



## NATIONAL ECD COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETING: OVERVIEW

Date: 20-05-2021

### 1. PRESENTATIONS

<b>1</b>	<b>Title</b>	PIECCE Project-Where it Began and How Far it Has Come
	<b>Presenter</b>	Sheila Drew
	<b>Organisation</b>	SAIDE
	<b>Key Theme</b>	Project update, showcase of materials and lessons learned through PIECCE
<b>2</b>	<b>Title</b>	PIECCE Inspired Collaborations
	<b>Presenter</b>	Hasina Ebrahim, Ruby Motaung and Candy Goodlad
	<b>Organisation</b>	UNISA, TREE and Midlands Community College
	<b>Key Theme</b>	Sivulithuba: Creating Opportunities for Capacity Building and Access in the Early Years

All presentations can be accessed through the links given in the Meeting Highlights.

### 2. MAIN DISCUSSION POINTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Number of participants: 70+

#### Presentations:

- The Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education (PIECCE), a collaborative effort between Universities and ECD NGOs, has produced a programme framework meant to guide the development of NQF Level 6 and 7 programmes. The programme framework has been developed along with support materials with the purpose of illustrating how some concepts of the framework might be implemented in a programme.
- Borne out of the PIECCE project, UNISA, TREE and Midlands Community College have partnered to form the 'Sivulithuba: Creating Opportunities for Capacity Building and Access in the Early Years (CBAS)' project. This project is still in pilot phase and creates an opportunity for ECD practitioners to gain entry into an HEI with support mechanisms in place to help practitioners transition to a Diploma course.

#### Issues/Concerns:

- Issues around training and qualifications that have been in existence
- The length and requirements for ECD practitioners to articulate into HEI qualifications
- What happens to practitioners after acquiring these qualifications? Where do they work and who pays them?

#### CoP Activities/ Reflections

- PIECCE members communicated a strong need to move issues of teacher educator and workforce development forward through a designated community of practice
- A call to build a collective vision around workforce development that challenges the status quo and elevates the capabilities of the ECD workforce

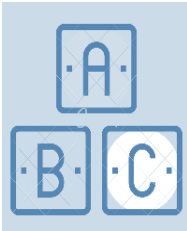
**Useful Resources shared:** [Access to the programme framework, support materials and illustrative packs will be provided soon.](#)

## National Early Childhood Development Community of Practice

### Meeting Highlights 20 May 2021

Virtual Meeting

#### WELCOME & CHECK-IN



Patsy Pillay (KZN BRIDGE Champion) facilitated the National ECD CoP meeting held on 20 May 2021. The CoP focussed on The Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education (PIECCE), which is a multi-stakeholder partnership between a number of universities and Resource and Training Organisations (RTOs) who developed a framework for NQF Level 6 and 7 qualifications. The project aims to increase access to qualifications for ECCE educators working in Birth to Four, thereby helping to professionalise the sector. Project leaders (Sheila Drew and Hasina Ebrahim) showcased the outputs of the project which include a standardised programme framework and set of support materials amongst others, lessons learned from the project and partnerships borne out of this project.

#### UPDATES

##### *Provincial updates*

Thandeka updated the CoP on BRIDGE ECD CoP activities both at a national and provincial Level:

- **Mpumalanga** is working on tracking the reopening child attendance trends in ECD programmes as many people were opening up ECD programmes again however, there was still the challenge of children not coming back.
- The **Western Cape** is focussing on elevating the role of parents of young children. A small committee has come together and has a plan to elevate the role of young parents by way of a seminar. The details of this will be continuously shared with the National ECD CoP.
- **Kwa-Zulu Natal** has some topics that they would like to revisit, particularly the issue of retention of ECD practitioners due to job losses and issues around advocacy.
- In the **National ECD CoP** there have been discussions around rethinking the CoP model due to BRIDGE's responses and adaptations due to Covid-19. There have been benefits in going virtual because this has created wider access for CoP members but the CoPs have become too large. It becomes difficult to maintain certain elements of a 'Community of Practice' such as building relationships and trust. The crisis in the ECD sector has made us aware that we need to strengthen the CoP and deepen BRIDGE's contribution to systemic change. Due to these arising needs BRIDGE is planning **Special Interest Groups** (in addition to the current CoPs) in order to focus on specific priority issues.
- BRIDGE had the opportunity to present to the Portfolio Committee for Social Development. BRIDGE doesn't typically do advocacy but this has always worked when we have partnered with others for example – The Real Reform Campaign
- The Collaboration of ECD Networks (CECDN) met with the DBE ECD directorate to explore the critical issue of coordination and how to bring this issue into the fore. The outcome of this meeting is quite valuable - the agreement was to facilitate strengthening between the

CECDN and National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) to work together more effectively in terms consultations and other matters relating to the Function Shift.

***Patsy introduced the topic by providing background on qualifications:***

Although the PIECCE Project will discuss Higher Education qualifications, focus was still required on lower National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level qualifications, particularly Levels 1, 3 and 5. There is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding that requires the ETDP Seta and QCTO to clarify their plans and position. BRIDGE continues to pursue this engagement and will update CoP members accordingly.

## **PIECCE PROJECT – WHERE IT BEGAN AND HOW FAR IT HAS COME:**

***Sheila Drew (SAIDE)***

### **PROJECT UPDATE AND SHOWCASE OF MATERIALS**

This was an EU funded project co-funded by UNICEF and began in January 2017. Its overall objective was to contribute towards the professionalisation of ECD by looking at access into Higher Education for ECD practitioners at the Level of Birth to Four. Specifically, the task was to develop a Standardised Programme Framework (not qualification) for a Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) at NQF Level 6 and a B.Ed in ECCE at Level 7. Sheila emphasised that the point of a Programme Framework is not to specify or prescribe the content but rather to come up with a framework which provides guidance on the key issues that a programme at a diploma/B.Ed Level should address.

The target audience for the project included:

- Primarily teacher educators
- Secondly, their student teachers and other teachers
- Indirectly, children themselves
- Even more indirectly, other stakeholders (QCTO, ETDP SETA, other NGOs etc.) in the ECD sector could be addressed

Dealing with the Programme Framework at Level 6 and Level 7 could not be done in isolation, they therefore had to address the issue of what the relationship between Level 6 and Level 7 qualifications is to Level 5, Level 4 etc. qualifications.

Project members decided to have **threads running through the project** as a way of trying to account for certain principles and to provide a framework for the project:

### **Threads**

- Inclusivity
- Quality
- Collaboration
- Play



## **OUTPUTS**

1. A Collaboration Process Framework – to model a way of collaboration across institutions within the sector. This was documented in order to create the framework for how that might influence programme design at the systemic Level.
2. Undertook some research of existing ECD and related Capacity Building Programmes to see whether it could inform what they were doing.
3. Developed a set of teacher educator support materials for selected modules of the Level 6 Diploma. (not for the whole programme) These were produced as open education resources.

## **THEORY OF CHANGE AND COLLABORATION**

The project was complex with many components and grappled with concepts that have existed in the sector for many years which do not have a straight-forward answer so a Theory of Change was developed around Key Learning Questions.

*Collaboration learning questions included:*

- How does collaboration build consensus? What constitutes quality ECD, what constitutes the professionalisation of practitioners, what constitutes inclusivity in and ECD context?
- How does collaboration improve relations, address silo thinking and lessen tensions between different providers in the sector?
- What is the scope of this collaboration and how is it sustained?

## **PROGRESS**

*Collaboration framework and stakeholder engagement:*

- Held two Communities of Practice
- Participated in the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference on articulation
- Initiated a NECDA/BRIDGE alignment roundtable
- Participated in various stakeholder forums
- Wrote a collaboration framework

*Lessons learned through PIECCE*

*Collaboration lessons learned:*

- Collaboration needs a champion
- The conversations need dedicated time and money
- Collaboration has to have shared goals and principles
- It needs commitment
- We need to nurture a collaborative mind-set
- We have to understand that there are organisational differences

## **PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK**

### *Programme framework context:*

The intention is to provide guidance on the design and implementation of programmes not to prescribe. PIECCE members were working in the context of the National Integrated ECD Policy (NIECDP) 2015 and the new Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD Educator

Policy. They also explicitly wanted to link the programme framework to a play framework and materials, which is how UNICEF became the co-funder.

### *Programme Framework components*

- Chapter 1: Vision and mission
- Chapter 2: Context and principles
- Chapter 3: Knowledge and practice standards
- Chapter 4: Africanisation, IKS and belonging
- Chapter 5: Developmental Education
- Chapter 6: Pedagogies
- Chapter 7: Play
- Chapter 8: Assessment
- Chapter 9: Work Integrated Learning
- Chapter 10: Modes of engagement
- Chapter 11: RPL

## **PROJECT FRAMEWORK ISSUES**

- Articulation, alignment and related issues such as Foundational Learning; assessment strategies; quality of Occupational and TVET qualifications
- Inclusivity; what does it really mean and what do we expect practitioners to understand when working with children who might have barriers?
- Africanisation and belonging
- Play across Birth to 9; what does play mean for all children and how practitioners are able to interpret this?
- Work Integrated Learning (WIL)
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Capacity building of teacher educators

To view the full presentation, click [here](#).

## **ILLUSTRATIVE PACKS AS TEACHER EDUCATOR SUPPORT MATERIALS**

- Developed 6 illustrative packs from selected modules at Diploma Level 6
- These are exemplars for open and accessible design
- Tried to integrate play and inclusion
- They are Open Education Resources (OER) and are uploaded onto the National Open Learning System (NOLS)

*Access to the programme framework, support materials and illustrative packs will be provided soon.*

## **THE KEY RECOMMENDATION**

There was a strong call for the PIECCE Community of Practice to continue. It was agreed that the best approach would be via the BRIDGE National ECD CoP but this takes time and money. They have prepared a position statement on the idea of a Teacher Education CoP.

## Questions and answers:

**Kaathima:** What is the purpose of the supporting materials for lecturers?

**Sheila:** Part of the framework's purpose was to challenge ideas and to raise questions and it was hoped that in the design of programmes, teacher educators would not just copy and paste from some of the programmes and courses that they have done in Grade R or other NQF Levels. They wanted to encourage people to stop and think. Even though it was a framework, it was important to provide support materials with the purpose of illustrating how some of those ideas might be implemented in a programme.

**Kaathima:** Do the frameworks facilitate parental involvement?

**Sheila:** The Knowledge and Practice Standards will talk about the question of how to involve parents, how to work with parents and how to include parents in the life of the child.

## PIECCE INSPIRED COLLABORATIONS

*Professor Hasina Ebrahim (Research Professor & UNESCO Tri-chair in ECD at UNISA), Candy Goodlad (Director of Midlands Community College), and Ruby Motaung (Director of TREE) presented:*

**Sivulithuba: Creating Opportunities for Capacity Building and Access in the Early Years (CBAS)**

This is a collaboration between TREE, UNISA and Midlands Community College. PIECCE has enabled these three organisations to think differently about what has been happening in the workforce development space and thus lessons have been drawn on to guide this collaboration.

To view the full presentation, click [here](#).

### **LESSON 1: The South African ECD Context is the baseline for action**

These two tools informed a responsive action:

#### **1. A Baseline Study which gave five key findings:**

- the need for academic support and mentorship at multiple Levels – the concept of developmental education infuses the personal and the professional for the student to enter academia
- reflective practice is key and is about the mind-set issue –not a transmissive mode of teaching but an asset based approach stemming from the idea that everyone has traits that need to be enabled in a student centred approach;
- diversity and equity inclusion are important cross-cutting concepts;
- RPL needs attention for HEI entry-there is a discontinuous pathway which is worrying at HEI entry Level- a lot of practitioners won't get through if the RPL issues aren't unpacked
- a community of practice is needed for professional development - work-force development cannot be left hanging and the SIGs that BRIDGE will start can address this.

#### **2. Contextual Analysis means we are dealing with:**

- vulnerable childhoods

- questionable practices for teacher/practitioner quality
- fragmentation of the field
- low status of women
- poor retention – the workforce is unstable

**The baseline together with the contextual analysis gave them a direction for the way forward.**

***LESSON TWO: We need to nurture thinking practitioners (teachers/educators...) for better child outcomes***

A practitioner cannot undergo professional development where they are not valued as people holding beliefs, knowledge and skills. We have to enable and tap into what they already know to make them **intentional** teachers and take them to the new knowledge space. We want **critical thinking** practitioners that think through the work that they have to do as opposed to technical practitioners that do 'tick-boxing' or daily programme coverage. This requires reflective practices and the ability to respond contextually.

***LESSON THREE: If you want to set up collaborations (because silo working is failing us) you need to be principle guided. Principles allow for scope and mind-set. The nine principles are being put into effect and this is already challenging:***

1. Shared understandings
2. Trust and relationships
3. Accountability
4. Knowledge Management and Communication
5. Reflective Practice
6. Adaption and Evolution
7. Innovation
8. Sustainability
9. Inclusivity

### ***Ruby Motaung***

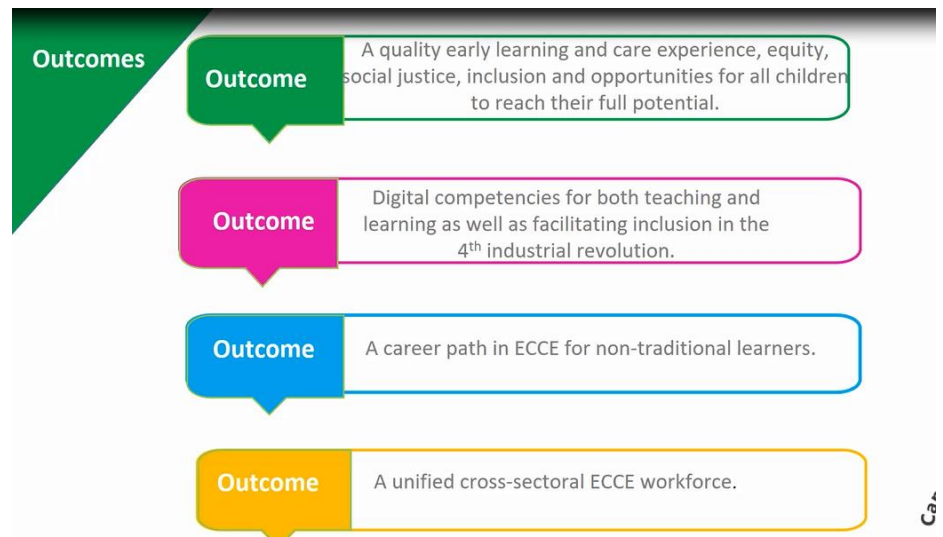
CBAS was conceptualised from the PIECCE Project and its key principles of collaboration. The need for the project was reinforced by findings of a student support programme where 65 students who studied a Grade R Diploma and were funded by the Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) Department of Education and the ETDP SETA. After five years of distance learning, only 11 out of the 65 graduated.

### ***PROJECT IMPACT***

The project aims to make an improvement in the scale and quality of ECCE (birth to four years) in vulnerable communities, the most critical aspect being retention of practitioners- as seen with the 65 students, many of them could not complete in three years due to various reasons. Lastly, the project aims for a high throughput in the ECCE Diploma by building the capacity of the practitioners through a blended model of teaching, learning, coaching, mentoring and support.



Outcomes of the programme seen in the slide.



## RATIONALE

**Provisioning gap (Function Shift/Migration)** – there is a shortage of about 100 000 practitioners and a shortage of about 40 000 ECD assistants

**Creating a quality workforce** – through standardisation of training, mentoring and coaching, career pathways and opportunities for higher learning.

**KZN** – the project will be piloted in this province where they have identified a number of challenges that include the large number of vulnerable children under 5 and the challenges the practitioners face.

**Policies:** The project is driven by the policies that govern ECD in the country: NIECDP 2015, the Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD Educators and the National Development Plan.

## LEARNER JOURNEY

*Requirements:*

- University requirements must be upheld in order to maintain their standards.
- Those that have already graduated with NQF Level 4 and with an NQF Level 5 National Certificate/Diploma can gain entry.

As much as the minimum requirements for ECD has created an enabling space in the RTO sector, the Universities are still maintaining their standards. The project team is still looking at engaging the University to redress the imbalances of the past and one of the ways is through RPL.

The students will complete one year of capacity building which includes mentoring, monitoring and support and will be accepted into UNISA to do their Diploma. The Diploma will now be a full time online course and will no longer be a five year programme. A WIL support programme throughout the Diploma is offered including a mentoring, coaching and academic support programme. The academic and practical components are integrated within the programme.



***Candy Goodlad discussed The ECD Level 4 Graduate Survey conducted in the beginning of 2020***

The project surveyed 255 ECD Level 4 graduates to establish what their feelings were about studying further:

- Out of the 255, 33% are currently employed at ECD sites, 37% are volunteers at ECD sites and 14% own their own ECD site. Only 13% are not working at all and 3% work in a different field-this shows that 84% of ECD graduates are still active in the ECD sector.

Respondents were also asked how many of them had matriculated:

- 75% of Level 4 graduates had a Gr 12 NSC with 52% of these graduates possessing a higher certificate. 98% of the respondents indicated that they would like to study further and would consider enrolling for the Diploma at Level 6. 78% indicated that they would like to attend a programme but felt that they didn't have the capacity to go straight into higher education.

***DIGITAL CAPACITIES, MOTIVATIONS OF WANTING TO STUDY FURTHER AND CHALLENGES***

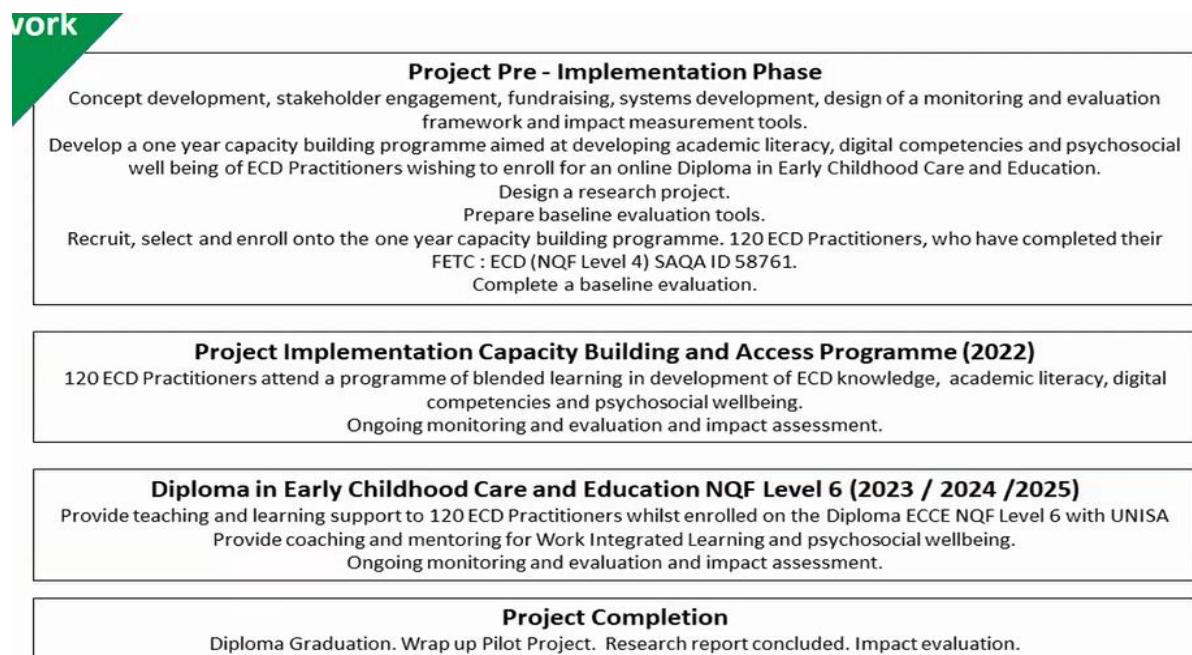
<u>Digital Capacities</u>	<u>Motivations</u>
91% have access to digital devices	To work better with children 67%
10% own a computer / laptop	To get a better job in ECD 50%
72% own a smartphone	To be able to open my own ECD
28% have access to a computer	To earn more 27.3%
50% indicated data is a problem	To learn more 60%
54% have their own email address	

Respondents were then asked what **challenges** they faced in terms of continuing into higher education and the answers indicated payment of studies, having to be more hardworking and assimilating to teaching online instead of face-to-face.

Importance of digital and academic competency is key in the CBAS programme and there are intentions to offer a blended model which integrates the use of a simple digital platform and classrooms based facilitation. Six knowledge areas have been identified:

1. Building capacities
2. ECCE 0-4 Essential Package, First 1000 days, National Curriculum Framework
3. Play Based Learning
4. Inclusion
5. Gender
6. Being and Becoming a Professional

A temporary site has been set up and a prototype is being developed for one of the modules. There are three implementation phases seen below:



## Plenary discussion

**A number of questions and comments were raised by CoP members:**

**Kaathima:** Once qualified in the HEI qualifications, would pay practitioners?

**Colleen:** Does the Level 5 (A & B as we know it) still serve a purpose as it caters for Grade R practitioners? What happens with it?

**Pam:** Why did the vocational institutions (TVET institutions) leave the PIECEE team and are there any implications going forward?

**CoP member:** The issue around career pathing- does it mean that eventually the Level 4 will fade away and what happens to the majority of practitioners that don't even have a Level 1 or even a Level 4 at this stage?

**Nora:** Are the reflections that are put forward intensive enough?

**Gill:** Does the Function Shift have any implications?

**CoP Member:** Concerning gender, is there any space given to men in ECD in terms of diversity and international thinking about who should be in the ECD workforce?

**CoP member:** Is ECCE replacing ECD

**Responses to questions and closing comments from presenters:**

**Sheila:** Some of the questions that have come up like; the number of years to gain a qualification, who's going to pay the teachers once they are qualified etc., are all systemic issues. Part of what PIECEE was trying to explore was to understand to what extent can a collaborative approach influence systemic issues of teacher qualifications? PIECEE and Siviluthuba aren't going to solve those problems and so part of what is being proposed is that these conversations about who is going to pay the teachers, how many years, how to properly prepare students need to take place in a forum.

**Hasina:** The number of years that it takes a practitioner to complete a qualification is an issue as it takes a long time for people to graduate. The sector needs to think carefully about 'micro-credentialing' (JET Education is leading this) and the possibilities of Just-In-Time skills that employers require– what happens in this kind of scenario where we enable professional development in a different way which is already happening? There is the deeper mind-set and attitude shift that needs to happen which is difficult, that is why CBAS has also created 'being and becoming' material that shows how the trajectory takes place in a stepped but iterative way.

**Ruby:** In relation to Chapter 10 of the ECD Policy of 2015, the ECD workforce is a broader scope of cadres and that is what we need to think about when we think about ECD as a package. We should not only focus on Level 4 as a qualification. The qualification does not translate into to quality teaching and learning so how do we make sure we go beyond the qualification and make sure that we create an enabling environment for the entire ECD workforce to develop? We need to ask ourselves if we are proud of the quality of training and so we have to reflect on our own efforts in enabling opportunities for access and articulation.

ECD vs ECCE – ECCE is a qualifier that talks to the qualification which focusses on Birth to Four, it does not take over the National Curriculum Framework which is the entire ECD phase (Birth to Nine years).

In terms of the funding, we have managed to secure start-up funding so we are relying on being funded by different funders who have shown interest. Once it is scaled up, only then will it become a course that people have to pay for. A total of R120 000 was given for the pilot.

We will also be negotiating with NSFAS to ensure that the learners have funding going on into the Diploma.

## **HASINA SPOKE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A POSITION PAPER ON PROFESSIONALIZATION FROM CIVIL SOCIETY**

This [position paper](#) would form the basis for debate and engagement on advancing a professionalization system where RTOs, government, TVETs and universities as new players could form a community of practice. The community of practice could serve to action collective positions to government and to advocate for needed changes through insertions into key platforms like the ISF and its working groups and releasing periodically position statements of what this CoP does. The aims could include conditions of service, career pathing, professionalism, the data systems and the standards – we have now learned that we will have a supplier data base, what does this mean for the Human Resources development?

### **In summary:**

- Working towards a special interest group embedded within the CoP for workforce development
- To find out what kinds of actions are needed to mobilise for the ECD sector, in its myriad of platforms, to lead and innovate so that we are not reactive but responsive to the kinds of contextual demands in the framing of children's rights

***Thandeka thanked the presenters, Patsy as facilitator and CoP members for their engagement in the meeting.***

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