For further consultation, the following documents have been left at the disposal of the General Conference delegates:

Early Childhood Care and Education: basic indicators on young children, prepared in 1995 by UNESCO's Early Childhood and Family Education Unit;

The early childhood information package, *Eight is too late*, prepared in 1996 by the Consultative Group on Early Childhood for the Education for All Mid-Decade Review;

Toward a Fair Start for Children by Robert Myers. Published by UNESCO in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese and several other languages.

3.2 *The quantitative trend:* The *working document* prepared for the Education for All Mid-Decade Review, convened in Amman, Jordan in June 1996, noted that since 1990, reported enrolments in early childhood programmes in developing countries have grown by some 20 per cent, now reaching 56 million young children. This represents about one out of five children in the three to six age-group. Girls make up nearly half of the enrolment. In fact, in many developing countries today, the size of the early childhood development and education system has become such that decisions

need to be made about future government involvement and, as health and family education levels rise, whether to gradually incorporate early development programming into the public system.

The figures noted by UNESCO are corroborated by other international agencies, e.g. according to UNICEF sources, over 90 states worldwide have now formally recognized early child development as a major supportive strategy for basic education. World Bank sources inform us too that over \$500 million are now channelled explicitly by borrower countries to early childhood development and education programmes, while billions of dollars are devoted to children's programmes in general. Likewise, owing to country-generated demand, early childhood programming has recently been placed on the funding agenda of USAID.

3.3 *Qualitative developments*: Besides this quantitative expansion, new qualitative trends in early childhood are evident since 1990. There have been efforts to broaden the outreach and focus of pre-school programmes, which have tended to cater to children from the more privileged families in urban areas. Early childhood programmes increasingly go beyond the notion of simply preparing children for primary school, with more emphasis being given to provide a range of community-based services to young children in line with their basic needs. More attention is also being given to children at risk, who are reached more effectively through integrated programmes combining education, health and nutrition components. These are generally managed at the local level and rely on the active involvement of parents, communities, NGOs and other partners.

However, as we shall see in the review of regions below, great differences of both coverage and quality exist between countries. In short, the importance of early childhood development programming within the larger framework of human resources planning is diversely appreciated.

Regional survey

3.4 *Africa*: The provision of early childhood development services in Africa is constrained by lack of resources and trained personnel. In most countries, therefore, only a small percentage of children have access to pre-school services of any kind, the poorest neighbourhoods and rural areas generally remaining unserved.

Formal institutions play only a minor role in the provision of early childhood education - less than 10 per cent of the relevant age-group attending these institutions. With the exception of a few countries, the preference for the 'all-primary' option tends to prevent ministries of education from investing in early childhood development, although some examples of community-based education are extremely promising and offer ready opportunities for the inclusion of early development components.

Enrolment increases in private or voluntary non-formal programmes have been consistent over the last decade. The proportion of girls at this level is reasonably high, probably early childhood institutions cater primarily to an educated urban elite, where discrimination against girls is less pronounced. The importance of the private sector deserves special mention, as about 60 per cent of children go to private institutions.

There is an evident need for governments to become more involved, not only in the creation of early development services and inputs (curriculum development, local production of learning materials, training of personnel, etc.) but above all, for improvements in socio-economic conditions and family environments. For, though the arguments in favour of early education are largely accepted, there is still controversy over what the government's contribution and priorities in allocating budget resources should be. Thus, most governments, even if conscious of the huge rewards that the promotion of early childhood can offer in the long term, seem to have focused their attention on other priorities.

3.5 *Arab States*: Many Arab countries have made significant progress in providing education for younger children. Early childhood care and education is seen as an important factor for creating foundations that will increase the effective participation of children in primary school. However, early childhood education is essentially an urban phenomenon and its overall growth continues to be slow. Pre-school education is estimated to reach less than 10 per cent of the four to six age-group, with a few exceptions: Jordan (29 per cent), Lebanon (43 per cent) and Kuwait (nearly 100 per cent).

Social demand for schooling is extremely high, as Islam calls for education from the cradle to the grave. Many communities and families support both Koranic schools and private sector initiatives to ensure the education of their children. There is evidence too of a growing interest among some governments to promote modern early childhood education along with traditional Koranic teaching. For this purpose, curricula and programmes to upgrade the existing competences of traditional teachers are being prepared and training courses for new teachers established. This is viewed as low-cost intervention to promote early childhood within an established, community-supported educational endeavour.

The number of early childhood institutions and programmes varies considerably among countries of the region owing in large measure to their being considered within or outside the sphere of public or governmental responsibility. However, in general, governments have been encouraging communities and NGOs to develop early childhood services, and have taken responsibility for registration, the setting of educational standards and curricula, as well as monitoring activities and teacher training.

3.6 *Asia and the Pacific*: In general, over the last decades, early childhood development and education has received increased attention in the region, and is expanding to include rural and home-based programmes for young children whose parents cannot afford private formal pre-school. However, the situation of early childhood programmes is highly diverse, as in a number of countries, in the absence of government involvement and/or legislative provision, programme development has been haphazard. Programmes have tended to serve the better-off parts of society and neglect the poor, disadvantaged or those living in remote areas. Programmes tend also to have very specific aims rather than seeking to respond to the overall needs of the child.

Governments have hesitated to directly finance early childhood programmes, but have sought instead to encourage community action in this area. Few countries in the region, however, have been able to provide access to pre-school education for more than 40 per cent of young children. An approach being tested in countries where it is recognized that circumstances will not permit a sufficient expansion of early childhood education is to make use of the first months or year of primary schooling, which is, in effect, a 'kindergarten' programme intended to prepare the children for the normal primary-school curriculum they will encounter after.

High standards have been reached, however, in countries such as Japan, Australia and New Zealand where not only excellent national coverage exists but also, through economic development and income redistribution, the living standards of all families have been significantly raised. In a number of countries, efforts are being made to introduce family literacy programmes as a means of preparing children for school, as well as making parents more confident and effective in their parenting role.

Some disquieting tendencies can be noted, however, such as the lack of correlation in certain countries between rises in GNP and child well-being. It is regrettable when dynamic new economies leave behind children and families or throw aside the social safety nets built in the past.

3.7 ***Europe and North America:*** In Europe and North America, most countries have achieved or are moving towards comprehensive publicly funded services for children aged three to six years, and reach quasi-universal enrolment of children before the compulsory school-age. Generally, services for children of two years and above are more developed than for the younger age range. Many variations exist between countries, however, e.g. the balance between formal and informal provision; the existence of entitlement or not; the relative emphasis given to developmental, academic or custodial objectives; the level of quality achieved; the links between early education on the one hand and parent/community development on the other; the role of education ministries in the provision and supervision of services. Policy and practice are thus very diverse.

However, a number of developments in several countries concern issues that are of growing common importance, viz. a search for greater diversity and flexibility in services; encouraging more parental involvement; improved training for workers in childhood services; changes in starting ages and/or hours of compulsory schooling; an evolving relationship between schools and services providing care and recreation for children; the development of subsidies paid directly to parents to reduce their costs in using services.

Many countries, especially in eastern and central Europe, are going through a transitional period in their economic and social structures which obviously impacts on early childhood services. Despite the traditional excellence of their systems, governments in eastern and central Europe, have been obliged to cut back on provision, although recently, signs of redressment are visible in some countries. Economic difficulties, privatization and budgetary austerity brought about a drop in the supply and quality of early childhood services and in the enrolment of children in those programmes. Furthermore, as governments have loosened their hold on the socialization process of young children and de-institutionalization takes places at rapid pace, families are being encouraged to replace both state and institution as the primary source of the young child's development, as well as to provide a nurturing and stable environment.

3.8 ***Latin America and the Caribbean:*** The rapid expansion of early childhood development and education over the past decade has been one of the most important changes in the education sector of the countries of the region. There has been phenomenal growth in attendance rates, particularly among the five to six year-old population, and a significant expansion of the private sector catering to public demand. The effort is now beginning to reach in significant ways into so-called 'disadvantaged' populations. When one considers that this rapid expansion has occurred during a time of extraordinary pressure on the economic resources for most Latin American governments, it is a particularly significant accomplishment.

Governmental perceptions of early childhood intervention in Latin America are also, in general, broad and developmental. Early childhood programming is seen as not only preparing children for primary school, but also as a means of meeting the integrated developmental needs of young children. Attention is given consistently and significantly to using these programmes to educate parents and foster links between early childhood and primary education. All this reflects growing political recognition of the importance of early development in the larger framework of human resources development. The development and education of young children has now reached a scale where, in general, it is fully incorporated into public discussions of education.

Despite these encouraging signs, some weaknesses appear. Although headway has been made in educating families and children in rural areas through non-formal programmes, the availability of early childhood development and education has so far favoured middle and upper classes in urban areas. More investment in bringing early development programmes to poorer social groups is an

obvious need, all the more so as such programmes radically improve school enrolment and participation rates in those districts which benefit from them.

Likewise, in coming years, the question of expansion will need to be handled with great attention, for with size there is a tendency for quality to decrease. Decisions will need to be made, in particular, to strengthen the capacity of ministries to regulate and monitor activities within the early childhood care and education field, to provide continuing and formal training to educators and administrators, to develop and distribute effectively appropriate educational materials.

IV. APPROACHES TO PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

4.1 *Pre-school: a western model:* Today, in education ministries in many countries, the school or pre-school model is no longer the only reference for the creation of early childhood services - a benefit for countries where pre-schools had become fee-paying, academic institutions which drew away public educational investment from programmes catering for the majority of the population. Yet, when access is provided to all children and its programmes properly conducted, the public pre-school or kindergarten can be an excellent model. However, if the state has not sufficient funds to provide a national pre-school system, low-cost programmes would need to be developed based on alternative strategies and approaches.

4.2 *A wealth of effective approaches:* As Myers (Routledge/UNESCO, 1993) has pointed out, a broad range of approaches are available to governments or organizations planning programmes for young children and their families. To meet the wide range of situation and demand, various strategies - often complementary in nature - can be put into effect to attain early childhood development goals. Among these strategies are:

Strengthen national awareness and demand: The potential audience includes policy-makers, politicians, parents, communities and the general public.

Develop national child care and family policies: At ministerial level, coherent family policy development is marked by co-operation between, health, social welfare, family affairs and education. Attention should also be given to foreseeing the possible impacts of workplace practices or of social and economic policies on families with young children.

Develop national supportive legal and regulatory frameworks: e.g. progressive establishment of accessible child care and early education services, improvements in access to and quality of obligatory education; fiscal benefits for parents with young children, flexibility of working hours for both parents, etc. or other entitlements which promote indirectly the well-being of families and children.

Deliver services directly to children: Objectives should be broad in order to meet the needs of children in diverse settings, e.g. child survival, child care, socialization, overall child development, 'preparation' for school, and rehabilitation programmes. While such programmes can be offered in centres designed specifically as pre-schools or child care centres, they are also found in non-formal settings: homes, community centres, the market place or other agreed setting.

Train teachers or personnel adequately to conduct early childhood activities: that is, to go beyond child psychology, teaching skills and mastery of content towards the skills of establishing rapport with children and parents, of nurturing active learning skills, of designing carefully each session so that children can learn, of making developmental inputs at the appropriate moment, of taking a broad view of child development.

Support and educate care-givers and families: The broad objective is to create an awareness of the importance of the family's role (fathers as well as mothers) in supporting children's growth and development and, if necessary, to change parental attitudes, beliefs and practices.

Promote community development and cohesion: Contemporary analyses concur that environment and context - both at the family and community level - have a profound impact on children's lives.

4.3 **Conclusion:** The variety of the approaches above demonstrates that the field of early development is intersectoral by nature. This should not prevent ministries of education from taking a lead in initiating action in the field as high quality educational inputs are of great help to young children from the age of three. Yet, a danger to avoid is to allow early development programmes to become, on the one hand, custodial or academic, and, on the other, instruments of social exclusion.

V. UNESCO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY EDUCATION PROGRAMME

5.1 **Present Activities:** UNESCO is active in the early childhood and family education field in:

Advocacy: UNESCO promotes whenever possible a basic affirmation of the Jomtien *World Conference for Education for All*, viz. that learning begins at birth and that early development and family education are basic strategies for the development of human resources and the achievement of education for all.

Training: In 1996, UNESCO, with the aid of the Government of the Netherlands, launched a first regional training centre - the Averroës European Training Centre for Early Child Development and the Family - which aims to train policy-makers and managerial staff from Europe and developing countries in various aspects of child/family programming. If funding is available, subregional training centres will be supported or established in French-speaking Africa and Asia during the next biennium. In addition, UNESCO has been deeply involved in the *More and Better* training initiative with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, UNICEF and Save the Children in East and Southern Africa; and in 1996, published, with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, a training pack, *Enhancing the Skills of Early Childhood Trainers*.

Programming: For the past years, UNESCO, through its field offices and the Participation Programme, has supported 20 or so other programmes all over the world. Its Early Education Unit has been deeply involved in programming in West Africa with FICEMEA, e.g. establishing the Clos des Enfants initiative in Mali. In addition, it has been actively supporting the development of early childhood professional networks to strengthen national capacity, such as the *Early Childhood Development Network for Africa* and the *Réseau africain francophone prime enfance*.

Information dissemination: UNESCO has been nominated a lead agency in the *Inter-Agency Early Childhood Communications Strategy*, for the dissemination of information on research results, key themes and issues, case-studies, indicators and statistics, international initiatives and progress achieved in the field of early development and education. It has collected and published over the last years several directories on early childhood institutions and resources in the various world regions and in some cases, national inventories. UNESCO participates in interactive early childhood activities on the Internet as a member of the Children's House initiative. Two addresses outlining the work of UNESCO in the early education field are:

at Children's House < <http://childhouse.uio.no/ycfwpage/index.htm> > and

at the UNESCO Education Server < <http://unesco.unep.edu/educprog/index.html> >.

Obviously, additional funding from donor countries interested in promoting human development and early education programmes would enable UNESCO to strengthen its role in this rapidly growing field and to offer technical assistance to governments in designing, developing, implementing and monitoring integrated early childhood programmes.

VI. ORIENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although each country will have its own agendas and priorities, the strategies for the further development of early childhood and family education need to be guided by the following orientations and recommendations:

6.1 *International level*

1. That the international agencies engaged in human resources development should give appropriate attention to early development and education and should co-operate closely with each other and with ministries of education, health, social welfare and/or family, who bear, in fact, major responsibility for this field;
2. That governmental planning and finance departments, international development banks, bilateral co-operation and funding agencies should channel adequate funds to family policy and early development as key strategies in building human resources;
3. That renewed attention should be given by the international community to international standards of child welfare and education, defined, in particular, by the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*;
4. That UNESCO should continue and develop its early childhood and family education programme as an integral part of education for all strategy, in co-operation with its inter-agency partners, such as UNICEF, UNFPA, the Early Childhood Consultative Group, etc. and its National Commissions all over the world. In particular, information development and the dissemination of research results and best practice should be a feature of its international work.

6.2 *Regional and subregional levels*

1. That co-operation in the early childhood field should be undertaken by Member States at regional or subregional level and, whenever it is beneficial, that efforts should be made to adopt common standards, to share legislative initiatives and policy formulation, to engage co-operatively in materials production and promote regional information flows;
2. That UNESCO should reinforce regional programming by fostering policy planning meetings and training at regional level, bringing together high-level policy-makers and other professionals in the educational and social development fields. Along the lines of the Averroës European Training Centre, it should encourage the creation or development of similar *Regional Co-operating Training Centres* in other regions. In addition, it should reinforce its activities in support of professional networks and the teaching of early childhood and family education disciplines at university and teacher-training levels.

6.3 *National level*

1. That energetic leadership be given in every country by ministries of education towards establishing or strengthening high quality, integrated early childhood and family programming, at least at pilot programme level. As part of this initiative, ministries of education will build capacity for policy development, planning, research and monitoring of both early childhood and family education;
2. That parent education and information should be promoted actively through adult education, especially women's education and the media, through health clinics and home-school links or, as in the Integrated Child Development Services in India, through linking parent education to the provision of services;
3. That a national effort should be made to develop a rich cultural environment for children. Action in this area would include the recording and promotion of indigenous stories and games; promoting locally produced play materials; the production of national training materials, as well as preparing materials for non-literate communities;
4. That innovative and flexible measures should be taken to reach the most disadvantaged groups and, in particular, children with special needs and families and young children at risk. Early detection and treatment can save not only public funds but above all, the needless suffering of young children and parents;
5. That in *initial reports* submitted by individual countries to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, special attention should be given to outlining early childhood and family policy initiatives. Children have fundamental claims on the modern state such as, their rights to adequate nutrition, health, clothing and housing; to mass media which disseminate information of social and cultural benefit; to civil participation - including in families and schools - in all matters affecting the child; to an education which prepares the child for a responsible life in a free society; to leisure and self-constructing activities, etc. The Convention on the Rights of the Child also underlines the primary right of parents in matters pertaining to the upbringing of children and their right to assistance from the state in undertaking this responsibility.