



Seychelles First International Biennial Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education



President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Danny Faure, Vice President, Mr. Vincent Meriton, distinguished guests and children

After two days of pre-conference seminars on various topics related to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), some 250 local and international delegates assembled at the Eden Bleu Hotel for the opening ceremony of the First International Biennial Conference on ECCE on the evening of Thursday 17th February, 2017. The opening ceremony was graced by His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Danny Faure and the Director for UNESCO-IBE, Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope, among many local and international dignitaries and scholars.

The evening began with the Seychelles National Anthem followed by a glorious welcoming performance by the National Schools' Choir. Mrs. Shirley Choppy, the Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD), warmly welcomed all invitees and delegates, in particular the delegates from 17 countries across the globe, to the ceremony and to the first two-day international conference, which Seychelles has ever organized. The keynote speaker, Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope, Director of the International Bureau of Education (IBE) under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) gave an impassioned address...
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A note from the CEO

Welcome Dear Readers to this special edition of our Newsletter.

February, 2017 will remain as a special month in the history of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Seychelles. Over fifty delegates - from more than fifteen countries, renowned international speakers and around three hundred local professionals convened for the First International Biennial Conference on ECCE. The conference was held under the theme 'Building Resilient Early Childhood Care and Education Systems: Lessons of Experience' and was jointly organised by Seychelles and IBE-UNESCO. The highlight of the Conference was the designation of Seychelles IECD as a Best Practice Hub for ECCE by the IBE-UNESCO. This is a great national achievement and a proud moment for Seychelles.

This special edition newsletter is dedicated to this very important and auspicious event. It showcases a review of the highlights and main events of the Conference and the seminars preceding the main Conference.

Without the support of the partners and stakeholders, both locally and internationally, the conference would not have been possible and successfully realized. I wish to extend our heartiest thanks to the National Conference Organising Committee for their guidance, the IECD and Sectoral sub-committees for the brilliant execution of the various assigned events of the Conference.

I count on your constant support and continued collaboration for the advancement of ECCE in Seychelles and worldwide.

Rendezvous for the next International Biennial Conference in Seychelles in 2019!

Mrs Shirley Choppy
 CEO of the Institute of Early Childhood Development



She reflected on the chosen theme of the conference ‘Resilient Early Childhood Care and Education Systems: Lessons of Experience’, and the consistent progress that Seychelles has made in ECCE since 2010. She highlighted some of the lessons learnt by Seychelles and concluded by calling on other countries present to learn from the Seychelles’ experience and be guided by the chosen theme of the conference.

The Vice President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Vincent Meriton officially opened the First International Biennial Conference. In his address, he recounted the journey of Seychelles in building the current ECCE system. He acknowledged the remarkable contributions of the previous leaders and emphasized that Seychelles has always given considerable attention to ensuring the well-being of its children. Through a short video from Dr. Irina Bokova, the Director General of UNESCO, congratulated Seychelles for its achievements and consistent progress, especially for its political support and leadership in developing and promoting ECCE.

The highlight of the ceremony was the launch of Seychelles as a Best Practice Hub for ECCE – an exceptional accomplishment for our small island state. The Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Mr. Joel Morgan delivered the address to launch Seychelles as the Best Practice Hub. This major achievement was cemented through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Seychelles and IBE-UNESCO. The signing, on behalf of the Government of Seychelles, was done by Mrs. Macsuzy Mondon, the Designated Minister and Minister for Local Government; whilst Dr. Marope signed on behalf of IBE-UNESCO. To honour the momentous occasion, on behalf of the IBE-UNESCO Dr. Marope presented the IECD Chief Executive Officer, Mrs. Choppy with a commemorative plaque.

As usual, the participation of children in the ceremony left the conference delegates and invitees in high spirits by various enchanting performances. This included a poem which was recited by two children from the Independent School, a traditional dance performance by a group of Primary School students from Anse Boileau, a ballet dance presentation by students of the Elite Dance School, and to end the ceremony a performance by the National School Choir.

The ceremony came to a close on a unifying note as the audience linked hands to sing the very popular song “We are the World”. In the spirit of the lyrics there was a heartfelt call to everyone present, to have a joint agenda - to work together for the advancement of the children of the world.



Dr. Marope, Director IBE-UNESCO, delivering the keynote speech



Dr. Marope and Designated Minister Mondon signing the MOU for the Best Practice Hub



President Faure and distinguished guests in attendance

ECCE CONFERENCE:

Second Day

The International Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) focused on sharing knowledge related to child development concepts. Participants shared best practices, gained information on early childhood intervention strategies and addressed current as well as future challenges of each country. The sessions were held at the International Conference Centre Seychelles (ICCS) and coordinated by the Health Department of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in collaboration with the Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD).

The day was opened by the Principal Secretary of the Health Department, Dr. Bernard Valentin. He emphasized the importance of health in the development of children and encouraged countries to share their experience and knowledge for further advancement. The main highlight of the morning session was a virtual tour showcasing the ECCE system and achievements towards resilience in Seychelles. It featured the political and technical commitment, the policy direction and presented the progress made by different Sectors in ECCE, which are working together to move forward the Seychelles ECCE agenda. The high level panel discussion that followed the virtual documentary had the Chief Executives of ECCE in Seychelles at the helm. The deliberations centered on collaboration, private partnership in financing ECCE projects, teacher conditions and parenting issues.

Dr. Emily Vargas-Baron, Director of the Institute of Reconstruction and International Security through Education (RISE) gave the Keynote Address which focused on the importance of inclusion of children with special needs.

During the course of the conference two further presentations concentrated on sharing experiences and best practices. The first presentation was delivered by Dr. Gunilla Dalberg, Professor Emerita of Education at Stockholm University, Department of Child and Youth Studies. The second presentation was delivered by Ms. Rusudan Bochorishvili, Director of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Services at First Step Georgia and Chair of Georgian Coalition of Early Childhood Intervention.

These sessions were followed by three presentations from renowned and top level global neuroscientists on the development of brain science in relation to ECCE. They were (1) Paul-Howard Jones, Professor of Neuroscience and Education at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, (2) Dr. Amedeo D'Angiulli, Professor of Neuroscience and Child Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa and (3) Professor Ross Cunnington, from the Queensland Brain Institute, University of Queensland. The highly interactive and informative presentations and high level panel sessions were very well appreciated by delegates.

The day ended with four country presentations on ECCE systems and provisions from Cameroon, Seychelles, Swaziland and South Africa.

Third Day

The third and last day of the Conference was coordinated by the Social Affairs Department in collaboration with IECD. The day began with a presentation by Professor Tim Waller from Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge in the U.K. The theme of his presentation was '(Pre) Schools without schools'. He elaborated on the importance of pre-schooling and its provisions to further enhance children's holistic development.

Dr. José M. Saavedra, MD, Chief Medical Officer from Nestlé Nutrition and Associate Professor of Paediatrics, John Hopkins University School of Medicine emphasised the importance of good nutrition in ECCE and gave an overview of the projects across the world which are funded by Nestlé. The day continued



Highlighted session with the Neuroscientists

with group work whereby countries shared experiences and identified weaknesses in their respective ECCE systems. Discussions culminated with eight countries sharing their experiences in a plenary session.

Conclusion

The Chief Executive Officer of IECD, Mrs. Shirley Choppy presented a summary of the challenges being encountered by each of the countries. She explained that these challenges will form the basis of a Joint Framework for Action that IECD will put together with the assistance of IBE-UNESCO. The participating countries, which are also implementing the UNESCO 'General Education Quality Analysis Framework' (GEQAF) will reconvene in Seychelles in 2019 for the second international conference to share the progress.

This was followed by a Roundtable panel to gauge the support of both local and international partners to support ECCE. Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope, the Director of IBE-UNESCO highlighted the mandate of IBE in the mobilization of funds to support Early Childhood Development. She also placed strong emphasis on the important roles of partners in the implementation of projects and associated initiatives that will have positive impact on the lives of young children. She concluded by sharing a few points for reflection and the way forward.

Before the closing ceremony, on behalf of the Government, the Designated Minister, Mrs. Macsuzy Mondon presented a plaque to Dr. Marope. This token of appreciation signifies her unwavering support and the fruitful collaboration and cooperation between the IBE-UNESCO and Seychelles.

The two-day conference ended with the closing remarks by the Minister for Health and Social Affairs, Mr. Jean-Paul Adam. He expressed his appreciation for the designation of Seychelles as a best practice hub for ECCE, the importance of working and engaging with the Private Sector to consolidate and institutionalise the ECCE Framework. The Minister closed his remarks by reinforcing engagement, interaction and coordination between government and ECCE.



Dr Vargas-Baron delivering the keynote speech

Courtesy call on the President of the Republic



Prior to the official opening of the First International Biennial Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, Her Excellency Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope, Director of the IBE-UNESCO paid a courtesy call on President Danny Faure. She was accompanied by former Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Mrs Jeanne Simeon and the CEO of IECD, Mrs Shirley Choppy.

Dr. Marope wished to thank the President for his commitment and dedication to ECCE which directly contributed to Seychelles becoming a leader in Early Childhood Care and Education. She

also praised President Faure for his support towards Seychelles' voluntary contribution to the International Bureau of Education. This contribution will aid IBE in assisting other countries with ECCE and other related projects.

IECD would also like to commend President Danny Faure for his leadership and unwavering support in advancing Early Childhood Care and Education in the Seychelles and internationally.

Seychelles Biennium Review Caucus on ECCE



A Review Caucus was hosted by the Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD) in collaboration with the ECCE sectors and the United Nations Education and Scientific Organisation – International Bureau of Education. It took place on the 14th February 2017, to share the Status Review Report on ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) from 2011 to date, discuss progress, achievements and challenges in ECCE.

The caucus was one of the main side events of the First International Biennial Conference on ECCE held in Seychelles from February 16-18, 2017. It was graced by the presence of Designated Minister Macsuzy Mondon and Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope, Director IBE-UNESCO among other Ministers and High Level Dignitaries. Dr. Marope was part of the panel of international experts who provided their inputs and intellectual support through the high level panel discussion aimed at helping Seychelles address challenges and strengthen ECCE services further.

In his opening remarks, the Chairperson of IECD Board said that the aim of the caucus is to critically take stock of where we are, what has been done, what we have yet to do to be able to take us forward and give a better start to the children of our country. He said the Board of IECD will ensure it perseveres and puts into practice whatever is decided.

The highlight of the Caucus was the presentation of the Review Report on ECCE. Dr. Andre Leste, the former Director for

Programme Coordination and Research, provided some details on achievements so far and also the challenges being faced across sectors. He said the country is seen as example for achievements across the various sector including the IECD on policies, programmes and other ECCE initiatives. However, he concluded that the country is doing fairly well in terms of its commitment to child development and child protection. As for the challenges, Dr. Leste remarked that 'quality' is one of the main challenges and monitoring, supervision, reporting and data management are necessary to achieve quality.

A panel discussion on the Status Review Report, with the participation of the sectoral Chief Executives also formed part of the programme. This was chaired by the then Deputy Cabinet Secretary – Mrs. Jeanne Simeon. In addition, a High Level Discussion was led by Dr. Marope to provide intellectual support and inputs to address the challenges and strengthen ECCE services. She also applauded the initiative to take stock of ECCE nationally and proposed some recommendations for actions.

The ceremony also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding with private sector companies and National ECCE Trust Fund, for a strategic partnership in ECCE development. It specifically concerns the construction of a modern and model Day Care Centre at Grand Anse, Praslin. The signing was made between the Chairperson of the National ECCE Trust Fund, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and private sectors notably the Vijay and Saharjanand construction companies. This was followed by the Donor's Forum organised by the Ministry of Local Government and IECD, held on the 03rd February 2017, with representatives from the construction companies and commercial banks to support and mobilise funds towards the construction of the Day Care facility on Praslin.



Conference Side Events

A total of four presentations organised by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development took place on Wednesday 15th February prior to the Conference. The participants included High Level Officials, stakeholders, partners, sponsors, Education Representatives, school leaders, teachers, Day Care Operators, and Assistants, and students from the National Institute of Health and Social Services.



Dr Gunilla Dahlberg, Prof. of Early Childhood Education, Sweden

The presentation of Dr. Gunilla Dahlberg laid emphasis on 'Quality Evaluation in ECCE' and stressed the importance of learning through play in early childhood. It was revealed that learning environments should be set up to encourage children to explore and investigate their surroundings. Educators were therefore urged to provide all children with the right environment that will allow them to cultivate a learning mind.

The First International Biennial



Souvenir photo with the President, Vice President, Ministers and Chief Executives with the ECCE Best Practice Plaque



Jessica Li Ah Kane & Ibrahim Ur reciting the



Minister Morgan delivering his address to launch of the Best Practice Hub



The surprise handing over of the Best Practice Plaque to CEO of the



Lively traditional dance performance by Children from Anse Boileau Primary School



Beautiful performance by the

Conference on ECCE in pictures



Marjee from Independent School recites her poem



Minister Adam delivering the closing address of the Conference



Director of the Best Practice Hub of the IECD, Mrs. Choppy



Opening address by the Vice President



Brilliant ballet performance by the Elite Dance and Fitness School



The National Schools Choir

A presentation by Dr Mmantsetsa Marope, Director of IBE-UNESCO was based on 'Future Competencies and Future Curricula'. The presentation questioned traditional practice and persuaded educators to move away from the learning of content and assessments that only challenge students to remember and reproduce what they have heard, read and written. In addition, the speaker added that modern day technological and digital advances have to be taken on board by teachers. Educators have to be digitally minded in order to develop autonomous learning skills for their personal growth and for their students' development. She further noted that the transition itself is extensive and there are numerous implications for teaching, learning and assessments.



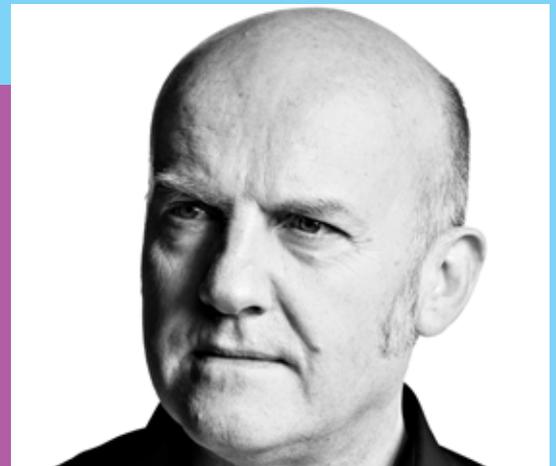
Dr Mmantsetsa Marope, Director of the IBE-UNESCO, Switzerland



Professor Patrick Griffin, Chair of Education at the University of Melbourne, Australia

Professor Patrick Griffin based his presentation on the Competency-Based Curriculum: The Transition from Content to Competence. He outlined that the competency-based curriculum-focuses on the identification of outcomes, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that a student needs to learn for absolute proficiency and higher levels of learning. Professor Griffin reiterated that learning progression is at the heart of a competency-based curriculum.

Professor Paul Howard-Jones, a Professor of Neuroscience and Education with the University of Bristol shared what neuroscience tells us about the special interaction that children have with their environment. Children have to be engaged in finding something that interests them, and then must be assisted to construct their thinking around their prior knowledge. He further emphasised that the brain is multi-sensorial and therefore when constructing learning with children it is more effective when they are given multi-sensory stimulus. Finally, teachers need to scaffold their learning, making sure that fresh learning becomes permanent and easily accessible.



Professor Paul Howard-Jones, Prof. of Neuroscience and Education, UK



Professor Tim Waller, Professor of Child and Family Studies, UK

The last session on 'Outdoor Early Education' was conducted by Professor Tim Waller who focused on the importance of early childhood play and exploration outdoor. He explained that children should be offered the chance of exploration and exposure to their external surroundings. It was made clear that schools are not good enough unless the staff take this aspect into account.

Seminar presentation on equity in ECCE



Dr. Christian Morabito, addressing the overseas delegates and local participants

The Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD) in collaboration with IBE-UNESCO organized a seminar on Equity in Early Childhood Education as part of the activities leading up to the First International Biennial Conference in Early Childhood Care and Education. The half-day session was launched by the Chief Executive Officer of IECD. Mrs. Choppy highlighted that we should all value diversity and individuality and aim to expose children to an environment which reflects diversity and encourage children to appreciate our human similarities and differences. She also described Equity in ECCE as a challenging endeavor and even insurmountable for many countries. Finally she put forth that equity is not an issue and a lot has been done in terms of equity in Seychelles, but more emphasis needs to be placed on 'quality' of ECCE services and programmes.

Dr. Christian Morabito, an International Consultant in ECCE at the IBE-UNESCO provided many illustrations to describe Equity in ECCE and acknowledged the many challenges faced by many countries. He concluded his presentation by providing recommendations and possible approaches to tackling the issue. In a plenary session, chaired by Mr. Cristian Fabbi, International Consultant in ECCE at the IBE-UNESCO, participants, both local and international ECCE professionals raised many questions, sought clarifications and shared good practices and suggestions.

The seminar ended with closing remarks by Mrs. Vereine Louis-Marie, the Director of Regulatory Affairs Section at IECD. She stressed on the importance of collaborative work in reducing the disparities that exist in our respective countries; and reiterated the need to step up our joint effort to improve the quality of programmes and services to reach marginalized communities.

Learning environment in holistic Early Childhood Care and Education

On 16th February 2017, The Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD) and the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development in collaboration with UNESCO International Bureau of Education organized a training session. This half-day programme for teachers from both the State and Private Schools was on "Learning Environment in Holistic Early Childhood Care and Education". This event was part of the activities during the Conference.

There are many factors that impact a child's early learning and this includes parents, caregivers, and other children, however the element with the strongest influence is the early learning environment. The learning environment comprises of a combination of spaces and circumstances in which a young child grows and learns.

An effective learning environment encourages learning through play with a rich set of materials and learning opportunities. Children's experiences are limited by their surroundings and the environment we provide for them has a crucial effect on the way their brains develop. Throughout our lives, the brain re-wires itself based on experiences and different environments

This is why healthy environments in these early stages of development are so important. Not only are children learning new things in new environments, their brains are constantly applying knowledge of past experiences to newer ones.

The session was facilitated by Mr. Christian Fabbi, a Consultant from the IBE-UNESCO and moderated by Dr. Andre Leste, the former Director for Programme Coordination and Research at IECD.



Teachers ready for the informative session

During his presentation Mr. Fabbi stressed the importance of creating organized work spaces which would be favorable to the good development of the child. Each space contains a diverse activity which teaches the child something different. A few examples given by Mr. Fabbi were: the dress up corner, where children could learn about their identity and role play; the use of natural and recycled elements. Children can relate to objects and materials which surround them such as: sand, wood, flowers and seeds. Learning how to interact in a group are also social skills that Mr. Fabbi talked about during the session; children should be given the opportunity to discuss and share their experience during each activity.

The teachers participating were very pleased with the presentation as it gave them insight into the use of more hands on learning methods for their pupils. The session ended with small group work and questions.

Building effective early childhood education systems is a global imperative



Every child should have the best start in life

Evidence on the multiple benefits of quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) is compelling. ECCE improves children's ability to learn, level and equity of learning outcomes, school completion, social adjustment, individual earnings later in life, productivity, economic growth and more.

Among others, it reduces the risk of school grade repetition, dropping out of school, social delinquency, incarceration, and breaks the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

While ECCE is among the smartest investments governments and donors can make, close to half the world's children do not have access to quality ECCE. Access is intolerably low in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, West Asia and South Asia.

Both developed and developing countries are unable to provide quality ECCE services for all their children. Services are even weaker for children of age 0 to 3 years.

Seychelles leading the way in ECCE

So, which countries are leading the way? Would you be surprised to learn that the Republic of Seychelles, an archipelago of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean, east of mainland East Africa, is among the world leaders in ECCE? Would you know that both political leaders and experts there are committed to ensure holistic development of children from pre-birth onwards?

How and why has Seychelles made ECCE a priority? Mrs. Shirley Choppy is the head of the Institute of Early Childhood Development (IECD) set up in 2013 as the

coordinating body for early childhood development in Seychelles to oversee developmental stages from 0-8 years of age, provide leadership and strategic direction for ECCE at national level, and advice government on policy issues and programmes relating to ECD.

Mrs. Choppy explains: "At the time of the UNESCO World Conference on ECCE in 2010, Seychelles was working in silos on ECCE with limited progress. We realized that we needed to work together with the shared commitment of all partners including the ministries of Education, Health and Social Affairs, as well as local governments. As a small country, we were able to synergize our expertise and work collaboratively, and also enjoyed very strong political will. When we finalized the framework on ECCE, the IECD was born to ensure effective implementation. As a country, we realized ECCE had been neglected with focus on secondary or upper primary education, just like some other countries, but we believe ECCE is the foundation for nation building. We are now in a position to share what we learned with other countries, motivate and lead the way."

Sharing good practices beyond borders

The Seychelles' commitment has gone beyond national boundaries. These great strides have led to the country hosting the First International Biennial Conference on ECCE convening 18 countries to share knowledge, experiences and best practices. The conference was organized by the National High Level ECCE Policy Committee and the IECD (February 16 – 18, 2017) with technical support from the International Bureau of Education (IBE-UNESCO).

Its theme was Building Resilient Early Childhood Care and Education Systems: Lessons of Experience. A total of 350 regional and international delegates converged to Seychelles, including experts from all fields that constitute a holistic ECCE service—neuroscience, health, nutrition, the law, social affairs, education, water, sanitation, women and child rights.

They shared their expertise while different countries shared their best practices. Delegates came from all spheres including the public and private sectors, civil society, academia, research, policy makers and practitioners.

The President's resolve to lead in ECCE

Seychelles' President, His Excellency, Mr. Danny Faure resolved to lead the building of effective ECCE systems nationally and globally. During the conference, I was glad to formally recognize Seychelles as an IBE-UNESCO Best Practice Hub (BPH). The President understands the fundamental importance of early childhood care and education as a foundation for human development, which is a foundation for overall development.



Modest about his achievements, the President knows that his country has made strides, but acknowledges that: “we should not remain in the comfort zone, we need to ensure that we have the proper mechanism to consolidate the work we have done and remain vigilant so there is no stagnancy.”

This article was contributed by Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope and published by the GPE in May 2017.

Seychelles has acted as a leader on the global stage for ECCE, which would never have been possible without the resolve of President Faure’s very dedicated, committed and unflinching leadership.



Impressions from the Conference

Dr. Dahlberg asked all participants to reflect on the importance of allowing children to explore their environment through play. She stated that educators should set up learning environments which allow children to develop as thinkers and ultimately doers.

She further referenced Louis Malaguzzi who affirmed that, “All children are intelligent, and all children are competent”. This implies that as educators we must create enabling environments that allow children to explore, think, make sense of things, places and people in their world through interacting with others, investigating, questioning, forming, testing and refining ideas. Much of this happens through play and other experiences that permit children to be creative, to take risks and to make discoveries. In addition to constructing knowledge and developing skills, children also need to develop positive dispositions and attitudes towards learning. Therefore, we need to promote learning by planning activities through which children can experience success as learners.

General impression on the session conducted on Quality Evaluation in ECCE *Julina Françoise — Institute of Early Childhood Development*

On the occasion of the 1st Biennial Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education conducted in Seychelles from the 16th to 18th February 2017 teachers from kindergarten, P1 and P2 classes were cordially invited by IECD to attend seminar and conferences. Two students from primary two Jessica Li Ah Kane and Ibrahim Umarji had the pleasure of representing Independent School with a beautiful poem entitled “Island in the sun” during the impressive opening ceremony which was really appreciated by the multicultural participants. The conference was fruitful and interesting whereby we had the opportunity to learn about how our government and other private sectors have taken ownership of the ECCE programme. It is clear that the positive steps taken by ECCE Sectors will ensure that no child is left behind. We believe that the UNESCO should send a powerful message to the countries that are not being supported by their government. The children are our future so we need to give them the opportunity to develop holistically.

The 1st International Biennial Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education *Jeanine Hoareau — Independent school*

“We were greatly impressed by the presentation of Mr. Tim Waller on the 18th February, 2017. He spoke at-length about The Bric Project where pre-school children have the opportunity to go out into the community and experience everyday situations. It’s about making them democratic citizens from an early age. We both felt that this was something that we could implement here in Seychelles where our children have the advantage of sea, land and forest based activities. We would like to thank IECD for organizing the conference and for their kind invitation for us to take part.”

The 1st International Biennial Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education *Mary Uzice and Louise Moncherry — International school*

THANK YOU!

The Chairperson and Members of the National Conference Committee would like to convey their heartiest thanks and warm gratitude to the Government of Seychelles and the IBE-UNESCO, in particular Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope, the Director of IBE, for their unwavering support and assistance to successfully realize the First International Biennial Conference on ECCE in Seychelles. Special thanks go to all International renowned speakers and experts for their brilliant presentations, overseas and local delegates for their engagement and participation.

The conference and side events would not have been possible without the commitment, diligent and hard work of the Organizing Committees in the main ECCE sectors. Our sincere gratitude go to the Institute of Early Childhood Development and its Board of Directors, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education & Human Resource Development, Ministry of Local Government, the National ECCE Trust Fund and the Seychelles National Youth Council.

Our whole-hearted thanks also go to our partners; The Seychelles Nation and The Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC); both Television and 'Radyo Sesel' for their relentless support and assistance to bring information about the conference to the population and continuously keeping them informed throughout the Conference. We are also particularly pleased with the contributions of the other key partners from the private sector, namely: Seychelles Trading Company and the Construction industry – Vijay Construction and Sahajanand Construction, which have all pledged their support and commitment during the conference to support early childhood development. Thank you very much for your generosity.

We wish to commend all those who have contributed towards the success of this conference and reiterate our call for all parties to work together for a strong and winning start for children in Seychelles.

