Strategic Framework

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I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

UNICEF supports countries as they work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals through the priorities outlined in its medium-term strategic plans. Basic Education and Gender Equality is Focus Area 2 in the 2006–2013 strategic plan. This programme area identifies UNICEF’s commitments to strengthening young children’s early development and readiness for starting school at the prescribed age and with appropriate competencies.

Although increasing numbers of children are enrolling in primary school, many enter late or early, fall behind, fail to progress and drop out. The degree to which children arrive at school with the cognitive, social and emotional skills they need is a growing concern. A child’s readiness for school is linked to school outcomes: Children who enter school ready to learn are more likely to perform well and complete successive levels of education.

School readiness defined

In this initiative, school readiness reflects the interaction between three domains: the child, the school and the family.

- Children’s readiness for school focuses on learning and developmental outcomes.
- School’s readiness for children focuses on school-level outcomes and practices that foster every child’s smooth transition into primary school and advance all children’s learning.
- Families’ readiness for school focuses on the attitudes of parents, caregivers and older siblings, and their involvement in children’s early learning and development and transition to school.

These three dimensions work synergistically to promote or curtail school readiness. A child who is ready for school has basic skills and knowledge in multiple areas. Although each society defines the minimum skills and standards separately, commonalities are emerging across nations. Moreover, it is the family and school that provide the supportive environments to ensure that all children have opportunities to learn and develop to their full potential by the time they are ready to enter school.
Child-to-Child and school readiness

Many early learning programmes currently in use have been based on Western models and implemented in industrialized countries, with little validation that they will be similarly effective in the developing world. In developing countries, Child-to-Child is a promising approach to providing cost-effective and efficient interventions in early childhood development (ECD), especially for more marginalized or deprived populations. The Child-to-Child approach is based on two assumptions. The first recognizes that in addition to their primary caregivers, young children are strongly influenced by other children – typically older siblings, playmates or minders they interact with daily. Second, by involving older primary school students, education systems can build on this phenomenon to systematically influence school readiness and on-time entry. In this way, establishing a rhythm of schooling at home through older siblings will facilitate a smooth transition to school.

In the innovative approach to school readiness proposed by UNICEF, older primary school children are encouraged to help preschool children develop early learning competencies and start school at the right age. This initiative builds on a successful and well-known precedent in the development and implementation of Child-to-Child programmes.

Child-to-Child is best known as a model developed by the Child-to-Child Trust in London and widely adopted by developing countries as a means of promoting health education through children. Child-to-Child activities are usually integrated within broader health education programmes. But they are distinguished by the direct and active involvement of children in the process of promoting health education through their interaction with other children in their families and communities.

The approach presented in this strategic framework draws on these principles to address the challenges of providing early childhood education opportunities for the great majority of children in developing countries. Child-to-Child materials and methods will be integrated into on-going primary school activities. Building on the established phenomena of schoolchildren playing with and caring for younger children, the intervention hopes to foster a rhythm of schooling by preparing preschool children and their families for on-time school enrolment, readiness and success.

Goals and objectives

The overall goal of Getting Ready for School: A Child-to-Child Approach is to increase both the child’s readiness for school and the school’s readiness to receive the child and cultivate optimal learning environments for its youngest students. The initiative aims to:

- Increase both girls’ and boys’ on-time enrolment in primary school.
- Ensure children arrive at school with a strong foundation in language, early literacy and numeracy, as well as the social and emotional skills required for learning.
• Decrease drop-out rates and enhance overall primary school performance.

In addition, the intervention promotes the following outcomes for older children, parents and families, teachers and schools:

• Primary school children develop skills that support early learning, as well as increase their self-esteem and confidence.

• Parents and families gain increased awareness of the importance of child development and gain skills for promoting early learning opportunities, as well as positive health, safety and nutrition practices. They also understand the importance of on-time enrolment.

• First grade teachers develop enhanced child-centred teaching and learning methods.

• Teachers expand their awareness of how early childhood experiences significantly influence later learning and enhance the quality of teaching and learning methods and materials. Positive student outcomes increase teachers’ confidence and satisfaction.

• School systems foster linkages and partnerships between school and home, recognize the needs of its youngest learners, create child-friendly learning environments and raise educational standards.

Two interventions designed to achieve these goals are Helping the Little Ones/Helping My Own Learning and Getting Ready for School. The first is used by children in the early grades of primary school who have younger siblings or relationships with children in the community between birth and age five. The second intervention is used by children in upper-primary school as they relate to siblings and children in the community who are between four and six years old, or the age just before school entry.

Getting Ready for School: A Child-to-Child Approach was piloted in collaboration with six countries: Bangladesh, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Tajikistan and Yemen. In addition to geographic region, factors considered in country selection include:

• Low level of primary school enrolment.
• High level of overage children enrolled in primary school.
• Low preschool coverage and absence of other early learning opportunities or such programmes as community-based childcare and development.
• Poor retention rates, weak learning achievement and high levels of dropout within early primary school.

• Previous experience with Child-to-Child programmes and activities.
• Commitment by the national ministry of education and teacher training institutes.
Within the flexibility of this programme approach, the following are adhered to by all participating countries:

- **Materials and training:** Teaching and learning templates have been developed by the Child-to-Child Trust. All materials are based on clearly defined outcomes and are revised to meet specific country contexts following adaptation guidelines.

- **Communication and advocacy:** A visual identity is systematically applied to all materials to strengthen recognition, understanding and uptake in communities. Prototype advocacy and communication materials have been developed with support from UNICEF Headquarters. The templates are designed to encourage country-specific communication and advocacy efforts, and a webspace has been launched to facilitate distribution.

**Programme evaluation:** The Child-to-Child approach is unique in that an evaluation component is a part of the programme design.

Participating countries will receive on going monitoring, evaluation and technical support throughout the duration of the initiative. In-country capacity-building at all levels of the programme will be given highest priority. The following sections provide more detailed explanations of materials and training, communication and advocacy, and evaluation.
II. MATERIALS AND TRAINING

Two interventions are planned: Helping the Little Ones/Helping My Own Learning and Getting Ready for School. As illustrated in Figure 1, Helping the Little Ones/Helping My Own Learning consists of developmentally appropriate stories, games and learning activities that can be used by children in early primary school as they relate to younger children from birth to age five. The suggested books and activities are designed to enhance young children’s social, language, motor and thinking skills.

By developing and utilizing these materials, young primary school children strengthen their emerging skills in reading, writing and numeracy. Communication and social skills required to understand and respond to the needs of other children are also enriched. Schoolchildren are strongly encouraged to take materials home and play with their younger siblings and other young children as part of their school activities.

Getting Ready for School is a series of interactive learning games and activities that focus on the basic building blocks of early numeracy and literacy for children prior to school. This one-year intervention is designed to be used by children in upper-primary school with younger children during the year before they enrol in school. Because the official age of entry varies from country to country, the materials are flexible and can be used with children aged four through six. Many of these activities can also be used to enhance teaching and learning environments during the first year of primary school.

The learning materials and implementation are designed to be inherently flexible. They have been systematically revised and adapted in response to the particular needs of the selected communities, schools, teachers and families. The interventions are complementary and adaptable to the differing needs of children from birth to school entry. In synergy, they help children arrive at school with the learning skills and self-confidence needed to succeed.
Intervention Strategy 1 – Helping the Little Ones/Helping My Own Learning

This intervention includes the developmentally appropriate Early Reader Series and play-based learning activities that can be used by children in the early primary grades to enrich the overall development of their younger siblings and other preschool children in the community. The suggested activities provide stimulating, age-appropriate learning opportunities for the very youngest learners, and reinforce many of the social and emotional skills needed by children during their first years of primary schooling. Thus, both younger and older children benefit from enriched developmental outcomes.

Four aspects of early learning and development guided the creation of these materials and activities. Activities for understanding and communicating help children develop their understanding of words, gestures, directions, questions and routines. Talking about stories and books are an important component. Activities for exploration and problem solving focus on how young children explore and figure things out. Activities that address concepts of colour, size, matching, weight and number, as well as anticipating consequences and solving problems, are included. Activities for interacting with and understanding others help children develop important social skills, such as recognizing and respecting others. In addition, these activities help children express who they are...
and what they are feeling. **Activities for moving and doing** include games that help children combine movement and the coordination of fine motor and self-help skills.

**The Early Reader Series, puppet families and little libraries**

The Early Reader Series consists of 18 colourfully illustrated books designed to appeal to infants, toddlers and young children. The family of characters and the stories they tell are designed to introduce children to books at an early age. They suggest a set of rich and stimulating activities for primary school children to participate in with younger siblings and friends.

There are two levels of readers. Those geared for children at the early stage of reading include *Beautiful Things for Anna*, *I Can, You Can* and *Let’s Pretend*. A second level requires slightly more advanced reading skills. The six titles in this series include *Tina Learns to Count*, *How Many Legs* and *Stop, Look and Listen*. As with all the materials developed in this initiative, countries are encouraged to adapt the content and characters. Moreover, technical assistance is available to countries wishing to produce new, developmentally appropriate children’s books.

The characters introduced through these stories can come to life with a family of puppets. The puppets are meant to stimulate children’s creative, language and listening skills. A prototype set of puppets and instructions has been developed, and countries can easily develop their own puppet family.

The Early Reader Series and puppet families can be used to stimulate active child-centred learning within the early primary classroom and to help the young learner feel comfortable in a supportive learning environment. This initiative also calls for the development of classroom and school-wide lending libraries.

*Child-to-Child* has designed a model classroom library with books and other learning materials suspended for easy display and availability to children. Countries are encouraged to adapt this model as they address variations in materials and environments.

Children are encouraged to take the books, puppets and learning activities home and use them with other young children. The goal of the Early Reader Series and associated activities is to promote effective home learning environments. Books and puppets can stimulate a wide range of fun and simple activities for children, teachers and parents.
Younger children can:
- Talk about the pictures
- Listen to the story
- Use puppets to act out the story
- Create new stories
- Draw pictures from the story
- Join in all the activities.

Older children can
- Read and show pictures to a younger child
- Talk about characters with a younger child
- Use puppets to express feelings
- Make up new stories
- Help younger children draw pictures
- Create new activities.

Parents and other caregivers can
- Read and talk about the story
- Listen to children’s' stories
- Tell new stories
- Remember traditional stories, songs and games
- Join in some activities
- Help make materials to support activities.

Teachers can
- Use books in the classroom
- Encourage children to take books and puppets home
- Suggest to older children ways to develop and tell stories
- Help children create new activities and materials.

**Treasure Box of Fun:** The Treasure Box of Fun offers a complementary strategy to the library of readers and puppets. In this strategy, Child-to-Child schools encourage the identification and collection of low-cost, locally available learning materials that stimulate young children to play, explore their environment, and develop their curiosity and creativity.

The prototype treasure boxes suggest numerous simple, low-cost and developmentally appropriate early learning materials, chosen to support young children playing and learning together. A guide indicates how each material can be used to encourage optimal interaction. If a treasure box contains wooden blocks of different sizes, for example, children playing together can develop the following skills:

**Talking and thinking**
- *Connect words to actions* as they talk about what they are doing.
- *Participate in conversations* about what they are doing.
- *Understand position words* as they walk on a path of blocks next to the table.
- *Understand concepts* such as soft, hard, big, small, heavy, light, rough and smooth.
• Use their imagination as they tell a story about what they have created.
• Make a plan as they decide what to build together.
• Complete a task as they make a path of blocks.

Moving and doing
• Develop awareness of where they are going as they walk on a path of blocks.
• Develop balance when moving as they carry blocks across the room.
• Use hand and wrist muscles to do delicate tasks as they stack small blocks.

Expressing feelings and learning about self
• Express their feelings when they discover “I like to build.”
• Feel “I can do it!” as they complete a tower of blocks – or knock a tower over.

Getting along with others
• Play with other children.
• Cooperate with others as one child hands another a block.
• Follow a simple rule that keeps everyone safe, such as “no throwing blocks.”

The Treasure Box of Fun can be used in many settings. Suggestions include:

Help older children help young children get ready for school. Create a classroom or school-wide toy lending library. Make a series of bags, with each containing one material and a suggestion card of how to use it. Invite children to take bags home to share with their families. Suggest to parents that they ask their children about materials they have brought home, and that they join in the learning and play.

Help children work together in the classroom. Older and younger children can work in pairs so they can play and learn with these materials at school. Teachers can receive training in using the materials to create more child-friendly classrooms and to apply interactive teaching methods.

Build young children’s interest and comfort in school to help assure the benefits of education are part of their lives. Invite groups of young children to come play together at school with the help of older children. When young children spend time at school and enjoy learning, they will discover an interesting place where they want to be.

Provide opportunities for parents to support their child’s education and learn from each other. Invite groups of parents to make bags of surprises for each child. Gather beautiful stones, make fill-and-dump cans, dolls, puppets, matching games or blocks. The possibilities are endless. Think together about some activities children can do with each ‘surprise’ and what children may learn through each activity. Families are encouraged to share their stories and questions with each other.

The materials and activities included within this intervention have the potential to positively influence the classroom environments and teaching methods used in the earliest grades. The introduction of child-centred learning materials and methods enable the youngest learners to make a smoother transition into the formal learning environments characterizing many classrooms. While there is much to be done, this
intervention hopes to make a small contribution to improving the quality of teaching for youngest learners.

**Intervention Strategy 2 – Getting Ready for School**

Building on the skills developed in Helping the Little Ones/Helping My Own Learning, Getting Ready for School is a one-year programme for children during the year before they enrol in primary school. The learning activities focus on early literacy through listening to and telling stories, as well as numeracy – counting, sorting and problem solving. Throughout the programme, attention is also placed on developing children’s self-esteem, confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

All children of the appropriate age are encouraged to participate. In collaboration with school directors and community leaders, all eligible children are identified the year before the required school enrolment age. Child-to-Child has extensive experience with involving older children in this type of mapping activity. Once eligible young children are identified, parents are informed and encouraged to enrol their children.

Getting Ready for School is based on the participation of older children acting as ‘young facilitators’ who participate in weekly group sessions and more informal home-based activities. Through this process, older primary school students engage in a meaningful community programme. In addition, the programme helps build on and utilize the literacy and numeracy skills these children have acquired.

Young facilitators are matched with one or several eligible children. It is recommended that children in the last year of primary school be selected as facilitators. The early learning activities promoted through the programme are simple, but they require mastery of basic literacy and math skills. Strong interpersonal skills and an ability to interact well with young children are important qualifications. In addition, students should express a personal desire to participate in the programme.

The proposed structure of the Getting Ready for School programme is based on weekly club meetings at the primary school. During the sessions, young facilitators work with other children under the guidance and supervision of a teacher. The weekly meetings provide children with all the materials needed to carry out the early learning activities. Children are encouraged to continue using the materials in creative ways outside of the school clubs.

Given the participation of both the young facilitator, who is an older primary school student, and the soon-to-be enrolled child, it is suggested that teachers from both first grade and higher primary grades be jointly responsible for coordinating and implementing the programme.

Because the materials and training introduce teachers to innovative and child-centred early learning teaching methods, it is strongly recommended that all first grade teachers participate in the training and have access to the materials. The teaching and learning methods incorporated in the materials enrich and enhance the teaching skills used by teachers in the first grade classroom. Training in the design and implementation of the
classroom libraries are built into the Getting Ready for School teacher training programme.

The early learning activities comprising this intervention strategy are more advanced than those developed in Helping the Little Ones/Helping My Own Learning and focus on a sequence of graded early numeracy and literacy activities. The literacy activities are based on the four components of emerging literacy: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Children explore literacy through songs and poems, make up stories, create books and read together, build sight vocabulary, explore sound-symbol relationships, and draw and talk about ideas.

Activities related to books and language include:
- Listening to and talking about stories.
- Retelling stories and creating new stories.
- Learning through songs and poems.
- Making books and reading together.
- Encouraging creativity through drawing and puppets.
- Using strategies to discover new words.
- Finding print in everyday life.

The numeracy activities are designed to help children connect mathematical concepts with real-life situations. Children use everyday objects to solve problems and estimate sizes and shapes, thereby becoming familiar with numbers, quantities and counting.

Activities that support the natural development and understanding of numbers include:
- Sorting and grouping objects.
- Using everyday objects such as beans, pebbles and buttons to learn about numbers.
- Comparing and measuring size and shape.
- Recognizing and predicting patterns.
- Playing number games.
- Practicing problem-solving skills.

Activity sets

The Getting Ready for School programme consists of five activity sets, each including activities for seven group sessions; the seventh session for all activity sets is dedicated to review. The activity set themes are:

- Set 1 – Here I AM: All About Me
- Set 2 – Talking About Pictures: Where is the mouse?
- Set 3 – Understanding Size and Shape: Learning with Larry
• Set 4 – Caring and Sharing: Amy and her friends
• Set 5 – Solving Problems: Those hungry goats.

The programme begins with simple tasks that gradually become more challenging. As each set builds on the skills of the previous set, the programme must be implemented sequentially. Although specific learning objectives are identified for each session, many cut across all sessions, including:

• Developing social skills such as listening, taking turns and sharing.
• Enabling children to take initiative and express their views and feelings.
• Building children’s confidence and self-esteem.
• Nurturing creativity and imagination.

The 35-week programme is designed to be implemented during a school year, with one session each week. The design is flexible, however, and allows for country adaptation. The duration and frequency of group sessions, for example, can be adapted to meet the needs within a particular context.

The group sessions are coordinated and facilitated by primary school teachers as they guide the young facilitators who work with children individually or in small groups. A friendly, secure and relaxed environment is the most conducive for young learners.

The activities implemented during each group session can also be used at home. Children learn best through repetition. By repeating and building on the group-based activities, parents and other family members have an important role; they are also encouraged to participate in and contribute to the group sessions.

**Getting Ready for School includes the following materials:**

**The Young Child’s Early Learning Pack** is a self-contained, all-inclusive tool designed to help young learners get ready for school. This kit is filled with activities to foster literacy and numeracy. In addition to storybooks, counting games and cut-outs, each learning pack contains such basic materials as paper, glue, crayons and scissors.

**Getting Ready for School: A Guide for Young Facilitators** accompanies the Young Child’s Early Learning Pack as an easy-to-use guide that contains step-by-step instructions for each activity. Each activity has been carefully selected to support continuous home-based learning and interaction, and suggestions for how children can continue to work together outside the group sessions are an important component.

**Getting Ready for School: A Guide for Teachers** contains all the information teachers need to facilitate group sessions. For each session, the guide highlights learning objectives and the materials needed to carry out the suggested activity. Warm-up activities and suggestions for fun review activities from the last session are included. At the conclusion of each session,
teachers will review the suggested home learning activities. Using the space provided in the guide, teachers are encouraged to add their own comments and observations of the session.

**A Teacher's Training Manual** has been designed to guide participating teachers in all aspects of the proposed Child-to-Child interventions. Because both interventions are based on the same principles, separate training manuals are not required. Teacher training workshops introduce child development concepts in simple terms, with an emphasis on the development of early literacy and numeracy. Interactive hands-on learning help teachers explore all activities in the programme. In addition, teachers are encouraged to discuss how to facilitate the programme and support the skills of the young facilitators.

To ensure programme quality, ongoing monitoring and support is provided by the non-governmental organization responsible for programme implementation. In collaboration with the Child-to-Child Trust, observation tools and instruments have been designed to facilitate this process. Follow-up training is implemented by local non-governmental organizations if and when required.
III. COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

A communication strategy has been developed to support the objectives of Getting Ready for School: A Child-to-Child Approach. It consists of a two-pronged strategy to raising awareness of and promoting interest and participation in the initiative at the global and community level.

Global-level communication is particularly important during the initial stages of the project because it involves securing buy-in among partners and participants, as well as encouraging ownership by policymakers and communities. Subsequently, as the programme expands and moves into the mainstream, results-based advocacy will be supported by a strong focus on evaluation.

The goals of community-level advocacy are to strengthen family readiness by informing community members, particularly parents, about the importance and benefits of early learning; raise awareness on the role of families and communities in enhancing their children’s development; provide Child-to-Child as the model for effective early learning; and increase acceptance of and participation in the Child-to-Child initiative. Possible channels to reach this audience include pamphlets, posters, flyers, radio announcements and TV spots.

Audience and key messages

Prototype messages to reach two different audiences have been developed and will be disseminated through a broad range of communication channels.

Messages for the global-level audience – policymakers, donors, international organizations and non-governmental organizations – include:

- Early learning gets children ready to start school at the right age and with the right skills. As long as too many children are poorly prepared for learning or start school later than the prescribed age, progress towards getting all children to access and complete primary education – as well as the quality of that education – will continue to suffer.

- In developing countries, Child-to-Child is one of the most promising, innovative and cost-effective strategies in offering opportunities to children who cannot access or afford preschool education.

- Children younger than school age are most influenced by other children, typically older siblings or playmates. The education system can build on this phenomenon to influence child development and school readiness in a more systematic manner, and both younger and older children will benefit.

- Children from the poorest families all over the world are less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out if they get there. Even at age five or six, girls are most
likely to be absorbed into household chores as boys get priority for schooling. Disparities between rich and poor, ethnic groups, boys and girls, and rural and urban children are most effectively reduced during the early childhood period.

- Partnerships are essential in attaining the objectives of the initiative, which involves collaboration between the Child-to-Child Trust, UNICEF, governments and local organizations.

**Community-level messages** are designed to reach communities, schools and parents. The following items illustrate four messages that can serve as templates for countries to adapt and produce locally.

1. To inform the community, particularly parents, about the importance of early learning:

   **Learning through Play: On the path to school success**
   - Children are born curious and ready to learn.
   - Children learn when they explore, experiment and have fun in a safe place. They learn when then play.
   - Children’s early experiences shape how their brains develop
   - Good early experiences help a child’s brain develop well.
   - When children have many chances to play, they learn about themselves, others and how things work.

2. To raise awareness about what parents and the wider community can do to enhance children’s development:

   **Parents are Teachers Too: Talk, sing and listen to your child**
   - What you say and do makes a difference in your child’s learning.
   - Your child watches and learns from you. Because you are so special, she wants to be like you.
   - Your child’s relationship with you teaches him what he can expect from people and shapes his relationships with them.
   - Everyday moments – eating, dressing, going to the market – are times to enjoy your child, talk together and help him learn.
   - When you take time to talk, sing and listen to your child, you help her feel good about herself and want to learn.

3. To provide the Child-to-Child model as an innovative strategy

   **Learning together to get ready for school**
   - The Child-to-Child programme helps children learn about their feelings, getting along with others, letters and words, numbers, colours and shapes.
   - Older children help young children learn from fun games, books and toys.
- Older children are learning as they teach young children.
- Children bring games, books and toys home to share with family members.
- Children learn best when family members show interest in games and other activities at home.

4. To increase acceptance of and participation in the Child-to-Child initiative

Make Dreams Come True: Send children to school ready to learn

- Children feel good about themselves when they learn new things. They want to keep learning more.
- Learning today can shape a child’s future.
- You support a child when you spend time with her to sing a new song, look at a book or play a new game.
- Children’s early learning sets the stage for school success.

Parenting education and school readiness

Programme communication is an important link between school activities and parents and families. Countries are encouraged to develop simple, positive and practical communication materials for parents. These should reinforce the child-centred learning concepts promoted through Getting Ready for School materials. Additional messages for parents that can be adapted at the country level include:

- Amazing newborns
- Your child’s social and emotional development
- Children’s fears
- Language development
- The power of play
- Many ways to play
- Learning to read and write
- Learning to count
- Every child is special

Visual identity

A visual identity has been developed, and all materials designed at the national and international levels will systematically apply the chosen graphic design and colour palette – taking into account the typography, logo and graphic motif. The Child-to-Child visual identity defines the ‘personality’ of the communication strategy and differentiates it from all other communication and early learning projects.

Guidelines for the visual identity include:
- Short, simple, bold, colourful.
• Light, open, easy to adapt for advocacy and programme communication.
• Does not require too much reading to process the information.
• White space used to enhance impact.
• Ample use of effective illustrations.

Elements considered in the design of the logo include:
• Primary and preschool children learning together, both at home and at school.
• Focus on child-to-child relationships.
• Focus on education.
• Focus on school readiness.

Webspace

A webspace has been launched to enhance communication and support a consistent application of the initiative’s visual identity. The space will provide:

• A ‘go-to’ destination for up-to-date information.
• An information source for countries wishing to adopt this approach.
• Design resources that can be shared by partners and participating countries.
• Programme updates that can be easily uploaded and downloaded.

The webspace can be found by visiting: https://grs.same-page.com/studio/v7/index.cfm
Please contact Abhiyan Jung Rana at ajrana@unicef.org, to gain access to the site.
IV. PROGRAMME EVALUATION

To determine the effectiveness of Getting Ready for School: A Child-to-Child Approach, a comprehensive evaluation in each of the six pilot countries was conducted.

Results and recommendations from the two evaluations of the pilot countries are available for download on the previously mentioned webspace, or by visiting: http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_61646.html

If participating countries are interested in implementing an evaluation, the design, as described below, can be used and modified to fit the needs of each country.

Research questions

The overarching research questions guiding the evaluation are:

1. To what extent does participation in the Getting Ready for School intervention…
   - increase on-time enrolment and school readiness of young children?
   - improve the progress and performance of the older children, including their knowledge and attitudes towards school, and boost expected outcomes for younger children in their homes and communities?
   - affect parents' knowledge and expectations of early childhood development, support for learning and their children’s school performance?
   - affect teachers’ instructional methods and schools’ readiness for children?
   - enhance community capacity to support families and foster young children’s development and learning?

2. Were schools, families and communities able to implement the Getting Ready for School intervention as intended? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention as it was implemented in this pilot?

3. What are the costs and benefits associated with programme implementation?

4. To what extent did participation in the evaluation of Getting Ready for School affect the policies, financial commitment and support of early childhood development within each country?

Overall design

Given that the Child-to-Child approach is implemented to assess its applicability for school readiness and concomitant educational outcomes – a novel application of the programme – it is imperative to evaluate its impact and to systematically document the process of implementation and related costs. Consequently, multiple linked evaluations should be conducted, including: an impact evaluation to determine the outcomes of this intervention on multiple beneficiary groups; a process evaluation to illuminate issues involved in fidelity to implementation; and a cost evaluation to discern the fiscal prudence of this approach.
The overall evaluation model is illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Getting Ready for School overall evaluation model**

In the country where implemented, the evaluation will involve two groups: one that participates in Getting Ready for School (treatment/intervention) and one that does not (control). The treatment group is made up of the schools, teachers, families and children participating in the initiative. The control group is made up of schools, teachers, families and children that do not participate in the programme but are otherwise as similar as possible to the treatment group.

Working in close collaboration with the evaluation team from each country, support can be provided to establish a strong evaluation design tailored to the situation in their country. Depending on the size of the country, available resources and pressing ECD needs, it is anticipated that the size and location of the communities that participate will vary. The goal is to obtain the largest school sample in each country that can be realistically managed. The minimum required sample size is 15 treatment and 15 control schools, with both treatment and control schools distributed across at least two districts.
to ensure than no district-specific influences affect the entire sample. The recommended minimum sample size for children and parents is 250 in the intervention and control groups.

Although there are several ways to determine treatment and control groups, a randomized design should be utilized where possible. Randomized controlled trials permit any observed differences between the intervention and control groups to be attributed to the intervention programme. As per this design, once the country identifies the communities and schools in which the programme will be implemented, schools will be randomly assigned to the treatment group or the control group.

Where randomized assignment to treatment and control groups is not feasible, a quasi-experimental design based on matched pairs of schools can be utilized. As per this design, schools are matched based on certain criteria and then assigned to the treatment or control groups. Each country’s evaluation design and sampling plan can be reviewed to ensure comparable intervention and control groups.

The impact evaluation will determine the benefits or changes for children and families. The initiative also seeks to determine the extent to which participation in the intervention has an impact on teachers’ instructional methods, the teaching and learning environment, and schools’ readiness for children.

Key questions in the Getting Ready for School evaluation will address the programme’s impact on four groups: children and families; first grade teachers and those at other levels; schools; and communities.

**Children and families**
- Do younger children who participate in Getting Ready for School have better on-time enrolment compared to children who do not participate?
- Are younger children who participate better prepared for school compared to children who do not participate?
- Do older children who participate make better progress in school compared to children who do not participate?
- Do older children who participate have better attitudes towards supporting younger children’s learning compared to children who do not participate?
- Do families whose children participate in Getting Ready for School have better knowledge about younger children’s learning and the importance of early childhood development compared to families whose children do not participate?
- Do families whose children participate provide better support for their children’s learning compared to families whose children do not participate?

**Teachers**
- Do teachers who participate in Getting Ready for School have an improved understanding of the importance of early childhood?
- Do participants exhibit improved teaching and instructional methods, such as child-centred learning, and interactive and innovative teaching?

**Schools**
• Has the participating school made changes in the amount and quality of support for incoming children in the early grades?
• Has the school facilitated children’s transition from home to school and enhanced connections between home and school?
• Has the number of students enrolled on time increased?
• Has the school showed improved educational standards after participation in Getting Ready for School?

Communities
• Do communities that participate in Getting Ready for School develop better capacities to support families compared to communities that do not participate?
• Are communities that participate better able to support children’s learning and development compared to communities that do not participate?
• Do communities that participate in the programme develop better school-community relationships compared to communities that do not participate?

Process evaluation

The process evaluation aims to gather information to assess three areas: a comparison of the strategy’s intent to programme implementation; the effectiveness of the programme in different contexts; recommended revisions to the programme design for future applications and scaling up.

Data will primarily be drawn from the process monitoring conducted by programme implementers. But to obtain comprehensive data and draw robust conclusions, additional data will need to be collected by evaluation teams through interviews with key informants.

The crucial questions to be addressed are:

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the programme?
What is working well?
What could be improved?
Who participated and how much of the programme did they receive?

Methods used to obtain this information can include interviews and focus groups with key informants, as well as reviews of teachers’ reflective records, attendance records and the demographic profile tool.

Cost evaluation

Investment in early childhood is often seen as an effective way to bring about positive social and economic returns, especially for children of poor families. The inclusion of a cost-benefit analysis adds an important dimension to the overall evaluation by providing first-hand information on the cost-effectiveness of these services, which can be used to guide future investment decisions.
A cost-benefit study attempts to estimate the dollar value of total benefits to the society for every dollar spent on the programme. The primary purposes of conducting the cost-benefit study are to examine Getting Ready for School expenditures on intervention services, and to explore the direct and indirect benefits of the programme for participating children and families. Due to the short duration of the study period, the cost-benefit analysis will mainly involve analysing short-term cost and benefit information.

The cost elements in the analyses include:

- **Start-up costs** – initial investment to implement the intervention, as well as the cost the provider will incur in setting up the intervention.

- **Ongoing costs** – the annualized cost of operation, e.g., teacher time in training children to use the Getting Ready for School intervention, programme-related supplies and materials, and capital equipment, for the years following initial implementation of the intervention. This analysis should also encompass the cost of ongoing professional training and the administrative, instructional and technical support needed to sustain the intervention.

To answer the other study questions, a multi-pronged approach to capturing data on the various cost elements can be used, including coordinated data collection strategies and applications. Questions about the amount of time teachers spend in providing training to children, for example, can be included as part of a teacher survey.

Financial documents such as budgets, payroll records and resource planning materials specific to the implementation of Getting Ready for School can also be reviewed. An examination of such institutional documents as personnel and expenditure reports makes it possible to estimate compensation rates for different types of staff – which will then be applied to the quantity of services to estimate the price of a particular type of support service. These documents also provide information on non-personnel costs, such as materials, supplies and transportation.
Policy evaluation

Efforts can be made to monitor changes in national policies. Issues to consider include changes in legislation regarding national commitment to the Child-to-Child approach as a strategy to increase school readiness and on-time enrolment. In addition, the design can consider the impact on preschool and primary school teacher training requirements.

An examination of policies before and after the study period should take place. Interviews with key policymakers will provide additional insight into policy changes.

Evaluation instruments

To address the research questions outlined above, participating countries can utilize a common framework of culturally appropriate measures to be modified by country teams to meet their specific needs. These measures include:

- Child assessment (school readiness).
- Parent or caregiver interviews.
- Surveys and focus group protocols for use with older children (young facilitators).
- Protocols for teacher and school administrator interviews and focus groups.
- Protocols for community leader interviews and focus groups.
- A programme cost-tracking tool.

In participating countries, child assessment and interviews of parents and caregivers can be administered before the programme begins to obtain baseline data and after programme implementation to determine its impact.

Throughout the implementation period, programme implementers will collect information that will inform the process evaluation and cost analysis. All other data sources will provide outcome data following programme implementation.

School records can also be utilized to track enrolment and retention as outcome indicators.
V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This initiative is a collaboration between in-country partners, UNICEF country and regional offices, the Education Section, Early Childhood Development Unit and the Division of Communications at UNICEF Headquarters in New York and the Child-to-Child Trust in London. The roles and responsibilities of each partner are outlined here.

A. UNICEF Headquarters

- Provide overall management and coordination
- Work closely with interested countries in implementing this initiative
- Develop the ‘Phase II’ replication strategy for roll-out to a larger number of countries
- Facilitate documentation and sharing of best practices and lessons learned using UNICEF platforms, in particular the webspace
- Provide assistance and support to country offices in the creation of various communication products regarding the programme
- Provide assistance and support to country offices in the evaluation of their programme if required.

B. Child-to-Child Trust

- Provide technical assistance
- Conduct material development training in each selected country
- Conduct teacher training after country-specific materials have been developed
- Provide implementing partners with follow-up support, supervision and monitoring

D. UNICEF regional offices

- Provide overall coordination, management and support for participating countries
- Manage technical and financial support to countries as appropriate for the programme
- Develop advocacy and dissemination strategies to support the Child-to-Child model

E. UNICEF country offices

- Select implementing partners
Identify participating communities and schools
Translate, adapt and refine all learning materials
Replicate and distribute materials
Provide project management and coordination at the country level
Manage project budget and secure adequate funding
Report back to headquarters on progress and submit updates, human interest stories and other materials for public dissemination

F. National governments

Collaborate closely with UNICEF at all stages of the project
Ensure timely integration of programme and materials into the school curricula
Provide support for advocacy and community awareness
Develop collaboration with selected teacher training institutes

G. Implementing partners

Coordinate day-to-day operations
Provide ongoing supervision and follow-up
Implement programme monitoring and evaluation