



**“RIGHTS FROM THE
START- Early Childhood
Care and Education NOW!”**

**Education for All Week
(EFA) 2012 by the Global
Campaign for Education**

**Trinidad and Tobago
National Commission for
UNESCO**

**Breakfast Session
Cascadia Hotel and
Conference Centre
Saturday 28th April 2012
8:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m.**

TRANSCRIBED REPORT

Date of Issue: 1st June 2012

“Rights from the Start- Early Childhood Care and Education Now” is the main theme for this year’s Education for All (EFA) Week, organised by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) jointly collaborates with the Global Campaign for Education to promote its Global Action Week. This year’s Global Action Week’s focus being promoted is *“The Big Picture.”*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO hosted a Breakfast Session on the 28th April 2012 in order to bring together ECCE Administrators, teachers, parents and stakeholders from 7 Educational Districts to discuss and highlight the social importance of Early Childhood care and Education in relation to the theme “Rights from the Start- Early Childhood Care and Education Now!”

Special thanks go to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in particular, the Ministry of Education headed by Dr, the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, President of Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, the Secretariat of Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, Administrators of the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit Division at the Ministry of Education, Panellists, teachers, caregivers, parents and stakeholders.

ATTENDEES

Dr. Tim Gopeesingh

The Honourable Minister of Education and President of Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO

Dr Kris Rampersad

Chair, Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO

Ms. Susan Shurland

Secretary General, Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO

Mrs. Elizabeth Crouch

Head, Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO Education Sector Committee

Mrs. Carol Bhagwandin

Administrative Teacher, Ministry of Education, Early Childhood Care and Education Division

Ms. Ramona Khan

Education Consultant for Professional development in Teacher Training

Ms. Lesleann Whiteman

Early Childhood Coordinator, University of the West Indies Open Campus

Mrs. Lisa Ibrahim-Joseph

Education and Research Officer, Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA)

Represented Early Childhood Care and Education Centres:

- Las Lomas #2, Early Childhood
- Munroe Road Government ECCE
- Norva's Kindergarten
- Roystonia Government ECCE Centre
- SWAHA Aranguéz ECCE Centre
- Cancia Mother Nurture Centre
- La Romain Government ECCE Centre
- La Paille Early Childhood Centre
- Chinapoo ECCE
- U.W.I Open Campus, Alpha East ECCE Centre
- Little Gems Pentecostal ECCE Centre
- St. Martin's ECC
- A.S.J.A Ladies ECCE Centre
- Esther's E.L.C
- SERVOL Demonstration Class
- Laventille Extension ECCE
- Belmont ECCE Centre
- Sangre Grande Government Early Childhood Centre
- St. Augustine South Government ECCE Centre
- Petit Valley Government ECCE
- St. Dominic's ECCE Centre
- North Manzanilla ECCE Centre
- SERVOL Beetham ECCE Centre
- Harpe Place Pre-School
- Montgomery ECCE Centre
- El Socorro North ECCE Centre
- Kiddie Care ECCE Centre
- Buccoo Early Childhood Centre
- Debe A.S.J.A ECCE Centre
- Naturalistic ECCE Day Care
- Strange Village ECCE Centre
- Happy Faces ECCE

BREAKFAST SESSION AGENDA -

Start Time: 8:00 a.m.

End Time: 11:00 a.m.

❖ Registration and Start of Breakfast

❖ Welcome and Opening Remarks

Dr. Kris Rampersad

Chair, Trinidad and Tobago

National Commission for UNESCO

❖ Panel Discussion

Moderator:

Mrs. Elizabeth Crouch

Panellists:

Ms. Lesleann Whiteman

Ms. Ramona Khan

Mrs. Lisa Ibrahim-Joseph

Mrs. Carol Bhagwandin

❖ Question and Answer Segment

❖ Address by the Honourable Minister of Education of Trinidad and Tobago,

Dr. Tim Gopeesingh

❖ Presentation and Viewing of Story Walls

❖ Message from Ms. Irina Bokova,

Dr. Sandra Gift

Director-General of UNESCO

❖ End of Breakfast Session

OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSION:

- ❖ To highlight Early Childhood as an importance stage in the holistic development of young children from birth to age 8.
- ❖ To emphasize Early Childhood Care and Education as a social equaliser and an asset of empowerment in the lives of vulnerable children and their families.
- ❖ To mobilise more commitment by Government agencies, stakeholders and Administrators to Early Childhood Care and Education as an integral priority in the national, Education Agenda.
- ❖ To respond to the concerns of Early Childhood Care and Education teachers and parents who are heavily engrossed in the socialization and human development of Children from birth.
- ❖ To collectively pioneer the way forward for increased strengthening, visibility and integration of both public and private Early Childhood Care and Education Centres and Programmes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early Childhood Care and Education continues to be a critical and defining factor in establishing the foundation for a child's holistic, human development, that is, cognitive, psychomotor, physical, emotional and social development.

Early Childhood years set a positive foundation in nurturing children as active learners and proactive citizens for life's journey with a keen sense of value and ethics. It aids the child in being aware of his role as a right bearer who is entitled to high quality and comprehensive education.

Investment in universal and equitable Early Childhood Care and Education leads to maximizing the child's full potential in a secure and stimulating, learning environment with the appropriate services and resources. Children, especially those that are most vulnerable, are then given the opportunity to leave society's underprivileged peripheries and attain greater access to social justice, empowerment and equity.

To this end, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) has partnered with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) "Education For All" (EFA) Week to raise awareness on the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education. This importance has been projected during a Global Action Week from the 22nd- 28th April 2012 which aimed at emphasizing "The Big Picture."

"The Big Picture" action aimed at showcasing the creative expressions of young children as well as their interaction among each other with adults. Artistic mediums that channelled the children's imagination included painting, drawing and taking photos. ECCE stakeholders, policy makers,

Government institutions, Administrators, parents and teachers were subsequently reminded of the relevance of the Early Childhood experience in successfully socializing and educating the child, a right holder, from the very start.

These visual presentations therefore physically symbolised and rightfully spoke to the need for increased investment and attention by the Government and donors in the sphere of Early Childhood Care and Education. “The Big Picture” also served to emphasize the importance of Curriculum development, professional teacher training programmes and a stimulating, learning environment.

Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO sought to promote the theme “Rights from the Start- Early Childhood Care and Education Now!” for this year’s Education for All (EFA) Week by engaging ECCE stakeholders, Administrators, parents and teachers in a forward-thinking and constructive discussion surrounding the holistic, human development of the child, a right bearer to universal, equitable Education from birth- from the very start.

This transcribed report relates the resulting, discursive highlights from the Breakfast Session on the 28th April 2012 which was held at the Cascadia Hotel and Conference Centre and hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO.

OPENING REMARKS

At the opening of the Breakfast Session, **Mrs. Elizabeth Crouch**, Head of the Education Sector Committee of Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO welcomed ECCE Administrators, teachers, stakeholders and parents. All ECCE Facilitators were encouraged to engage with each other in communion as the agenda for “Rights from the Start- Early Childhood Care and Education Now!” is being promoted across Trinidad and Tobago. Participants were reminded of the impact of high quality and universal Early Childhood Care and Education on the lives of the underprivileged child in society and by extension, marginalised families. Mrs. Crouch justifiably reinforced the importance of Early Childhood Education as a social equaliser and foundation for successful, holistic development of young children.

In her welcoming speech, **Dr. Kris Rampersad**, Chair for Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO remarked at the great sense of energy and creativity fostered in the room as a result of “The Big Picture” visual presentations on display. The Chair reiterated that the theme “Rights from the Start- Early Childhood Care and Education now” is presently instrumental in moulding the school life and future of young children especially those that are deemed the most vulnerable in our society. In keeping with UNESCO’s concern with the Education For All (EFA) goals, the Chair further highlighted the need to engage children in exercises that would incite them to identify and express their sense of place, particularly their embryonic school environment. Also, there is need to contextualise the awareness of the EFA goals in the new information era of the 21st century. For this reason, UNESCO plans to launch a multi-dimensional project entitled “ConnectED- Today talks to yesterday about tomorrow.” This project will seek to merge UNESCO’s 50th anniversary in Trinidad and Tobago along with the nation’s celebration of Independence. “ConnectED” aims to connect young children with

community elders by means of informal and formal education, as well as new technological, social media tools.

Mrs. Carol Bhagwandin, Representative on behalf of Mr. James Solomon, Administrative Coordinator of the Ministry of Education's ECCE Division made reference to young children as the country's most valuable asset and hope for a better future. Mrs. Bhagwandin articulated that human capital requires committed investment given that such a resource undoubtedly reflects the wealth of a country. Leaders of ECCE must therefore freely give young children love, care, nurture and access to Education so that they can mature into responsible, confident, moral and skilful adults in society. Young childhood must not be robbed of their childhood experiences and must be given the fair chance to maximise their full potential. Mrs. Bhagwandin pointed out that Child Development is a natural, continuing and cognitive process which is highly dependent on stimulation from an interactive environment in a child's early years. The best, pedagogical practices in Early Childhood Care and Education and the importance of high quality ECCE can help our society achieve sustainability and advancement. Young children at the Early Childhood Care and Education level must have sufficient exposure to a variety of stimuli for their physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.

SUMMARY OF THE PANELLISTS’ PRESENTATIONS

“Stimulating the Developmental Domains of the Young Learner.” By Mrs. Carol Bhagwandin

- Early Childhood Care and Education offers a sound basis for learning and it aids in the development of skills and knowledge.
- Development in one area or domain simultaneously facilitates the development in other areas/domains.
- There are several developmental domains in relation to the young child. These domains include- physical, cognitive, social and emotional.
- The ultimate objective of ECCE is to have all domains stimulated within the child. At this juncture, the child needs help in receiving and benefitting from stimulation.
- There exists several key ways to stimulate each domain. Caregivers, Parents and teachers are all facilitators who provide a variety of stimuli needed to maximise a child’s development.
- Children receive stimulation at ECCE Centres through the following forms:
 - ✓ By playing with stimulating objects and physical games. Tactile objects serve to stimulate critical thinking skills, holistic development and social maturation.
 - ✓ By practice and participation in play activities. Socialization of children cannot occur in isolation. Verbal interaction such as dialogue assists children in developing their ability to reason and use private speech. Critical thinking about

what children want to say is put into action. Also, emotional development manifests when the child begins to identify their feelings as well as those of others. Through active interaction, children learn to express their emotions in a healthy fashion, label their feelings and talk about their friends' emotions. Emotions are expressed through writing, singing, and drawing activities which aid the child in being less frustrated and violated while learning to be more focused.

- ✓ By getting instruction from others. Children develop an attitude of respect for others' needs and they learn the art of listening which is essential to positive communication and effective dialogue.
- ✓ By learning to read and by being read to. Actions such as 'picture reading' contribute significantly to the holistic human development of the young child.

Physically, children have the opportunity to dramatize stories. From the cognitive perspective, they child begins to identify, label and describe what he/she sees in pictures. Rich language content of stories furthermore highlights a range of emotions. Children also play a major social role in making their friends happy while engaging in such sessions. Next, moral stories teach children respect for others, 'turn taking' and how to project their feelings in a clear manner. Additionally, children begin to develop their imaginative capacity.

- Finally, Early Childhood Development Programmes and the Curriculum should consist of opportunities that support the holistic development of the young child. All sense organs need to be appropriately and adequately stimulated through different interactive forms of engagement. Activities such as freely drawing, acquaintance with nature, matching,

sorting, comparing the colour, size and shape of things, all help improve the progress of the growing child.

“The Importance of Cognitive Development in Early Childhood Care and Education.” By Ms. Ramona Khan.

- There exists a notable interrelationship among all developmental domains of the young child. In other words, what occurs in one domain has a significant and consequential impact in other domains.
- Domains of development are not discrete entities. These domains occur simultaneously in an integrated and systematic fashion among young children.
- Cognitive development must be supported in the Early Childhood years of children both at home and within the school environment, especially at the Pre-School level (3-5 years).
- There is a direct link between cognitive development and centre-based Early Childhood Care and Education years experienced by the child.
- Cognitive development refers to the aspect of development that involves thinking, problem solving, and intelligence, language and knowledge construction. This type of development does not occur in a vacuum and is influenced by other social and emotional factors of development as well. The young child’s development is thus dependent on socialization and increased interaction.
- Cognitive development is firstly characterised by the child’s ability to recognise himself as a separate organism and a unique/individual entity apart from his parents.
- At the Pre-School level, children develop ‘object permanence.’ Object permanence refers to the recognition that an entity does not seek to exist if it is out of the child’s presence. Children nurture an understanding of their connection to the world and they are able to

conceptualise the fact that people and things come back. Hence, their fascination with activities such as ‘peek-a-boo.’

- Next, children begin to develop their ability to use symbolic representation. Language is an example in this case. Our linguistic engagements and social interactions with young children are critical to their cognitive development.
- Language is an integral part of cognition given that it serves as a tool for engagement and for making sense of the world.
- ‘Cognition’ makes reference to that mental process or faculty that young children use to acquire knowledge.
- Children are involved in conscious thought and memory at this point. They think of themselves, the world and others.
- Educating the young child is therefore a critical function of parents and teachers who must be aware of the developmental markers of cognition.
- Children’s developing abilities to formulate ideas, to think rationally and to analyse are supported by Early Childhood teachers’ experiences as well as developmental, learning theories.
- Cognitive skills that should be promoted throughout Early Childhood years include:
 - ✓ Skills of Inquiry
 - ✓ Opportunities to analyse, hypothesize, experiment, communicate findings from projects
 - ✓ Knowledge of the physical world
 - ✓ Relationships between objects
 - ✓ Understanding the properties of objects (how they feel, their shape, etc)

- ✓ Knowledge of the social world
 - ✓ Awareness of self and others
 - ✓ Nature of social interactions
 - ✓ Classification
 - ✓ Spatial relationships
 - ✓ Serration
 - ✓ Number sense
 - ✓ Symbols
 - ✓ Literacy and Numeracy activities
 - ✓ Social sciences and scientific inquiry
- Children are curious and active learners. Education is thus, an explorative journey. Opportunities must be provided for young children to construct knowledge of themselves, people and the world around them.
 - A 'learning environment' must be fostered with materials for exploration while taking into consideration the nature and dept of interactive activities and dialogue.
 - A child's socio-economic status further impacts upon his ability to adjust and benefit from school. A child's potential can only be fully maximized in high-quality ECCE Centres that are designed to reduce or eliminate the failure of young children who come from low socio-economic backgrounds/at-risk environments.
 - High-quality, centre-based ECCE Centres must consider two important dimensions if they intend to be effective:
 - ✓ A suitable amount of children-to-adult size ratio

- ✓ Good quality of interactions between adults and children together with materials used in engagements
- Early Childhood Care and Education is critical for a child's future success and life. Parents and teachers are instrumental in meeting the developmental needs of the child across all domains.
- The State has an important role in facilitating a creative and enabling ECCE environment through the implementation of necessary investments and frameworks.

“Focusing on Emotional Development as a Key Domain in Early Childhood years.” By Ms. Lesleann

Whiteman

- Emotional Development has often been overlooked in Early Childhood Care and Education because of emphasis placed on academics.
- There are linkages that exist between the emotional competencies of a young learner and his academic performance and lifelong learning experience.
- Research has shown that children who are more aware of their emotions upon entrance into Primary School have a lower risk of aggression problems and anxiety disorder.
- Healthy emotional development leads to emotional intelligence and good, mental health.
- In our society and culture of Trinidad and Tobago, there needs to be more focus on mental health given that there has been a rise in violence and bullying in the nation’s institutions.
- In examining the emotional development of a child, Theorists often refer to the “stage theory.” During the first stage of infancy, children depend on their parents for consistent, adequate and nurturing care. There is needed to develop trust and security in their environments.
- As children grow, they desire greater control over their autonomy. At this stage, children need parents and adults to accept their attempts at independence.

- Next, at the ECCE level, children become more curious and develop a stronger need to assert their independence. Thus, supportive and understanding adults are required to facilitate this stage of emotional development.
- The following include steps that can be taken to ensure that children develop emotionally healthy:
 - ✓ ECCE Educators must provide a psycho-social environment that is warm, compassionate, friendly, supportive and responsive to the needs of each child.
 - ✓ There must be an importance for a sense of connectedness to their learning environment. Children thrive in a place that fosters a great sense of belonging given that human behaviour is motivated by needs especially unmet needs. Young learners must feel secure in expressing their feelings, in speaking openly and in asking questions. Additionally, teachers must render themselves available to helping children identify and express themselves in a healthy manner.
 - ✓ Communication, that is, how adults respond to children is an important factor in young learners' identification and labelling of their feelings. Teachers can identify emotional impact through exercises such as storytelling and questioning children about the feelings of fictional characters.
 - ✓ Adults must be able to apply various coping mechanisms when confronting children's emotions. Coping mechanisms help with teaching the child self-control, sharing, remaining calm and understanding how

their emotional system works. An example of a coping mechanism includes identifying the impact of actions and events on the feelings of young learners. Another example is teaching the child to consider another person's viewpoint which is the beginning of empathy.

- ✓ Parents must comfort children that struggle with separation anxiety issues when they are carried to ECCE Centres. They must learn to ask questions that speak to children's emotions at the end of the school day. When probed with questions, children begin to think about their feelings and in so doing, learn to relate to adults.

“Contextualizing all Aspects of Young Learners’

Holistic Development.” By Mrs. Lisa Ibrahim-Joseph

- Children must be encouraged to engage in activities that are designed towards holistic development that is, expression and learning activities.
- Organizations need to know the needs of practitioners in order to support children’s all-rounded development. A lack of communication between organizations and practitioners can lead to the partial development of a child who lacks fundamental skills.
- Educators must work with families and parents in this process of development; not just the child. Parents need to be more involved in the child’s ECCE experience by attending field trips and understanding the teaching programmes introduced to young learners at Centres. In doing so, parents can make clear note of how their child is developing and progressing. Thus, parents must connect more closely to their children’s experiences at ECCE Centres.
- Active, centre-based learning that is highly interactive and stimulates critical thinking is essential for young learners to understand their development in the education process. Therefore, teachers must move away from strictly ‘book-oriented’ styles of learning and adopt more sociable and proactive learning exercises.
- Teachers must also pay attention to problem solving in the ECCE environment. This aids in children being better able to smoothly transition to Primary School Education.

- Practitioners need to access more enhancing professional training, suitable infrastructure and a wider resource of materials to support their tasks.

SUMMARY OF ECCE CHALLENGES

Several challenges were voiced among Early Childhood Care and Education teachers, some of which include:

- ✓ A lack of administrative, technological and professional learning and teaching resources and/or materials that are needed for the delivery of comprehensive, quality Education to young learners.
- ✓ Insufficient exposure to workshops, seminars and conferences that are specifically geared towards the enhancement and sustainability of Early Childhood Care Educators' pedagogical expertise and professional development. Furthermore, such professional development initiatives are in a greater demand in our sister Isle, Tobago.
- ✓ The absence of a 'smooth transition' from the ECCE level into Primary School level by young learners. A disruption in such a transitory phase in a child's education is being caused by an uncoordinated curriculum, unskilled teachers and an Entrance Exam that fails to appropriately assess and prepare young learners upon entering Primary School level.
- ✓ Inadequate engagement and assistance by the Ministry of Education and stakeholders with respect to the rectification of Early Childhood Care Educators' salaries and infrastructural upgrading of ECCE Centres for the provision of a quality, learning environment.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the challenges and concerns expressed by the Educators in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education, Administrators along with the Panelists suggested resolute action steps that can be exercised by all stakeholders and Leaders engaged. The following is an outline of the recommendations proposed:

- ✓ The design and implementation of systematic, comprehensive and on-going development workshops by the Ministry of Education that aids in cultivating knowledgeable practitioners.
- ✓ ECCE Educators and Administrators can fuel their passion and professionalism by taking the initiative to independently source new materials, to conduct research within a particular niche of study, to become involved in new certification programmes as well as to 'see the need, create the need and go for it!'
- ✓ The Cluster system being undertaken by the ECCE Division Unit at the Ministry of Education can be strengthened by an increase in proactive participation by all Educators seeking professional development and training. Also, the impact of the Cluster system's workshops and programme has to be expanded more across the national level.
- ✓ ECCE Leaders in collaboration with those at the Primary School level must seek new ways to bridge the existing gap between these two stages in a child's Education that disrupts the transition period. The fostering of new lines of communication and an exchange of knowledge between professional Educators can facilitate a streamlining of the best practices and thus, coherence in teaching approaches.

- ✓ The Government must seek to properly articulate the policies and programmes outlined in the national Curriculum to enhance its coherence and efficiency in a young learner's transitory phase. There is a need for the Curriculum to capture the developmental perspective of the child along with the consciousness of the child's rights to quality, universal education in an apt, learning environment.

- ✓ The Government, Stakeholders, Leaders and Administrators must promote and sensitize the wider public on the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education. An increased awareness in the public and private domain ranging from practitioners to parents to individuals, can offer Early Childhood Care and Education the leverage and visibility that it deserves as a pivotal developmental stage in lifelong learning.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**By the Minister of Education, Dr. the Honourable Tim
Gopeesingh.**

A very pleasant good morning to one and all and let me immediately thank all for attending and participating in today's event, and for giving up your valuable weekend time to demonstrate your commitment to our nation's children. And let me congratulate UNESCO for bringing this event together today. I read the speech of UNESCO's Director-General Irina Bokova's speech when I met her last year at UNESCO's Paris meeting and I remember speaking with her. And after my positive discussions with her, and with UNESCO spreading education to 195 nations around the world, I know that we have their support.

It is said that Early Childhood may lay the foundation of poverty or riches, industry of idleness, good or evil, by the habits to which you train your children. Teach them the right habits then, and their future is safe, for it is always easier to "build strong children, than to repair broken human beings."

It is a sentimental that I value tremendously, and one which greatly inspires my drive, as the Head of the Ministry of Education, to ensure that, in accordance with the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, Trinidad and Tobago is the first nation globally to attain universal early childhood care and education by 2015.

And part of this is ensuring that all 34,000 children between the ages of three to five are adequately housed in Early Childhood Centres through Government and the private sector

working together to achieve this goal. Eventually, we'll have one teacher to every seven or eight students and other auxiliary staff in these Centres with 50 to 60 students.

To this end, today's function by UNESCO is very timely and relevant to our nation. It is being held in collaboration with the international body year's Global Campaign for Education, which hosts and annual Education For All Week Celebrations. I believe this is the week.

The 2012 theme is "Rights from the Start- Early Childhood Care and Education Now," and I think the world is moving towards that and domestically, UNESCO will be promoting a "Big Picture" campaign, and the evidence of that are these beautiful pieces by our ECCE students. Let me then congratulate the Principals, teachers and other supporting staff at our Centres and kindergartens, for bringing out rich talents of our precious and beautiful children between the ages of three to five.

Today's event in particular brings together ECCE Administrators, teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the seven Educational Districts in Trinidad, and I'm happy to see Tobago represented here today, and I had fruitful talks with THA Chief Secretary Orville London, to ensure that Tobago's schools are equal partners with Trinidad.

I am happy to welcome among our discussion panelists Ms. Ramona Khan, Ms. Lesleann Whiteman, Ms. Carol Bhagwandin and Ms. Lisa Ibrahim-Joseph to lend their competence and expertise in today's discussions.

Ladies and Gentlemen present today, you may well be aware of the Ministry's very active drive towards achieving, as I said before, universal early childhood care and education in Trinidad and Tobago by 2015. In the past two years, we have come a very long way towards this goal, and it

forms a cohesive part and parcel of the strategic reform of the entire education system of Trinidad and Tobago which I have undertaken since assuming the very important post and it is aimed at transforming and vastly improving the entire education system.

Universal Early Childhood Care and Education is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and we are working feverishly on our other priorities to embed them into our education system. We have successfully given laptops to thousands of our students, we are upgrading computer labs and will be bringing Wi-Fi into each one of our secondary schools. My Ministry is working to ensure that all secondary, primary and ECCEs have television and radio equipment to allow them to access a television channel dedicated to education. The channel will feature trained educational personnel discussing various subject areas, it will be interactive and recorded and made available. We are also tackling the issue of Special Needs among our children, and the Ministry of Education has a project going with the World Bank to assist us in identifying these cases and what methods we can employ to manage them.

In our country, as of when I assumed office, over 50 percent of early childhood care centres are privately owned and I have thus embarked on implementing whereby State funds would be used for such privately funded pre-schools to encourage private, to improve quality and meet specific standards set by the Ministry of Education for teacher credentials and staff-to-student ratios.

In undertaking this programme, I commissioned research for the first time ever in Trinidad and Tobago which demonstrated that my proposed Universal Early Childhood Care and Education programme would contribute to children's later academic success, strengthen the link between pre-schools and the primary schools, and reduce the transitions the child will make.

It will also provide for more communication between teachers of both levels about Curriculum and student needs. We'll also be having an ECCE symposium on May 22nd and May 23rd.

This thrust towards achieving Universal Early Childhood Care in Trinidad and Tobago is, as I have said before aimed at ensuring that the country achieves the United Nations Development Goals which aim at eradicating poverty in the developing world. You all know that education is a passport to a better life. Without an education, it will be difficult for you to take up your rightful place in Trinidad and Tobago and the world.

The programmes' main long-term aims are to end the cycle of poverty and violence in Trinidad and Tobago. It's not something that would happen immediately but we will see the benefits in the medium to long term. Yesterday, I saw a film on bullying in schools and my Ministry intends to put strong measures in place to prevent this problem from occurring. And this is where the ECCEs will come into play so that children from an early age will be taught a positive value system. Once this happens, bullying will be controlled. We're also going to be asking Principals to instruct their teachers to have a circle of hope among their students to allow them to openly express themselves about their feelings about their schools and their fellow classmates. Guidance counsellors will also be involved in this process. Then we will also institute the 'Leader In Me' series designed to create leaders in young people where they are taught morals, etiquette and values.

A World Bank report on Early Childhood Care in China some 2 years ago endorsed that such a comprehensive program can indeed do this, as that report finds that science-based evidence interventions in early years of life is most critical to subsequent human development. Science

will be taught again up to Standard 5 because it teaches students critical thinking and reasoning skills, and the Ministry of Education will make it mandatory.

Neuroscience and longitudinal studies of ECCE show that lack of access to nutrition and health care, insufficiently stimulating human reaction and non-enrollment in pre-primary education are associated with lower educational attainment and achievement, which, in turn, reduce lifetime – earnings.

Longitudinal studies find that children who have attended kindergarten are less likely to have socially disruptive behavior, compared with the controlled group.

Early learning and foundation of good habits and social skills are far more productive than later remedial education and training. We must be preventive rather than remediative; my focus is on prevention rather than remediation.

Trinidad and Tobago's goal to maintain social stability in its' remarkable diversity, as well as improve its economic standing and growth in the long term to achieve developed nation status which would be more effectively served by increasing and investing in ECCE.

In Trinidad and Tobago, it has always been found that, because the majority of early childhood care centres are privately owned, these fees are a barrier to access for the poor children of the nation. It is the wish of the Honourable Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the government that ECCE education be free to our children. Additionally, the Prime Minister has dedicated those \$8 billion in the budget to ECCE education.

It is believed that enrollment in kindergarten will ensure that caregivers and teachers at these Centres would have improved access to the health needs and parenting practices of young children which can lead to timely State intervention in the lives of children facing poverty and abuse in their domestic environment. We want to bring these children out of these situations.

Effective pre-school raises achievement levels for all children, and it offers real hope for closing the school-readiness gap. Experts also tell us that 90 percent of all brain development occurs by the age of five. If we don't begin thinking about education in the early years, our children are at risk of falling behind by the time they start the kindergartens.

Children who participate in quality Early Childhood Education programs are more likely to have the necessary skills such as abstract reasoning, problem solving and communication to meet the demands of tomorrow's workforce.

Also, international research has shown that the best way to improve the workforce of the 21st century is to invest in early childhood education, to ensure that, even the most disadvantaged children have the opportunity to succeed alongside their more advantaged peers.

In keeping with these goals for our nation's children, we have, constructed 25 ECCEs and handed over five ECCE Centres in Clark Rochard, Bon Air, Malabar, La Horquetta and Valencia. We are training 3,000 in UWI, UTT, COSTATT, etc to staff our Centres, so this is a golden opportunity for citizens to certify themselves in Early Childhood Education and make a contribution to helping our precious children.

I am therefore quite happy to see today's function dedicated to this very valuable aspect of our education system, and I urge all in attendance to be privy to this information to ensure that it

benefits the children for whom we all work so hard. And I am very happy to see so many Fathers here this morning, and I thank you for being here and showing your support for this event.

I therefore welcome you all here again, once more, and again I thank you for dedicating your valuable time to better the interest of our future generations.

Thank you and May God continue to bless us all.



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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры
منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Irma Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

On the occasion of the Education for All Global Action

Week

Early childhood care and education

22 April 2012

Education is a breakthrough strategy that is essential for reaching all of the Millennium Development Goals. This must start as early as possible and it must be as inclusive as possible, to provide all children with access to quality early care and education. No society should leave any child behind.

Early childhood care and education is a powerful force for tackling discrimination and for bridging gaps of inequity. The benefits of early support are carried throughout life and they extend throughout society. Quality care and education can help children grow into healthy adults, able to nurture meaningful relationships, with the right skills and competences for school, work, family and community life. Failing to act early can condemn children to lives of disadvantage and marginalisation.

The importance of the early years is expressed in the first Education for All goal, which calls on governments to expand and improve “comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.” This is inspired by the right to early childhood care and education enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Under the right conditions, the early years are ones of extraordinary physical and intellectual development. This is an age where children discover the world, acquire language and comprehension skills, learn to reason and express ideas, to relate to others and live together. These are also years of extreme vulnerability. This is why inclusive early action is so important.

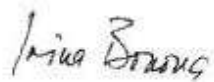
I wish to commend the Global Campaign for Education for highlighting this issue for Global Action Week 2012. This is an opportunity to recall the commitments made at the Moscow World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, held in September 2010. It is a chance for all to mobilize to translate these commitments into action.

Since the 2010 World Conference, UNESCO has launched an interagency process to develop a Holistic Early Childhood Development Index that will assist comprehensive monitoring of early childhood development. We are also acting on the ground across the world. In Egypt, we have supported the creation of a model early childhood care and education centre in Cairo to train trainers from across the Arab region. We have worked with the Government of Seychelles to develop a national policy framework for early childhood care and education, and we are helping to design a national childhood strategy with the United Arab Emirates. In cooperation with the publisher Michel Lafon and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, we have produced a book series called 'Bouba and Zaza' for African children between the ages of 3 and 8. For the Asia and the Pacific region, we have compiled parenting education guidebooks to promote stronger home environments for child development.

There has been progress. In sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, enrolments in pre-primary education have increased steadily since 2000. We must step up our efforts across the board — especially to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. In 2010, 7.5 million of the

7.6 million children who died before the age of 5 were from developing countries. Close to half of them resided in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 2006 and 2010, 27 percent of the world's children suffered from moderate to severe growth stunting, with the highest rates in South Asia. In 2009, while the global gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary education stood at 46 percent, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States reached only 18 percent and 21 percent respectively.

We still have far to go -- to tackle inequity as early as possible and to prevent gaps from widening as life continues. Early childhood care and education is a force for human dignity that carries lifelong benefits. It is a powerful motor for the sustainable development of societies over the longer term. These are the key messages of Global Action Week 2012. Young children simply cannot wait.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irma Bokova". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Irma Bokova