

Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD) Annual Meeting, Jordan, November 13-15, 2017

Narrative Report Executive Summary

1. Background and Context

The Follow up Committee of ANECD convened its first institutional meeting in April 2016 (<https://anecd.mawared.org/en/article/follow-committee-meeting-arab-network-early-childhood-education-2016>).

The secretariat had made significant progress in preparing a second meeting for November 2017, in connection with a regional launch of the Lancet series on nurturing care in ECD. The presentation of the conclusions of the Lancet studies and the work on implementing their programmatic orientations were to be the thematic component of this annual meeting. Unfortunately, WHO and UNCIEF, ANECD partners in the Lancet launch, had to postpone the event until next spring.

ANECD Secretariat resolved that it was still necessary to convene the annual meeting of the network to sustain the collective approach to its deployment and consolidation. Due to financial restrictions related to the postponement of the Lancet launch, it was only possible within the confines of this year's budget to cover the expenses of a restricted number of participants. Following the responses received in reaction to the initial invitation, the secretariat was able to negotiate a good representation of countries and members, and the meeting was held with the following objectives.

2. Objectives

- **Re-asserting ANECD strategic orientations:**
 - Disseminating and using knowledge and training resources in Arabic
 - Contributing to the development of human resources with competencies in ECD
 - Engaging Arab governments to develop national policies for ECD and to nurture the ECD sector at national level
 - Participating in ECD work with families in situations of conflict and displacement
 - Building ANECD as the networking platform for collective approaches
- **Reporting and discussing last year activities:**
 - Training of trainers in Arabic on the Science of ECD
 - Launching and developing the website and the electronic newsletter
 - Engaging with regional and global networking activities
- **Planning next year activities:**
 - Training on Science of ECD at national level
 - Work with refugees in Jordan and Lebanon
 - Research
 - New openings?
- **Building the network:**
 - Expanding the membership
 - Networking at the national level
 - Collective decision-making and the work of the secretariat.

3. Agenda of ANECD Meeting, Nov 13-15, 2007, Amman, Jordan

First Day: Monday 13 November 2017		
14:30 – 16:00	1. Openings - Welcome & the road to this meeting - Introduction of participants - Finalizing the draft agenda - Steering and documentation teams	
	2. Report of last year activities: presentation and general discussion	
16:00 – 16:30	Break	
16:30 – 18:00	3. The strategic priorities of ANECD: Presentation, Discussion, and Summary	
18:00	Steering and documentation teams meetings	
20:00	Dinner	
Second Day: Tuesday 14 November 2017		
9:00 – 11:00	4. Presentations on major ECD programmatic work in Arab Region, needs and challenges 4.1 Development of human resources: ECD workforce approach & Training on Science of ECD 4.2 Work with refugees & displaced in Syria & Yemen 4.3 Networking at the national / local level 4.4 ECD research in Arab Region, needs and challenges	
11:00 – 11:30	Break	
11:30 – 13:00	Working groups on the four themes above (4.1-4.4)	
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch	
14:00–16:00	5.1 Revisit strategic orientations: - Priorities for ANECD as a network compared to members' strategies - Arab Resource Collective (ARC) role as secretariat compared to its own strategic and programmatic orientations. 5.2 Consolidating ANECD - Working groups: - Membership: current situation and mechanism for expansion, including national networking - Governance: Functions and mechanisms of General assembly, Executive Committee, Secretariat.	
16:00 – 16:30	Break	
16:30 – 18:30	6. Reports from working groups and discussion	
18:30	Steering and documentation teams meetings	
20:00	Dinner	

Third Day: Wednesday 15 November 2017	
09:00–11:00	7. Introduction to Global ECD scenery Presentation on ECD Global Leaders project 8. General discussion on executive plans within strategic orientations and programmatic plans.
11:00 – 11:30	Break
11:30 – 13:00	Summary of action points & Closure
13:00	Lunch

4. Summary of the Meeting Proceedings

As the thematic component had to be postponed, the purpose of the current meeting focused on sustaining the deployment of ANECD. In addition to reviewing the strategic orientations of the network, the meeting worked on advancing the programmatic activities and consolidating the membership and governance of the network. ANECD annual meeting took place in Amman, Jordan, November 13-15, 2017. It was attended by 30 participants. Most of these had participated in the “Founding Assembly” in December 2014, the “Follow-up Committee Meeting” in 2016, and/or one activity of ANECD. They came from ministries, childhood councils, non-governmental organizations, regional and international agencies, and academia, as well as individual experts, from Arab and foreign countries.

The first day of the meeting started with a **tribute to Emad Tharwat**, the colleague, friend, and activist who was supposed to be in this meeting but had unfortunately passed away on October 22. Dr. Ghassan Issa, Director of ANECD, dedicated the current meeting to him.

Ms. Alice Keirouz, President of ARC, inaugurated the meeting expressing her pride to be with militants who fight for the rights of children, especially very young children.

Then, Mr. Youssef Hajjar, ARC Consultant and main facilitator of this meeting, briefly reviewed the process that led to this meeting and gave the floor to his co-facilitator and ARC Trustee, Ms. Nabila Espanioly who administered an acquaintance exercise. Thus, the participants shared their names, the countries from which they come, the sector to which their organization belongs, and the themes and strategies they use during their work. The exercise also pointed to the missing countries and sectors. Youssef then presented the agenda (above), noting that it is modifiable according to the meeting course and participants’ comments. At the end of this first session, some participants volunteered to form the two meeting working teams: the steering team who will help the meeting preparatory team in running the meeting, and the documentation team who will help ARC Consultant and writer of this report, Rania Saheli, in documenting the process of every session and formulating the report.

In the second session, Ghassan presented ANECD annual report from May 2016 to April 2017, including the website launching (<https://anecd.mawared.org/en>), training of trainers on the Science of ECD, and networking. After a discussion in plenary, Ghassan presented the strategic orientations of the network as formulated in previous meetings of the network. The presentation was followed by a discussion from which several points paved the way for the second day.

The working day ended with the steering and documentation teams meetings.

The second day, facilitated by Nabil Sublaban and Aziz Kaychouh, started with a summary of the first day, presented by Rania. The first session began with the presentation by Dr. Fadia Hoteit on the issues of Early Childhood Workforce with a focus on the Lebanese situation, which is not very different from the rest of the Arab countries. Lara Aoudeh then presented the capacity-building activities carried out through ANECD, namely the Science of ECD Training of Trainers session that took place earlier in 2017, in addition to future follow-up mechanisms to maximize the benefit of capacity-building activities. After that, Muna Abbas made a presentation about Working with Refugees, including the experience of International Plan in Jordan, local networking issues, and the challenges surrounding the work, such as the multiplicity of actors and the lack of funding sustainability. Later, Dr. Mohamed Matar presented Policy-oriented Research in line with the early childhood sector, focusing on the regional and international experience, and some proposals to frame this field in the Arab region. The presentations ended with Dr. Ghassan making a briefing on behalf of the representative of Yemen about the tragic situation of childhood there, and he added examples of working in emergencies, such as the parenting program.

In the second session, the participants were divided into four specialized groups, three groups related to ANECD strategic orientations and one thematic group related to the regional humanitarian crisis of refugees and IDPs of the war in Syria and their host communities, to discuss more thoroughly the issues tackled in the presentations in the morning session: 1) networking, 2) policy-oriented research, 3) emergencies and refugees, and 4) capacity-building and EC workforce. The groups were asked to come out with three outputs: a) What already exists in each field, b) what is needed to expand, and c) the role of the network.

In the third session, a rapporteur of each group presented a summary of his/her group results. A brief discussion followed every presentation, and few issues remained pending as the steering committee confirmed they would be handled on the third and last day.

Following the discussions, participants were divided again, but this time into two groups to discuss ANECD structural issues: 1) Membership: current status and expansion mechanisms including local networking and 2) Governance: functions and mechanisms of the General Assembly, the Executive Committee, and the Secretariat. On the other hand, the representatives of the International Organizations were asked to provide some lessons learned from their experiences with other existing early childhood networks. The two groups working on the organizational issues presented their suggestions in plenary regarding membership and structure. In brief, it was agreed that in this transitional period, ANECD would remain a networking platform for collective approaches with governmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals as members. The Founding Assembly (with few alterations) has become the General Assembly. Other organizational issues were moved to the last day.

At the end of the day, Mark Elliott reported on behalf of the International Organizations Group. He presented an overview and few lessons learned from other Early Childhood Networks, such as the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN), and the International Step by Step Association (ISSA). He also referred to the legal status of these networks, and added few possible criteria for governance and membership, in addition to standards for sustainability. The discussion that followed included an intervention from Youssef on the Early Childhood Consultative Group, how it functioned and why it ceased

to exist, noting that most of its adherents formed the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) hosted by the World Bank and UNICEF.

The second day ended in plenary with Nabila summing up the action points for the last day. As for the two working teams, the steering team met to modify the last day according to the course of the second day and emerging needs, and the documentation team agreed to exchange documentation during and after the meeting.

The third day started with a brief recapitulation by Mohamed Matar of the second day. Mohamed Azab, the facilitator of the morning session, introduced Mark to present the “Global Leaders” program, part of the “World Forum Foundation” (<https://worldforumfoundation.org/>). Mark’s presentation included a briefing about the program that seeks to identify and develop the early childhood leaders throughout the world, including the program experience in the Arab region. A discussion in plenary followed the presentation hoping that partnership between Global Leaders and ANECD would pave the path for more organized participation from the region and follow up. Mark and Ghassan will follow this issue after the meeting.

In the second part of the morning session, the session facilitator asked the participants to regroup in the same four programmatic groups of the second day (networking, EC workforce, research, and working with refugees). However, this time every group must come out with one priority (or two at the most) and a practical clear plan of action with distribution of roles and possible suggestions of funding. The groups reported their suggested plans and the plenary discussed them, noting that these plans could serve as drafts for the actual plans to be formulated by the real working ANECD groups.

In the last session of the day (and eventually the meeting), animated by Ghassan and Nabila, Ghassan distributed the names of the General Assembly members. Names were added and others discussed, and a final list came out. Then, the Executive Committee suggested by the steering team was presented to the participants and accepted. The plenary also agreed on the tasks for this Committee in this transitional period, including drafting a programmatic plan and bylaws for the network. Meanwhile, ARC would remain the Secretariat of the network and Ghassan Issa would remain the director.

Finally, four working committees were formed during the session, and a coordinator was nominated for each. Mohamed Matar would coordinate the Research committee, Rita Karam the Networking, Mona Abbas the working with Refugees, and Fadia Hoteit the Workforce.

Before the evaluation, Ghassan shared with the participants “good news” that Bernard Van Leer and Open Society Foundations, represented in this meeting, might support the network in the coming phase.

At the end of the Meeting, participants shared some reflections about the past days, expressing appreciation of the fruitful results of the meeting, the energy reigning, and the importance of collective thinking within a clear vision. They also showed commitment to ANECD, its expansion, and efficiency, for the best interest of the child.