

ECDAN

Early Childhood Development Action Network

**Multisectoral Approaches to Nurturing Care
Programmes:
A case study of opportunities and challenges in Zambia**

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	2
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	3
<i>1. Introduction</i>	4
Multisectoral coordination	4
Multisectoral action for nurturing care	5
Case study objectives	7
<i>2. Methodology</i>	7
Ethical considerations	8
Data analysis	8
Limitations of research	8
<i>3. Results and discussion</i>	8
How is ZEC DAN structured to promote multisectoral collaboration?	9
Activities by which ZEC DAN facilitates multisectoral collaboration	10
Perceived opportunities for multisectoral approaches	11
Challenges affecting multisectoral collaboration	12
<i>4. Conclusion and recommendations</i>	13
<i>References</i>	16

Abstract

Multisectoral action is advocated by international organizations as essential to addressing the multiple components of nurturing care and strengthening coherence across sectors. In Zambia, efforts have been made to advocate for multisectoral action in the implementation of Nurturing Care Programs (NCP) using the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF). For example, the Zambian Early Childhood Development Action Network (ZECDAN) was established to coordinate implementation of NCP at different levels, including early learning, growth monitoring and early identification of learners with Special Education Needs. While multisectoral action is advocated as one of the strategies to address complex health and child development challenges, there is limited clarity and persistent challenges in the process of multisectoral collaboration in action. This small-scale study explored the issues and challenges in the implementation of multisectoral approaches to NCP in Zambia, using ZECDAN as a case study. The study analyzed the current situation to the implementation of the NCP using the NCF and available platforms for multisectoral collaboration through interviews with members of ZECDAN. Part of the interviews included analyzing challenges for multisectoral collaboration, identifying available opportunities and recommendations based on a conceptual framework for multisectoral approaches developed in Africa. This study also included a desk review of publications on multisectoral approaches and the NCF at global, regional, and country levels. The preliminary results indicate that multisectoral collaboration among key actors is generally weak. Key challenges include insufficient resources to facilitate effective implementation, unclear roles and responsibilities including non-participation of local actors, and a weak monitoring and evaluation system. On the other hand, there appears to be adequate senior political leadership to support and advocate for multisectoral action for the implementation of nurturing care. Also, ZECDAN has helped partners to recognise their interdependencies in moving towards a common vision for nurturing care and has helped to coordinate and harmonise efforts of sectors involved.

Keywords: *Nurturing care Framework, Zero to three, Multisectoral approaches, Zambia national Education Action Network, Early Childhood Education Action network, Early Childhood Development*

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1. Introduction

Multisectoral coordination

A multisectoral approach refers to deliberate collaboration among various government ministries or sectors (e.g., health, nutrition, education, agriculture) and stakeholder groups (e.g. government, bilateral/multilateral agencies, civil society, and private sector) to jointly achieve a policy outcome. By coming together in diverse and multiple sectors, partners can leverage knowledge, expertise, reach, and resources. Early childhood development (ECD) and health goals are complex, and in many cases, may be influenced by interrelated factors that can be best addressed with a multisectoral approach (Salunke & Lal, 2017). By leveraging the strengths and varied approaches of partners, effective multisectoral coordination can eliminate policy implementation barriers, facilitate scale-up, and increase the impact that one sector or partner might have had alone. They can enhance service delivery through alliance building aimed at strengthening implementation of public policies (Ansell and Gash, 2008). In nutrition and early childhood development, multisectoral approaches have also been shown to improve collective effectiveness and efficiency of financial resources that strengthen coherence across sectors (Zaidi and colleagues, 2018). These are the main benefits of multisectoral coordination. It yields these benefits when government ministries collaborate with each other and with other non-government organizations to identify shared goals across sectors and opportunities for collaboration.

The structure and process of the coordinating body is critical for its success. Successful multisectoral collaboration is dependent on many factors and requires buy-in and commitment from partners working together. For example, Brinkerhoff and colleagues (2019) indicate that multisector approaches require effective governance, such as leadership, decision-making, accountability, and control. It depends on the strategies that support interchanges and (potentially) reconciliation of conflicting positions across different actors, organizations, and sectors. It depends on capacity-building processes, exchange of tools and other ways that members may benefit from shared knowledge. However, the absence of a political will or commitment, inability to identify co-benefits and to act in win-win situations, as well as poor communication, test the continuity and sustainability of multisectoral action (Agranoff, 2006). The objective of this research is to interview members of ZECDAN (Zambia Early Childhood Development Action Network), a multisectoral collaboration platform in Zambia, both government and non-government members, to learn more about its structure, processes, opportunities and challenges related to implementation of nurturing care programs.

Zambian country context of nurturing care programming

For Africa, including Zambia, the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) presents an opportunity to build evidence around holistic early childhood development (ECD) programs (World Health Organisations, 2018). The sustainability of potential multisectoral inputs lies in adopting multisectoral intervention packages that require coordinated national policies with implementable budgeted action plans that are governed by coordinating bodies at national and subnational levels (Britto et al., 2014). In 2017, Zambia established the Zambia National Early Childhood Development Action Network (ZECDAN) as a first step to enhancing multisectoral collaboration in implementing nurturing care programs. The focus of the network was on supporting the cross-sectoral implementation of nutrition services, early learning for children between 3 and 6 years, parenting practices for parents of children under 6 years, and research. The network brought together various government Ministries, as well as international, local, and academic institutions. Prior to its establishment, the implementation of parenting programmes and preschool was fragmented among different ministries and non-governmental organizations.

Currently, ZEC DAN is the main network working on ECD in Zambia and capable of providing a platform for multisectoral collaboration. In its structure, it brings together multiple small committees within many government ministries, and multiple international and local organizations who implement nurturing care programs in Zambia. These include committees within the Ministry of Health (MoH) such as the ECD Multisectoral Technical Committee (ECDMTC) which also includes Ministry of Education (MoE) Ministry of Sport Youth and Child Development (MSYCD) Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) and international agencies and organisations such as UNICEF, Child Fund Zambia, WHO and USAID. Within the ECDMTC, IMCI subcommittee members of MoH are also represented., In addition to the MoH and its MTC committee, there are many Non-Governmental organizations who are members of ZEC DAN such as ZANEC.

Across all levels the government, the MoH through its ECDMTC is spearheading a policy framework and coordinating implementation. The government is supported by International Non-Governmental organizations such as UNICEF, USAID, PATH, PLAN, Save the children, Child Fund, VVOB. The international organisations are expected to participate in the rotational chairing of ZEC DAN meetings and provide technical support to policy formulation and implementation. They are also expected to provide financial support, monitoring and evaluation.

In terms of its processes, The ZEC DAN network provides a platform to collaborate and share information, raise awareness, provide technical guidance among diverse partners; providing high-level and credible leadership from trusted partners/ministries; and creating a shared understanding and common vision for ECD/NC across diverse partners.

Figure 1. Organizations belonging to multisectoral collaboration platforms



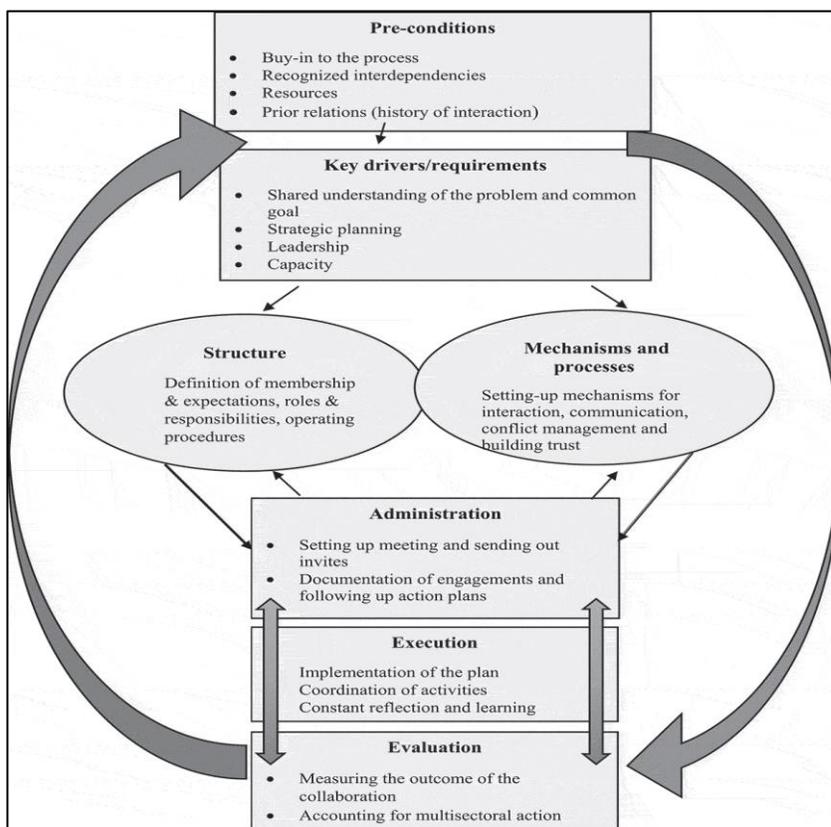
Multisectoral action for nurturing care

For ECD nurturing care programs, the need for multisectoral approaches cannot be overemphasized. This is because, as a basic human right, nurturing care spans multiple sectors including health, nutrition, security and safety, responsive caregiving as well as early learning, all of which are crucial to the health and development of children. Scaled-up and sustainable nurturing care programs are critical to improving

the health, development, and growth of young children especially vulnerable children (Richter et al., 2017). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a historic opportunity to implement interventions at scale and promote holistic ECD programming. Goal 4.2.1 ensures that young children are on-track developmentally in motor, cognition, language, and socio-emotional domains. Multisectoral approaches are effective, responsive, and workable. They provide a platform for including major stakeholders in the implementation of interventions, supporting information sharing and coordination among sectors, and the sharing of responsibilities for reaching goals (Britto et al., 2017). As a fundamental part of the Sustainable Development Goal 4.2.1, nurturing care promotes play, responsive stimulation, and communication. Multiple stakeholder commitment is crucial to the visibility and sustainability of nurturing care programmes. But there is a need to analyze the contextual issues that challenge multisectoral approaches for successful and sustainable programming (Phuka et al. 2018). Health, education, social, and child protection are critical sectors required to support the holistic needs of children.

Informed by the existing literature, a framework for multisectoral collaboration by Mahlangu and colleagues (2019) was adopted to guide the analysis for this study. The framework was developed in South Africa in the context of health systems and identifies seven key components that are critical to multisectoral approaches (see Figure 2). These include; Pre-conditions, key drivers, structure, mechanisms, administration, execution, and evaluation. Through a visual representation below, the framework shows how the seven elements are connected and how they support the multisectoral process. It is a good fit for the case study because it recognizes the complex contributions of many factors to making multisectoral approaches successful in addressing complex societal issues. Highlighted in the

Figure 2. Framework for multisector and multilevel collaboration. Mahlangu (2019)



framework is that preconditions and drivers have an influence on the outcome of collaboration, including buy-in to the process of collaboration, recognized interdependencies amongst sectors, and sufficient human and financial resources. The conditions should be supported by key drivers such as a common vision, a strategic plan and strong leadership.

Case study objectives

This small-scale study explores the opportunities and challenges of the multisectoral approach to implementation of the NCF in the context of Zambia. Such a study would be beneficial in understanding the strategies that can be explored for more collaborative and proactive approaches to implementation of NCFs that focus on children under three years. It explores multisectoral approaches to implementing nurturing care in Zambia by analyzing currently available platforms for multisectoral collaboration through interviews with member organizations of the Zambia Early Childhood Development Action Network (ZECDAN). For Zambia, ZECDAN is an important platform for multisectoral collaboration because it is a member network of partners working on ECD in Zambia at various levels. Interviews identified available opportunities and recommendations for effective multisectoral approaches. The methodology used in this study included a desk review of publications on multisectoral approaches to the implementation of nurturing care at the global, regional, and country level. Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted with members of ZECDAN and local organizations implementing programmes for children below three years.

2. Methodology

The study aimed to understand the perceptions and experiences on multisectoral approaches to managing ECD programmes in Zambia. The study used a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Qualitative studies are informative in social research. They are effective in understanding processes and experiences compared to understanding rates and statistical relationships.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 16 key informants (KIs) who were purposely identified based on their knowledge, expertise and involvement in the implementation of NC programmes. Identification was done with support from ZECDAN, Zambia's main ECD multisectoral platform. Additional key informants from local organizations who are not members of ZECDAN but implementing NC programs at local levels were identified through the Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) and interviewed for additional perspectives. Eight of the informants were government employees from four different ministries, including the Ministry of Health. The remaining eight informants worked at international NGOs, such as UNICEF and Child Fund (see table in annex). Using Lusaka as a focus for this case study, data were collected in Lusaka Province where major actors operate. Literature was reviewed and collected from existing publications, books, journals, reports, articles, and minutes of ZECDAN meetings. The collected data were organized according to research questions and identified themes for easy interpretation and analysis. This report has been produced from the generated findings.

Interviews were conducted by phone or video-conferencing. Notes were taken by the interviewer when recordings were not feasible. A set of questions below guided the interview.

- i. What is the current situation with the implementation of the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) in Zambia?
- ii. What platforms are available for Multisectoral collaboration in the implementation of NCF programmes?
- iii. How is ZECDAN structured to promote multisectoral collaboration? By what mechanisms?
- iv. What opportunities are available for Multisectoral approaches to the implementation of NC

programmes?

- v. What challenges affect [ZECDAN's attempts to promote] multisectoral collaboration in the implementation of NC programs?
- vi. What recommendations are available within and outside the ECD space for effective Multisectoral collaboration?

Ethical considerations

Before the start of the interview, ethical issues were considered and participants' confidentiality was assured. Participants were urged to stop participating if they felt insecure. Consent for participation was sought prior to the interview by first sharing the objectives of the research and requesting participation.

Data analysis

The process involved grouping data according to specific questions, and within questions by identified themes.

Limitations of the Research

There are a number of limitations to be mentioned. The study was conducted during the COVID pandemic when the government of Zambia had restricted physical meetings. This restricted the time required for the researcher to meet with the respondents. This challenge was compounded by poor internet connectivity for most of the respondents. Accessing research participants was also a challenge as most of them hold senior positions that have demanding responsibilities. Data transcription, analysis and reflection were time-consuming and some important ideas may have been missed. Finally, interviewees may not have been asked appropriate questions and probed sufficiently for them to express themselves fully on the topic of multisectoral collaboration.

3. Results and discussion

The researcher interviewed 16 respondents from 14 organizations. Of the fourteen organizations, 13 are members of ZECDAN. The fourteenth was not a member. Six were also members of the Ministry of Health's ECD Multisectoral technical committee (MoH, UNICEF, Child Fund, MoE, MYSCD, MCDSS). Several were also members of smaller multisectoral platforms such as ZANEC and the Firelight Consortium. They are all involved in the implementation of Nurturing Care programs for children below 3 years at various levels.

Table 1: List of organisations interviewed for the study

No.	Name of Organization	Type	Role	Number
1	Ministry of Health	Government	Policy formulation, Overall, in charge of nurturing care programmes (NCP)/Member of ZECDAN	1
2	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services	Government	Policy formulator, Implementer/member of ZECDAN	1

3	Ministry of Sport Youth and Child Development	Government	Policy formulator, Implementer/member of ZECDAN	1
4	Ministry of Education	Government	Policy formulator, Implementer/ZECDAN Member	2
5	UNICEF	International NGO	Policy influencer Implementer/Financier/member of ZECDAN	2
6	Child fund	International NGO	Policy influencer Implementer/ZECDAN member	1
7	VVOB	International NGO	Policy influencer /ZECDAN member	1
8	Mothers to Mothers	International NGO	Policy influencer/Implementer/Member of ZECDAN	1
9	Zambia National Education Coalition-Secretariat	Coalition of local NGO's	Policy influencer Coalition of local implementers/member of ZECDAN	1
10	Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS).	Local NGO	Policy influencer/Implementer/member of ZECDAN/ZANEC	1
11	Reformed Open Community Schools (ROCS).	Local NGO	Member of ZECDAN/ZANEC	1
12	Zambia Pre-school Association of Zambia	Local NGO/Training Institution	Member of ZANEC	1
13	Bwafwano Integrated Services Organization (BISO)	Local NGO	Member of ZECDAN/ZANEC	1
14	Zambia Open University	International NGO	Policy influencer /Implementer	1

Their engagement in implementation takes several forms. For example, some of the local organizations under the Firelight Consortium deliver parenting programs in Lusaka and Central Provinces. PLAN and Child Fund are also implementing parenting programs in various settings. UNICEF finances and trains community-based volunteers to deliver the Care for Child Health, Growth and Development program in Eastern Provinces. Although ZECDAN members implement their programs separately, they have the opportunity to share experiences and challenges with each other through ZECDAN.

How is ZECDAN structured to promote multisectoral collaboration?

ZECDAN is the main national platform for multisectoral collaboration in Zambia. Its members consist of government ministries, international organizations like UNICEF, and local organizations such as ZANEC and the Firelight Consortium. Two bodies are the acknowledged leaders in ZECDAN: the Ministry of Health

and UNICEF. They hold this position by virtue of their financial, policy and implementation resources and activities. UNICEF works closely with the MoH to implement the NCP, to frame policy, and to provide the initial technical and financial support for implementation and policy.

The implementation of the NCP in Zambia is dominated by the Ministry of Health (MoH) through its local health facilities. In order to implement programs for children from birth to 3 years of age using the NCF, the MoH has its own Multisectoral Committee where it receives support from three other line ministries (MoE, MSYCD, MCDSS) and non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF, USAID, WHO and Child Fund. There are 20 members in total. Also within the Ministry of Health itself are multiple subcommittees among which the IMCI subcommittee is part of the MoH's Multisectoral Committee. At the district level, there are also MoH-organized multisectoral committees with a variety of members.

Consequently, two parallel platforms are available to promote multisectoral collaboration: ZECDAN and the Ministry of Health. Many interviewed members are present in both platforms. In terms of governance, ZECDAN's chair is supposed to be rotational but it appears to be dominated mainly by UNICEF; the MoH's ECDMTC chair is the focal person for ECD in the MoH.

Activities by which ZECDAN facilitates multisectoral collaboration

As a network organization, ZECDAN promotes multisectoral collaboration through participation of its diverse membership in a variety of activities. The 20 members meet quarterly; each member has a designated time to share up-to-date information about their ECD program. Four main activities were raised by interviewees as area of interest and concern:

1. Capacity Building

They discuss opportunities for capacity building of their organizations outside of ZECDAN, such as through trainings by the LEGO Foundation, and conferences of the regional African Early Childhood Action Network (AfECN). All the interviewed respondents indicated that there is need for continuous capacity building of ZECDAN members. They felt the ZECDAN secretariate should conduct more orientation on Nurturing Care. ZECDAN members could take on different responsibilities for building capacity to implement NC programs. Members also felt that capacity of smaller, local implementers could be enhanced.

2. Resource Mobilization

Concerning Resource Mobilization, individual members talked about the resources they were receiving, such as finances and materials, and how others could obtain these resources. All interviewees felt that there is need to raise both financial and human resource for ZECDAN. This can be done through proposal development, identifying and supporting local capacities, and stepping up advocacy campaigns.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation are done sometimes by individual organizations using their own resources, as in the case of monitoring. For an evaluation, they may hire a university consultant and this would be expensive. All respondents agreed that there is need to develop the Monitoring and Evaluation system with clearer well-defined indicators to support the implementation of Nurturing Care by all.

4. Research and Learning

Although research and learning may overlap with capacity-building and evaluation, it is also a central concern for ZECDAN members. Eight out of the 14 organizations felt that ZECDAN as an organization should engage in research.

Perceived opportunities for multisectoral approaches

Based on responses from respondents, three key drivers and opportunities for multisectoral coordination in Zambia were identified. They included high-level leadership, coordination, and an enhanced shared understanding. These will be discussed in the following sections.

1. High-level leadership

Several respondents noted that ZECDAN has the capacity, credibility, and expertise to convene and coordinate different sectors and partners ("they are equipped for this role because they have the wider expertise"). In this way, ZECDAN has in place one of the key drivers of multisectoral coordination, which is high-level leadership. UNICEF and ministries have undertaken this role, providing ZECDAN with the credibility and power to convene different actors in the ECD space. The respondents stated that they were happy that UNICEF was chairing the ZECDAN. This is because UNICEF is a global organization with experience and expertise required to lead the network. It is also reliable and stable. Additionally, having UNICEF as ZECDAN Chair with its power to convene and to influence other sectors' decisions, regarding which programmes are prioritized, is a great opportunity for the network. Furthermore, allocating a leadership role to ministers to advocate for integration of ECD in programmes and activities of government as well as having these ministers endorse multisectoral action attracts support from other stakeholders.

Putzel (2004) notes that leadership is a critical enabler in any implementation process. A leader is someone who drives the collaborative agenda, and such a role should be undertaken by someone with credibility and power to convene and to influence other sectors' decisions regarding which programmes are prioritized. Allocation of this role to political leaders yields positive results in that they are able to secure financial resources, and advocate for integration of programmes and activities of government. Having a political leader endorsing the process attracted support from other stakeholders (Purdy, 2012). The Mahlangu (2019) framework also highlights the importance of having a leader with capacity to mobilize resources for effective functioning of the collaborative platform. According to (Hanleybrown et al. 2012), having an influential champion with skills to negotiate and secure financial resources for a collaborative is an advantage.

2. Coordination

Respondents noted that a key advantage of ZECDAN is that it brings together partners from across diverse sectors. It provides a platform to share different experiences from different stakeholders working in fields related to early childhood development. Several respondents noted that it provided a valuable space for "like-minded" actors to share information, raise awareness, and receive technical guidance. In this way, ZECDAN has drawn together major stakeholders and created a mechanism for regular information sharing and coordination. Beyond multisectoral coordination at the national level, respondents suggested that ZECDAN should consider appropriately and constructively engaging development partners at local and district levels. This is because national- and community-level stakeholders often have widely divergent views of, say, nutrition problems and solutions.

3. Enhanced a shared understanding

Respondents noted that ZECDAN not only opened space for diverse organizations to collaborate and participate in ECD but also played a crucial role in convincing non-traditional actors and sectors to get involved. ZECDAN has helped to ensure that different sectors understood the mandate of nurturing care and multisectoral approaches to child development across the sectors of health, education, and social welfare. In this way, ZECDAN has helped to create a shared understanding and common vision for ECD,

which is amongst the key prerequisites for multisectoral action. Some interviewees had a common vision for nurturing care, and a commitment to work together. Some individual sectors were able to connect but were not clear on their role and how they would benefit from multisectoral collaboration. However, other interviewees felt that more could have been done to enhance shared understanding; this in turn reduced their commitment and engagement in multisectoral work and planning.

Challenges affecting multisectoral collaboration

The challenges that affect the multisectoral approach to Nurturing Care programs in Zambia are multi-faceted at various levels. The data point towards three challenges in particular, namely, inadequate resources, unclear structures in terms of roles and responsibilities, and unavailability of monitoring and evaluation systems.

1. Inadequate Resources

Key among them is inadequate funding to implement the NCP particularly for stimulation, play and communication. The concern with finances and resources generally was raised by several informants. Respondents noted that a central issue was that ECD implementation and nurturing care activities were often unfunded and, as a result, likely to remain on a wish list. It has been difficult to mobilize the financial resources needed to facilitate the full implementation of ECD/nurturing care activities. The availability of financial resources is a critical pre-requisite to multisectoral implementation of the NCF. Although Zambia has witnessed increased stakeholder participation and demand for nurturing care programmes, funding remains alarmingly low, at government and non-government levels for health, nutrition and development.

“There is a need to enhance efforts through multisectoral mechanisms to raise funds for development, implementation and monitoring as well as evaluation of Nurturing Care programs. Currently, we have noticed huge investment in treatment programmes rather than prevention of childhood illness under which nurturing care programmes falls.” -Respondent from government Ministry

“There is need for a deliberate move to mobilize financial resources and do more advocacy for improved funding . For evidence based advocacy there is need to invest in research.” -ZECDAN Member.

2. Unclear roles and responsibilities

Respondents noted that a key challenge is that roles and responsibilities between sectors and amongst ZECDAN members are not clearly defined. There are many organizations involved, especially at the national level, with overlapping roles and responsibilities which are not harmonized. As a result, there is a lack of guidance and support from the central level to support and develop ECD partners at other levels to operate with effective efficiency. Knowing who is responsible for what sphere of work is important for efficient collaboration. Furthermore, respondents indicated that although the Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) represents local organization participation on ZECDAN, members of ZANEC are not regularly updated on ZECDAN business.

Membership and expectations of members were therefore not clarified. Recruitment was haphazard. Composition of membership should be informed by a stakeholder analysis to ensure that the collaborative is constituted by all the people who are working on NC programmes. Furthermore, representatives of sectors who join ZECDAN should be people with decision-making powers in their organizations, who will be able to implement resolutions from the collaborative (Mahlangu,2018).

“There is a need to have strong multisectoral approaches and collaborations. Integration should not only be in emergencies but should be ongoing. Local participation and representation remains weak with little or no awareness of the mandate of ZECDAN. Further, there is need to provide adequate orientation for the members and ensure that information on the objective of ZECDAN, role of the members and expected outcomes is adequately shared with others beyond the network on. Currently, there is dis-jointed coordination, inadequate national guidelines to guide sharing and learning of best practices; as a result, some members feel no sense of obligation to the network.” -Executive Director from a Zambian Local organization.

In the future, ZECDAN should address this issue to ensure partners operate with strategic direction and with clear plans on how to achieve the goals of the ECD/NCP strategies. For example, a written agreement on roles and responsibilities could greatly enhance the functioning of ZECDAN. Furthermore, the establishment of committees where individual members accept responsibilities could help to ensure that everyone is clear on what is expected of them as members of ZECDAN. Respondents suggested that ZECDAN should consider enhancing the participation of local implementing partners. This can be done by constructively engaging partners at local and district levels across the system. Furthermore, the respondents suggested that there is a need to address different stakeholder interests to cultivate a sense of ownership and accountability. This can be done by determining the nurturing care priority areas for ZECDAN and its partners.

3. Unavailability of Monitoring and Evaluation system

Inadequate monitoring and evaluation indicators, tools and plans at all levels make it difficult to consistently and systematically track implementation progress, make well informed implementation plans, and address implementation challenges. This has negatively impacted the consistent monitoring and evaluation of responsive care programs. If different indicators exist for different programmes, there can be little collaboration or sharing of results. There is a need to build local capacity around using indicators and sharing data on the benefits of multisectoral actions. This will enhance the quality of programming.

“In as much as consultants are necessary, ZECDAN should not rely so much on consultants all the time to do work that members can do. Consultants can be expensive and sometimes take time to deliver and in most cases the quality of work is questionable. Based on capacity, Network members can be engaged to do certain research.” -ZECDAN member

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Two main platforms exist in Zambia to promote and facilitate multisectoral collaboration within the field of early childhood development and specifically the implementation of Nurturing Care programmes. One is ZECDAN which includes members from many different government ministries, international organizations, and national organizations. It appears to be a fairly democratic organization dedicated to creating a shared understanding and common vision for ECD/NC across diverse partners. It provides a space to collaborate and share information, raise awareness, provide technical guidance to its diverse

partners. Moreover, it provides high-level and credible leadership from trusted partners/ministries. The second platform is the ECD Multisectoral Collaboration committee. Its 20 members overlap to a certain extent with ZEC DAN, but it is dominated by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health and UNICEF hold powerful and respected positions in the two platforms. The two are strongly focused on creating a policy and implementing its NC program in its health facilities, whereas ZEC DAN is there to support its member organizations to implement their programs through exchange and capacity-building. It may be the case that two parallel platforms are needed in Zambia to address all the functions of multisectoral collaboration.

Capacity strengthening for enhanced implementation

Based on the responses from the participants, ZEC DAN might consider conducting a partner capacity analysis. This will enable the network to understand and appreciate its capacity and opportunities to enable it to function at its full capacity. Collaboratively, partners should be engaged to develop strategies that will enhance ZEC DANs networking strategies. There is also a need to identify local opportunities and utilize them to enhance implementation. For instance, respondents suggest that clinics and hospitals could be used as entry points for local collaboration. ZEC DAN should provide clearer guidelines to all partners so that there is no overlapping in responsibilities and duplication of efforts. Participation of All relevant directorates within each ministry should be encouraged.

Additionally, respondents feel that ZEC DAN should consider having elective positions to encourage accountability, transparency and participation. Subcommittees should also be established to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. This will enhance coordination.

Resource mobilization

Respondents from government ministries point out that, financial resources remain key to the implementation of Nurturing Care programs at all levels. Therefore, ZEC DAN should consider developing a resource mobilization strategy to strengthen implementation of nurturing care programmes.

Monitoring and evaluation

There is a need for ZEC DAN to develop an integrated monitoring and evaluation system with well agreed and recommended objectives, indicators, expected outcomes, and data collecting tools by all members. The indicators should fit into the national M&E frameworks, be reviewed and discussed at the Multisectoral level to check the progress. This should be accompanied by consistent and systematic analysis to identify areas that need support. ZEC DAN should have clear objectives, indicators and expected outcomes. This can be done by tapping into its available pool of experienced, skilled and knowledgeable members.

Research and learning

Although issues discussed by ZEC DAN are focused on implementation, there is a need for mainstream research and learning. Currently the network has inadequate research capacity and support mechanisms. The network should consider setting up a research and learning committee to support this.

Respondents from learning institutions suggested that Learning institutions and networks should be engaged for research. ZEC DAN should consider holding research symposiums for learning and sharing. Coordinating mechanisms should be able to highlight research and use outcomes to support planning and revisions to implementation.

In practice, implementing a multisectoral approach is challenging, and its management marred by a number of issues. Gavian et al. (2006) state that, despite the challenging nature of implementation, the multisectoral approach remains a critical strategy for addressing complex societal problems, as it allows for innovation and integrated efforts of multiple sectors. What is needed is to find ways to make it work in practice.

Based on this case study, challenges of multisectoral approaches include, but are not limited to, inadequate funding, weak local participation, inadequate policies and low implementation of available policies as well as non-availability of monitoring and evaluation systems. The case study has helped to identify some, but not all, the factors influencing the success of multisectoral approaches, and highlight the importance of a theory-based conceptualization of multisectoral action in future research studies.

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