

Abstract:

If we are committed to the health and development of children, we need to recognize that the vast majority of the world's women are working women. In Africa, 80% of the women are actively engaged in economic activities outside the home. The "economic miracle" in Southeast Asia was made possible by the nimble fingers of thousands of women working in textile and electronics factories. There is need for pre-day-care advocacy for infants, through promotion of breast feeding and maternity leave. When the mother returns to work, the standard of the International Labor Organization should be applied, namely "...the care of children while the parents are working cannot be ignored because it forms a focal point on which three main concerns of development policy—work, health, and education—converge." Several principles emerged from the presentations in the international panel: 1. Child-care programs must be community based, using the resources of the families and the community organizations themselves. 2. Programs require the active involvement of the communities, women's groups, and other partners. 3. Programs are modified by innovations created by community organizations, universities, and other groups. 4. Programs require the mobilization of trained young men and women into the field of early childhood education and development. This international panel provided an overall uniting theme, that throughout the world the hope for the survival and better life for children unites parents of every country and every creed. This is one of the most powerful and strongest motivational resources in the world. We need to recognize the power of this hope and address that hope, providing with a certain degree of humility that there exist no single model, and no single country has all the answers. By respecting the ideas of the many innovations and different approaches of women, parents, and families, we can find the answers. There is a clear need for national networks as well as for international networks, exchanges of information, sharing of experience, and mobilization of the social resources in advocating early childhood education and development for the world's children.