



Task Force 6  
**Social Cohesion and the Future  
of Welfare Systems**

**Policy brief**

# HOW DO WE KNOW GOALS ARE ACHIEVED?

## INTEGRATED AND MULTISECTORAL EARLY CHILDHOOD MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS AS KEY TO DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE AND RESILIENT SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEMS

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**Mathias Urban** Dublin City University, Early Childhood Research Centre (ECRC) (lead author)  
**Alejandro Acosta** Fundación Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano (CINDE)  
**P K Anand** Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries  
**Alejandra Cardini** Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC)  
**Claudia Costín** Centro de Excelência e Inovação em Políticas Educacionais (CEIPE-FGV)  
**Rita Flórez-Romero** Universidad Nacional de Colombia  
**Jennifer Guevara** Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC) and Dublin City University  
**Lynette Okengo** African Early Childhood Network (AfECN)  
**Dwi Priyono** South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization / Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care, Education and Parenting (SEAMEO CECCEP)  
**Emily Vargas-Barón** Institute of Reconstruction and International Security through Education (RISE)

T20 NATIONAL COORDINATOR AND CHAIR

**ISPI**

T20 CO-CHAIR



T20 SUMMIT CO-CHAIR



**Università  
Bocconi**  
MILANO





# ABSTRACT

This proposed policy brief argues the case and provides examples and policy recommendations for comprehensive, multisectoral and integrated data, monitoring and evaluation systems to enable the implementation of multisectoral policies for early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood education and care (ECEC) to support young children, their families and communities.<sup>1</sup>

There is evidence that countries with more advanced information systems are better prepared to meet the challenges of uncertainty arising from local and global crises (Amirthalingam et al. 2012; Anderson et al. 2017; Rincón-Rodríguez et al. 2014; UNESCO-IIEP 2010). Building on their experiences, this policy brief maps out concrete policy recommendations whose national implementation can be promoted by G20 and indicates their relevance for welfare policies in areas beyond early childhood.



# CHALLENGE

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has put social welfare systems under considerable stress. In all affected countries, including all G20 members, the pandemic has revealed serious structural, qualitative, and functional challenges for social institutions necessary to maintain the integrity of countries' economies as well as to ensure fundamental social cohesion and good child development amidst crisis and disruption. For example, the sudden disappearance of reliable and secure childcare has made work difficult, if not impossible, for many families, especially women in precarious economic circumstances.

On a macro-economic scale, the disruption of early childhood services has impacted countries' ability to respond to immediate crisis. It has raised questions about the ability to 're-open' economies following lockdowns, not least due to often unsustainable models of delivery of services and over reliance on 'the market' and non-state actors. Consequently, the pandemic has proven early childhood services to be part of the critical and essential infrastructure of society. It also has revealed a critical lack of data, evaluation and monitoring systems, and, more specifically, countries' inability to integrate data across multiple sectors relevant to early childhood development, education and care.

Since 1976, at least 76 countries and one territory in both the global south and global north have adopted multisectoral ECD/ECEC policy frameworks. An important global context for this emergent 'systemic turn' is the inclusion of ECD/ECEC in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework under SDG4 (education), Target 4.2.: *By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.* The Group of 20 and the T20 have adopted a focus on early childhood development, education and care systems, beginning with the launch of the *G20 Initiative for Early Childhood Development* at the 2018 summit hosted by Argentina (G20, 2018), and continued in subsequent summits in 2019 (Japan) and 2020 (Saudi Arabia). Policy analysis and recommendations have centred around questions of

- systemic, whole-of-government approaches ('competent systems') (Urban et al. 2018)
- early childhood development, education and care as an enabler for achieving the entire SDG framework (Urban et al. 2020a; Urban et al. 2019)
- scalability of community-based, locally and culturally and linguistically appropriate early childhood programmes (Urban et al. 2020b)
- Increasingly, these elements are recognized as key to ECD/ECEC policy and programme effectiveness and sustainability (Think20 2019; 2020).

Resilient early childhood programmes require systemic approaches and enabling environments. Unfortunately, the lack of integrated, relevant, available and disaggregated early childhood codification systems and data across populations, regions, and government sectors and levels undermines the responsiveness, breadth, effectiveness and scope of sustain-



able early childhood programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the problems, the fragmentation, and the lack of ECD/ECEC data. In countries with fragmented or non-existent data, the responses of monitoring and evaluation systems to crises and disruptions are slow, limited and often ineffective. Without multisectoral and/or integrated systems, due to lack of access, marginalised young children and their families may not be adequately reached and well supported, even when resources may be available.

ECD/ECEC data, monitoring and evaluation systems directly contribute to establishing and maintaining effective and resilient social welfare systems – but only if they are well-designed, appropriately resourced, and competently governed. Sectoral systems of monitoring and evaluation rarely provide adequate overviews of the holistic needs of children and families. For instance, education and health data may be quite strong but data dealing with children's rights and protection are often lacking. Sectoral systems make it difficult, if not impossible, to bring all the data together in a common database to prepare analyses for purposes of programme planning, reporting and budgeting.



# PROPOSAL

In response to the challenge of insufficient and poorly integrated data we recommend the **design, development, and implementation of national comprehensive and integrated multisectoral ECD/ECEC data, monitoring and evaluation systems**. These systems, linked to multi-sectoral early childhood policies, are crucial to reporting on and ensuring the accountability and sustainability of sectoral, multisectoral and integrated services for ECD/ECEC that support young children, their families and communities.

The proposal aims at encouraging the establishment of comprehensive Management Information Systems (MIS) in all countries, guided by a shared framework that is adapted to meet the special needs and institutional approaches of each country. Such an approach will make it possible to overcome the present reality where, in most countries, MIS for data collection, monitoring and evaluation remain sectoral and fragmented, with different, incomplete, and often incompatible systems in place for Education, Health, and Protection. Each of these domains already has high internal levels of complexity, making the task of multisectoral coordination even more challenging.

It is important to note that the terms *integrated* and *multisectoral*, while connected, refer to distinct underlying concepts: data, monitoring and evaluation systems must be *multisectoral* in order to create a comprehensive picture of the reality of young children, their families and communities, drawing on multiple sources of information with the aim of making them compatible. At the same time, the three constituting elements of the system – i.e. *data collection*, *monitoring* and *evaluation* – will have to be *integrated* in order to enable meaningful interpretation, informed judgement, and democratic decision making of all stakeholders at all systems levels, including those at the centre of ECD/ECEC programmes: children, families, communities.

## **ELEMENTS OF INTEGRATED DATA, MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS**

While building integrated and multisectoral information management systems is, in many respects, a technical task, it will only be successful if it rests on what we suggest to all stakeholders as a necessary shared orientation:

**Every child's right to fulfil her or his full potential, grounded in holistic development, understood as a common good and shared responsibility**

Establishing this rights-based and common good approach as compass while roadmaps are developed towards more effective early childhood systems is crucial. The process is complex and not free from potentially conflicting interests as UNESCO points out with reference to Education Management Information Systems (EMIS):



In designing EMIS, therefore, it is important to consider the needs of all the groups that will rely on the information, including central ministry planners, officials of other national ministries (for example, finance), regional and district education officials, donors, and NGOs. *Ultimately, for EMIS to be effective as a planning and management tool, national needs, not donor requirements, must be the primary force behind the development of the system.* (UNESCO-IIEP 2010, p. 156)

Moving from any one sector (education, health, protection) to multiple ones exponentiates the problem. This must be proactively addressed and requires strengthening of government responsibility and effective international coordination.<sup>2</sup>

## **CROSS-SECTORAL, MULTILEVEL, SPECIFIC AND COMPARABLE**

Comprehensive MIS should be cross-sectoral, but also multilevel, considering the national and the subnational levels in the data collection process. The type of data collected should be oriented first and foremost to ensure the realisation of ALL children's rights – that is the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. Data should also help monitor progress towards international goals, such as SDGs. This requires at least part of the data to be comparable across countries.<sup>3</sup>

**MIS should include a wide range of key variables, which include but are not limited to:**

- Children's births (live births, low birthweight, pre-natal services, maternal mortality);
- Children's living conditions;
- Children's right to health (access to health services, child mortality rate, low height, obesity, malnutrition, compulsory vaccination);
- Children's right to social protection (access to social services, children under poverty line, national identity card, beneficiary of social protection programmes, grassroots organisations working in ECEC);
- Children's right to well-being and holistic development (including access to ECD services);
- Children's right to education and care (access to ECEC services; characteristics of ECEC settings: quantity, location, infrastructure, resources, type of provision considering owner, provider, funder, regulatory agent<sup>4</sup>, age range covered; unsatisfied demand of ECEC services; qualifications and continuous professional development of staff);
- Systems-level information including disaggregated information on socio-economic and socio-cultural diversity of children, communities AND the early childhood workforce;
- Systems-level information about children's and families' transitions into and through the early childhood system including parental leave policies and transition to the compulsory school system.

In addition, each national system, according to its characteristics, internal diversity and stratification should consider adding other key data to support monitoring and evaluation of their system.



## **GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY - HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL COORDINATION**

Governments should play a central role in building participation in developing and securing a consensus of all stakeholders at every level regarding a national vision for ECD/ECEC. In ECD/ECEC addressing all elements and levels of the system is also crucial for achieving success. This refers not only to the 'horizontal' separation of different government departments ('silos') and other actors including civil society organisations but also to a lack of bottom-up and top-down vertical coordination. Early childhood programmes and services are necessarily delivered at the local level to young children, families and communities. In many countries, responsibility for the governance of the system is distributed between levels of government – local, regional/territorial, national – with decisions about overall direction and purpose often resting at a different level to responsibilities for resourcing, regulation, and service provision. The stratification of the system requires particular attention in federal states, many of which are members of the G20. It is relevant too, to some extent, for supra-national entities like the European Union with distributed competences between Union and member states. In consequence, effective data, monitoring and evaluation systems require 'vertical' as much as 'horizontal' coordination and collaboration.

Building on this vision, governments should ensure the following elements of a multisectoral management information system are provided:

- Formal signed intersectoral and interlevel agreements to identify, select, collect and aggregate relevant data into a common ECD/ECEC database as well as to jointly analyse, interpret and report on these datasets;
- Stock-taking of existing and potential indicators at national, regional/territorial, and local levels pertaining to ECD/ECEC that include all relevant dimensions to ensure the realisation of young children's rights, beginning with, but not limited to: education, care, development, health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene, protection, rights, and well-being, infrastructure, law and general urban and regional planning;
- Protocol to identify missing and potentially relevant information with stakeholders at all levels (combined top-down and ground-up approach to information system design);
- Templates for each indicator;
- Plans for the aggregation, integration and nominalisation of the different data sets / indicators, including linkages to key international and national socio-demographic household surveys;
- Adoption of additional indicators or improved measurements (when information is not complete) on a phased basis;
- Systems and schedules for data collection, preparation, analysis, interpretation, reporting, dissemination and use, including interpretation with stakeholders at local, regional/territorial and national level;
- Quarterly and annual use of ECD/ECEC data sets and interpretations for national, regional/territorial and local ECD/ECEC system assessment and supervision;



- Quarterly and annual system for reporting, programme follow up, and programme- and system-wide ECD/ECEC planning and budgeting;
- Collaborations with high priority national, regional/territorial and local monitoring and evaluation projects, and evaluation research projects that provide key elements for the continuous planning, improvement and expansion of ECD/ECEC systems and services.

Every effort should be made to encourage more countries in both the Global South and Global North to develop multisectoral ECD/ECEC data, monitoring and evaluation systems. Some recent examples include the initiative by the European Union to introduce a universal **Child Guarantee**,<sup>5</sup> Colombia's integrated early childhood policy framework **De Cero a Siempre**,<sup>6</sup> India's **Integrated Child Development Scheme**<sup>7</sup> and first moves towards data integration in Indonesia's **PAUD** system.<sup>8</sup>



**TAB. 1 - ECD/ECEC POLICY FRAMEWORKS**

Policy Framework		Focus	Relevance
<b>EU Child Guarantee</b>	European Union	To prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing the access of children in need – persons under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion – to a set of key services including early childhood education and care	Interdepartmental policy orientation and coordination at the level of a supra-national body
<b>De Cero a Siempre</b>	Colombia	Rights-based, interdisciplinary and inter-professional early childhood policy framework in highly diverse and unequal country context	Integrated ECD/ECEC policy framework with implementation mechanisms at national, regional (territorial) and local (municipal level)
<b>Integrated Child Development Scheme</b>	India	Large-scale programme (>85 million beneficiaries), targeting children, adolescent girls, pre- and post-natal women	Scale of programme and level of integration of ECD/ECEC and parental support services. Use of IT
<b>PAUD (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini / Early Childhood Education and Development [ECED])</b>	Indonesia	Highly ambitious multi-sectoral policy agenda linked to strategic national development	Evidence of importance of integrated data, monitoring and evaluation systems

While different in scope and approach (the EU focuses on ‘vulnerable children’ in all EU countries; Colombia has chosen a more ambitious universal approach for all young children; India’s programme reaches beyond young children to adolescent girls and pre- and post-natal supports for women; Indonesia has begun to establish interdepartmental coordination) the success of these initiatives rests on their ability to gather and share information and knowledge across multiple government departments and different layers of government (national, regional, local), and with many actors. As we have argued before, despite undeniable and significant differences between countries and regions there is also an alignment of critical life situations of young children across global south and north.



## **RELEVANCE TO THE G20**

Transnational structures are needed to learn from experiences in establishing multisectoral monitoring and evaluation systems in real time, while encouraging exchanges between Global South and North countries. While international agencies including UNICEF and UNESCO, have an important role to play in achieving SDG 4.2, broader policy initiatives are needed that can only be realised by governments with responsibility for the policy areas and departments involved in systems development. With a remit reaching across all policy areas, G20 is ideally placed to support its members in creating the conditions that enable integration and multisectoralism to flourish both for their members and through their international initiatives to promote multilateralism (including aid and sustainable development).

The G20 plays a central role in coordinating international collaborative responses to global challenges and crises. Being a global forum, it reaches beyond its membership and has a track record of setting global agendas with a focus on reciprocity, collaboration, and multi-lateral policy approaches. G20 has established itself as a global forum for the promotion of evidence-based policymaking and has underlined the importance of systemic approaches to ECD/ECEC over three consecutive G20 cycles. With an ambitious early childhood agenda, G20 provides leadership in times of crisis.

Since 2018, T20 has developed and adopted a coherent position that emphasises the importance of systemic approaches to building effective ECD/ECEC systems. At the level of service provision, such approaches require active coordination across different sectors and professions, with further implications for professional preparation and continuous professional development.

In order to be effective, service provision for young children, their families and communities must be oriented, supported, and mirrored by multisectoral approaches to policymaking and governance. Referring to previously adopted T20 policy recommendations, G20 has emphasised 'government responsibility' for creating the conditions for multisectoral coordination to thrive, and it has emphasised the need for 'whole-of-government' approaches. The 'landscape' of ECD/ECEC provision is highly diverse in most countries, with various contributions from civil society, public, and private actors. However, the members of the G20 have taken a significant step by acknowledging that governments must take more active roles in developing effective early childhood systems.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Note on terminology: Several terms are used to describe programmes aimed at the development, education and care of young children from birth. They include Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), or variations thereof (e.g. ECCE, ECCD etc.). These denominations are grounded in different disciplinary backgrounds and early childhood traditions. Some countries and bodies including the European Union (EU) (Council of the European Union, 2019) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (OECD, 2001, 2006, 2010) have adopted ECEC to refer to a successful shift towards the inseparability of care and education, but in doing so continue to exclude crucial aspects of holistic development from the picture: i.e. health, nutrition, well-being, children's rights. Recently some scholars and international organisations have begun to promote ECD as an overarching term, intending to reflect the multidimensionality of needs in the lives of young children. It is important to note that none of these terms and acronyms are neutral. On the contrary, they are highly contested, subject to interpretation and often conflicting interests, and therefore inevitably political. We support the development of shared understandings but caution that the uncritical use of terminology carries the risk of epistemological, practical, and political hegemony: instead of the fulfilment of each child's potential in diversity, Development might be understood as reference to much criticised developmentalism (a reference to Western-centric universalism imposed on majority world communities). Education, instead of societies' purposeful engagement with young children in order to realise the right to fulfilment of their full potential in the here and now, might be narrowly interpreted as technology of instruction and preparation for predefined external needs and roles: school readiness, labour market, future skills, purposes of macro-economic achievement or political control. While beyond the scope of this Policy Brief, we emphasise that the creation and support of forums for critical debate and democratic engagement are fundamental to the long-term success of early childhood initiatives regardless of their scale. Here, too, G20 has a responsibility to systematically connect grassroots with centralised approaches to building effective early childhood systems (Urban et al., 2020b).

<sup>2</sup> In 2019, T20 in its final Communiqué adopted the following recommendation to G20: 'Strengthen G20 commitment to advancing access to locally and culturally appropriate quality Early Childhood Development (ECD)/Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for all children from birth and build international consensus on government responsibility for a "whole systems" approach to ECD/ECEC policies.' (Think20 2019, p. 6). The recommendations in this Policy Brief build on this consensus with a specific focus on data, monitoring and evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> The comparability of early childhood data is, in some sectors, problematic. Data such as access to education and care services is often measured differently in each country, due to the fragmented nature of ECEC systems.

<sup>4</sup> As discussed in previous policy briefs (Urban et al. 2020) other key aspects related to quality of provision (such as programme structure, curriculum and delivery) should be regulated by



an integrated policy framework which provides a common ground for all services targeting young children and their families.

<sup>5</sup>The objective of the European Child Guarantee is to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing the access of children in need – persons under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion – to a set of key services:

- early childhood education and care
- education
- healthcare
- nutrition
- housing

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10024#navItem-1>

Confirming the strategic importance of integrated and multisectoral approaches the EU Commission states “the Member States that are most successful in ensuring efficient access to services for children in vulnerable situations have a comprehensive range of policies in place. These successful Member States also have a strategic and well-coordinated approach. The coherence of social, education, health, nutrition and housing policies at various governance levels needs to be assessed and improved, with special attention paid to their relevance for supporting children in need. Therefore, it seems pertinent for Member States to have national Child Guarantee Coordinators, with a mandate and resources to effectively coordinate and monitor the implementation of the European Child Guarantee”. (European Commission 2021)

<sup>6</sup>The construction of public policy for early childhood in Colombia De Cero a Siempre implied an epistemological and conceptual challenge, and also for the generation and management of public policies. The consideration of girls and boys from their early childhood as subjects of rights, in exercise of them, only in a different way than young people and adults, with other languages, which does not imply that they do not exercise them, but rather that they do so. They do it in a different way than ours. And that therefore they are unique and unrepeatable beings that grow and develop within the framework of very diverse families and influenced by the territory and culture that surrounds them. Consequently, supporting its integral development cannot be done from the understanding that a few disciplines such as health and psychology have of it, but rather transcends them, requiring an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach that, with the challenges that it has generated, has contributed to developments in multiple disciplines from those mentioned to philosophy and ethics, through pedagogy, sociology, economics, law, political science, to architecture to name a few.

With this foundation, another challenge has been the translation of knowledge into actions to guarantee comprehensive care for girls and boys, the only way to contribute to the enhancement of their development. The Intersectoral Commission for Early Childhood was then created, made up of more than 14 ministries and institutions to agree on the basic



components of the policy, the guidelines, schedule their implementation, and advance follow-up. This novel way of executing policies in a coordinated manner, in addition to facing the traditional inertia of carrying them out, had another important challenge, be focus not on services but in the direct realizations in the children. The methodological strategy to carry it out was to build a Comprehensive Care Route (Ruta Integral de Atención, RIA), which serves as a framework for all the sectors involved.

And when it was carried out, another situation appeared, Colombia is a very culturally and geographically diverse country and the and the difficulties faced by families, very different, some derived from the armed conflict, others from the presence of drugs, illegal mining, displacement, ethnic discrimination for which the policy could not be prescriptive and homogenizing. This situation that was addressed by positioning the differential approach as a basic criterion for the design and implementation of the policy, understanding it as making visible the forms of discrimination historically suffered by people for reasons of income, ethnicity, location, disability, and / or sexual orientation That is, it recognizes the multiple identities that derive from social relations, the history and the operation of power structures, which must be taken into account in the search for equity and the enjoyment of rights. For which, the differential approach also celebrates diversity due to the wealth of options and processes that it implies. And as such, the differential approach has been basic in the operation of De Cero a Siempre. <http://www.deceroasiempre.gov.co/Paginas/deCeroaSiempre.aspx>

<sup>7</sup>The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in India covers over 85 million beneficiaries, including not only children, but also adolescent girls, pre- and post-natal women supports for women. The services rendered are the complete bouquet of pre-school and non-formal education, supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check, referral services, and nutrition & health education, in synergy with Nutrition Mission 2.0. In India, extensive use of digital technology including ICT is the fulcrum of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the vast child development initiatives across the country. For unique identification of a child, details of parents are taken at birth, augmented by child's biometrics at age 5 and revalidated at the age of 14. Parent's bank accounts for financial inclusion, mobile telephony and optic fibre network to rural self-government bodies supplement childcare ecosystem.

The New Education Policy covering ECD/ECEC is aligned with the 2030 agenda. ECD/ECEC aims to attain optimal outcomes for all round development- physical, motor, cognitive, socio-emotional-ethical, cultural/artistic, and of communication skills, early language, literacy, and numeracy for all in an equitable, affordable and inclusive manner.

<sup>8</sup>The Indonesian government has identified Early Childhood Development as one of the critical issues that need to be addressed. By 2045, Indonesia as a nation aims at having a 'golden generation' that can 'bring the nation into glory'. Currently, ECD/ECEC falls under the auspices of several ministries: Health, Education, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Social Services. No single government department is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of ECD/ECEC.



Increased recognition of stunting as a central problem has begun to trigger more systematic attempts at interdepartmental coordination. The President of Republic of Indonesia has introduced regulation to ensure that the ministries who share the responsibilities in delivering ECD/ECEC programmes are working together.

The Presidential Staff Office of the Republic of Indonesia together with the National Family Planning Coordinating Agency has been assigned by the President of Indonesia as the coordinator to monitor and evaluate the programmes run by the related ministries on early childhood development, especially in relation to stunting: a common problem that needs to be addressed by all ministries with responsibility for children's development.

In addition, all programmes conducted by the ministries must consult with Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning to get approval. In terms of the planning system, the Indonesian government has introduced guidance to ministries for both Long Term- and Short Term Development Planning. Coordinating the ministries and orienting their programmes towards common goals requires strong commitment and leadership. The policy changes point to the need for an efficient multisectoral monitoring and evaluation system. (<https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2019/11/paud-dan-pendidikan-keluarga-penting-dalam-mendukung-perkembangan-anak> )



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Mathias Urban** Dublin City University, Early Childhood Research Centre (ECRC), Dublin (Ireland)

Ph.D., is Desmond Chair of Early Childhood Education, and Director of the Early Childhood Research Centre at Dublin City University. He works on questions of integrated early childhood systems, diversity and equality, social justice, and professionalism in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Mathias has over 20 years' experience in designing and leading international collaborative research projects. He has a well-established track record of publications in international peer-reviewed journals, books and book chapters. Dr Urban is the lead author of T20 policy briefs on early childhood systems in 2018 (Argentina), 2019 (Japan), 2020 (Saudi Arabia) and 2021, (Italy).



**Alejandro Acosta** Fundación Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano (CINDE), Antioquia (Colombia)

Economist, sociologist, doctor of education. He coordinates the initial education group of the Mission of Educators and Citizen Wisdom of Bogotá, Colombia. He is an independent consultant, Professor Emeritus, and Senior Advisor to CINDE in Colombia. He was a part-time Professor and now a guest at the University of Manizales. He is a member of the boards of the International Network on Peace Building with young children, INPB and the Early Childhood on Peace Building, ECPC.



**P K Anand** Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries, New Delhi (India)

Visiting Fellow in Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a think-tank, where he is handling SDGs including issues related to early childcare, education, nutrition, water & sanitation, climate change etc. He holds rich experience of over three decades of service in the Central Government and the State Government of Rajasthan. In the Centre, among other areas he was the lead for SDGs, Plan Appraisal and Development Monitoring & Evaluation (DMEQ) in NITI Aayog the Government of India think-tank. In the State he handled elementary education, agriculture marketing and rural development.



**Alejandra Cardini** Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC), Buenos Aires (Argentina)

Ph.D., is Director of Education CIPPEC. She is a Professor of education policy at Austral University and San Andres University. She has led education discussions in the Think20 as Task Force Co-chair since 2018. She worked as a researcher and advisor for Argentina's National Ministry of Education. She is a teacher, a sociologist, she holds an MA in Education Policy and a Ph.D. in Education from University of San Andres – Institute of Education, University of London.



**Claudia Costín** Centro de Excelência e Inovação em Políticas Educacionais (CEIPE-FGV), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Founder-Director of CEIPE, a think-and-do tank within Getulio Vargas Foundation, a leading private University in Brazil where she is a Professor. She was in the recent past a Visiting Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Senior Director for Global Education in the World Bank. She was Secretary of Education of Rio de Janeiro and Federal Minister for Public Administration and State Reform, Brazil. In 2018 she joined the Global Commission for the Future of Work at the International Labor Organization (ILO) and more recently, November 2020, she joined both Governing Boards from UNESCO UIL – Institute for Lifelong Learning and Qatar Foundation.



**Rita Flórez-Romero** Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá

Professor at the Masters of Education programme, line of inquiry 'Communication and Education', at the Faculty of Human Sciences at the Nacional University of Colombia. She is co-director of the research group 'Cognition and Language in Childhood' and adviser on language to the National Ministry of Education. Over more than 30 years her personal, academic, and research interest has revolved around processes of oral and written language development, and their relationship with other spheres of human development over the life cycle. Professor Flórez-Romero has published extensively on these topics as well as on matters related to pedagogy and didactics of oral and written language in the context of inclusive education



**Jennifer Guevara** Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC), Buenos Aires (Argentina), and Dublin City University (Ireland)

Ph.D., is Rising Talent Postdoctoral Fellow at the Early Childhood Research Centre at Dublin City University and Associate Researcher of the Education Programme at the Centre for the Implementation of Public Policies for Equity



and Growth (CIPPEC). She works on questions of Early Childhood Education and Care policies, systems and workforce, with a focus on South America. Guevara holds a PhD in Education from Universidad de San Andrés, Argentina. She is co-founder of the Latin American Network for Research in Early Childhood Education, Care and Upbringing (Red de Estudios Latinoamericanos sobre Crianza, Enseñanza y Cuidado, RELACEC).



**Lynette Okengo** African Early Childhood Network (AfECN), Nairobi (Kenya)

Ph.D., is one of Africa's leading experts in early childhood development. She is the founder and Executive Director of the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN). Her professional experience spans advocacy, policy and strategy development, program evaluation as well as capacity building. Prior to her work with AfECN, Dr Okengo provided technical support to various international and national organizations. A major focus of her work has been advocacy for early childhood as a rights based imperative. Her work focuses on strategies to ensure all children are thriving.



**Dwi Priyono** South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization / Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care, Education and Parenting (SEAMEO CECCEP), Indonesia

Ph.D. (Universitas Negeri Jakarta), MEd (Western Washington University), he is Director of SEAMEO CECCEP. He has previously held the roles of Head of Education Office for South Sumatera Province, Head of Cultural and Tourism Office for South Sumatera Province, and Head of Education Office for Bangka District. His professional interests focus on leadership and management expertise, and he has published numerous journal articles and books on early childhood education and care. Dr Priyono currently directs the project 'Development of Relational Leadership Model for Kindergarten Principals'.



**Emily Vargas-Barón** Institute for Reconstruction and International Security through Education (RISE), Washington DC (USA)

Ph.D., she directs RISE Institute, a global authority in early childhood policy planning, research, monitoring and evaluation. She advises many countries using participatory methods and co-chairs the global ECD Task Force on Children with Developmental Disabilities. She was a USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Education, directed an ECD/ECI center in Texas, and worked as an educational planner and researcher for the Ford Foundation and UNESCO. She has a Ph.D. in anthropology and educational planning from Stanford University and has published widely.