



Early Childhood Development in  
Emergencies

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Thematic Meeting: the power of Playful  
Parenting in emergency situations  
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# Overview

**WHAT WE KNOW:** ECD services in humanitarian and fragile settings can **end preventable deaths** of newborns and children under 5, and **drive economic recovery** and **peacebuilding**.

**THE ISSUE:** ECD components are **not well represented** in humanitarian preparedness and response plans. Where they are, implementation is **inconsistent** and **lacks strong cross-sectoral coordination**.



# Facts & Case for Prioritization

 **22%** of deaths of children under 5 are in conflict and fragile settings<sup>1</sup>

Presently living in humanitarian and fragile settings:

 **5 million** pregnant women<sup>2</sup>

 **22 million** newborns and infants

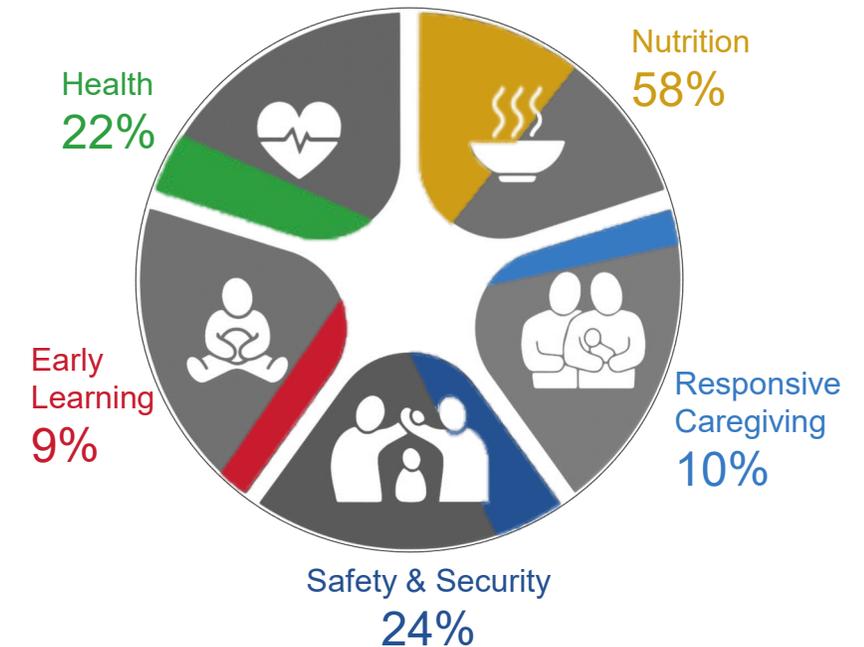
 **33 million** caregivers

 **34 million** women of reproductive age<sup>2</sup>

 **75 million** children under 5 have lived their **entire lives in conflict** areas<sup>1</sup>

 **1 in 8** babies is **born into conflict** areas<sup>3</sup>

Percentage of Nurturing Care Framework recommended ECD interventions included in 2018 UN humanitarian response plans<sup>4</sup>

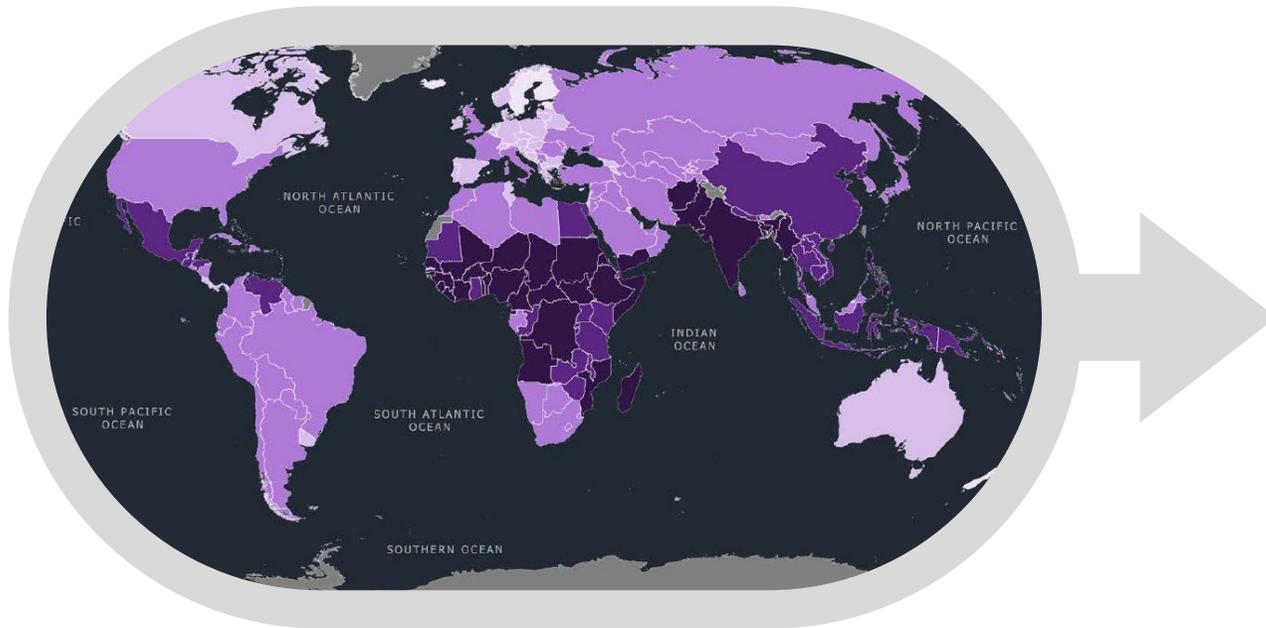


There is a **GROWING NEED** for ECD in humanitarian settings. But there are **KNOWN INTERVENTIONS & STRATEGIES**, and a pool of **INTERESTED FUNDERS** for this work

# The World is Facing a Child Rights Crisis

**1 billion children**

live in extremely high-risk countries



**99% of all children**

exposed to at least one major climate and environmental hazard, shock or stress

This is



...a health crisis

**90% of children** exposed to air pollution

**1/3 of children globally** are exposed to lead pollution



...a water crisis

**920 million children** exposed to water scarcity



...a protection crisis

**43 million children** displaced due to extreme weather



...a nutrition crisis

**24 million children** projected to be undernourished by 2050 as a result of the climate crisis



...an education crisis

**38 million children** had education disrupted by the climate crisis



...a humanitarian crisis

**175 million children** estimated to be affected by disasters

# Framing of Global Programme: Early brain development a foundation for lifelong learning, behavior and capabilities

## Message 1:

The relationship between genes and environment: Genes provide the blueprint for brain development; the environment shapes it

## Message 2:

Timing matters – the earlier intervention the better

## Message 3:

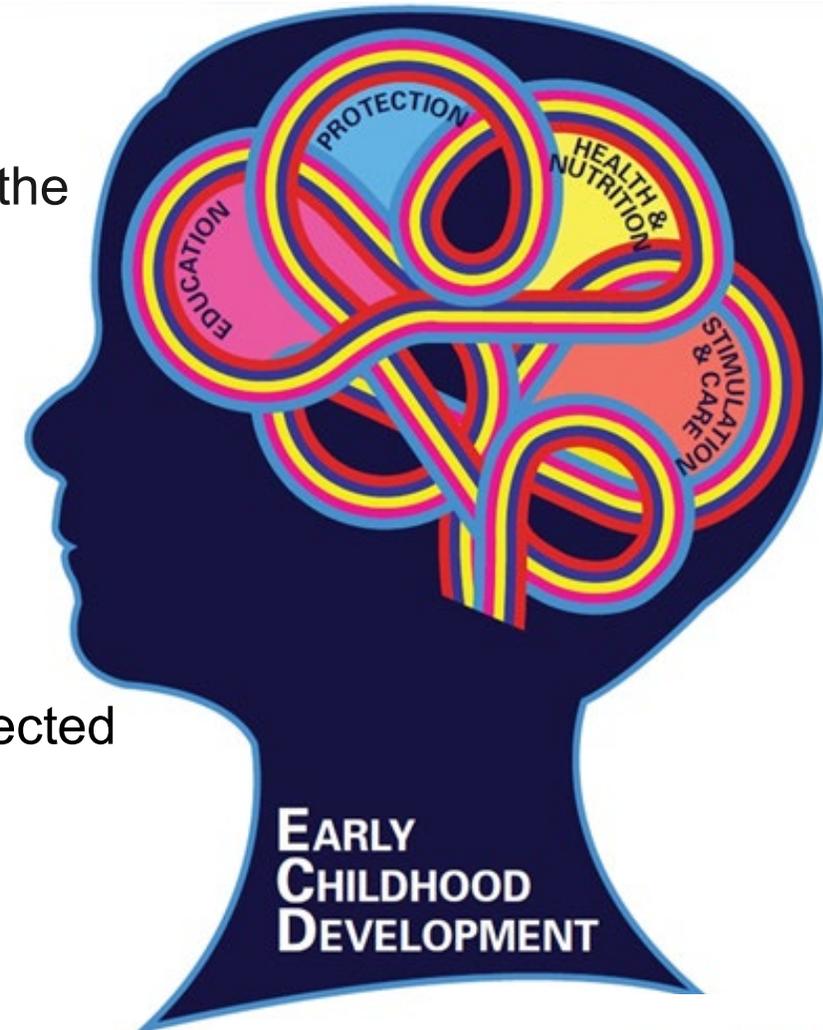
Toxic stress during early childhood = lifelong negative impact

## Message 4:

Brain human complexity - not sectoral development, but interconnected parts, this is why we need to work together!

## Message 5:

Nourishing the mind = nutrition + stimulation



# UNICEF Priorities for ECD

## UNICEF's Vision for Early Childhood



- ECD programming a flagship for all sections of UNICEF (Child Protection, Social Protection, Nutrition, Health, WASH, Education)
- UNICEF continues to be a global technical and thought leader for Early Childhood, in collaboration with partners

### I. Elevate Parenting Support

Roll-out the **organizational Parenting Strategy** through field engagement.

### II. Strengthen integrated services and systems

Implement integrated services aligned with the Nurturing Care Framework.

### III. Promote ECD in Humanitarian Settings

Promote integration of early stimulation, care, and parenting support as per Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.



## ECD Measurement

Promote countries uptake of

- ECDI2030 for SDG monitoring
- Measurement of programme effectiveness



**ECDI2030**  
Early Childhood Development Index

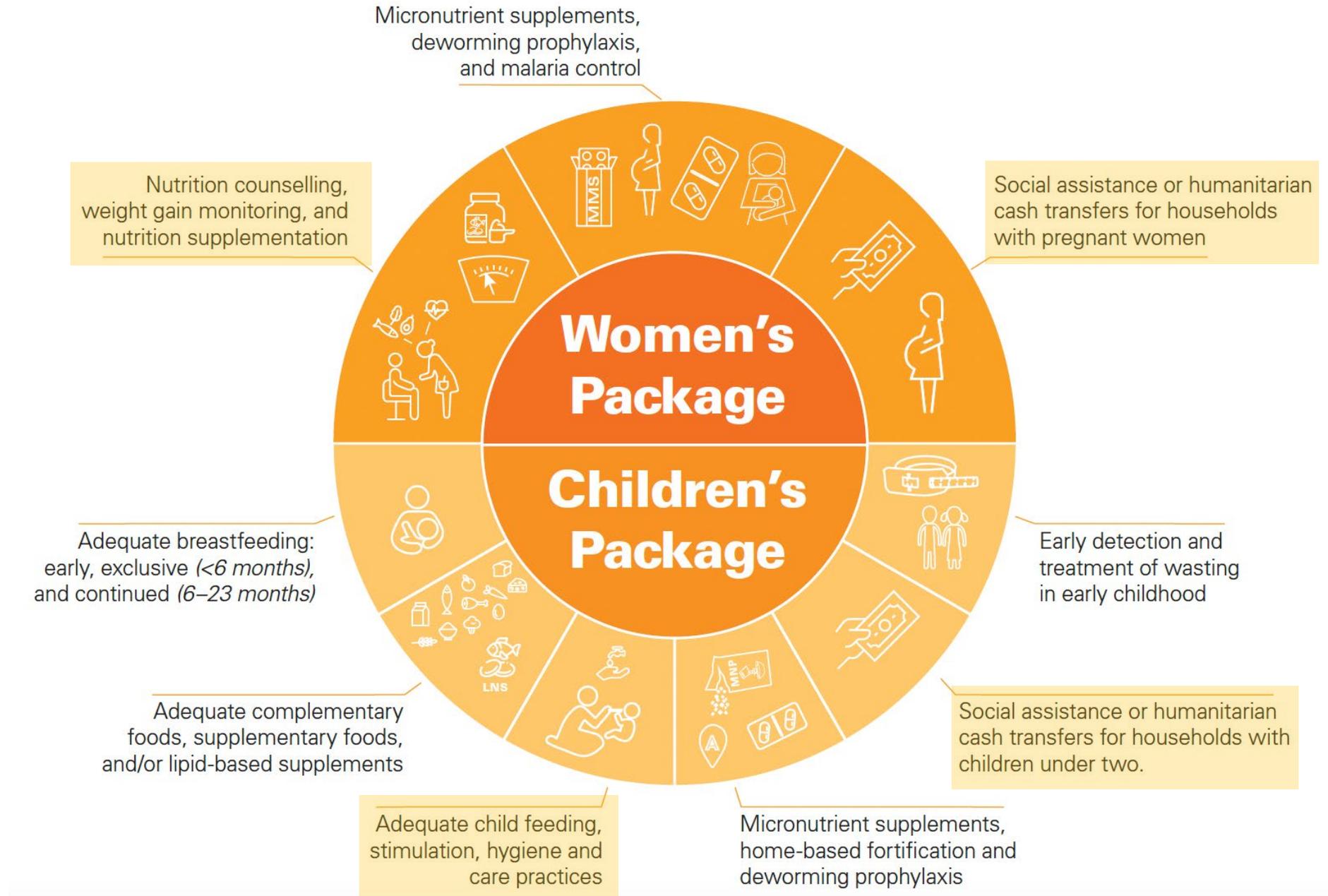
# Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action

ECD in emergencies:.

Core Commitment for Children	Nutrition programme contribution	Tools and training packages
<p><b>1. Access to services</b> Young children have equitable and safe access to essential services to fulfil their developmental needs</p>	<p>Protect, promote and support essential nutrition services for young children and their caregivers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ECD kits for emergencies:</b> materials that younger children can use to play among themselves, with the support of a facilitator.</li> <li>• <b>Project Play:</b> provision of stimulating materials for children treated for malnutrition, created by recycling boxes of ready-to-use therapeutic foods.</li> <li>• <b>Complementary feeding bowl:</b> designed to be used by counsellors during infant and young child feeding counselling and behaviour change sessions for a clearer and more interactive demonstration of optimal feeding practices. Caregivers can then take the bowl home as an ongoing reminder. The complementary feeding bowl supports the child-caregiver interaction; it also becomes a toy and an ECD tool.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Support to parents and caregivers</b> Parents and caregivers are supported to practice nurturing care</p>	<p>Support the well-being of caregivers and families in all programme contexts and leverage parenting programmes to enhance child survival, growth and development outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Caring for the Caregiver</b> is a training package to engage parents and caregivers and focus on their mental health and well-being. See online AGORA course introduction to <a href="#">Caring for the Caregiver</a></li> <li>• <b>MAMI Care Pathway</b> provides tools to help assess mothers' well-being and provides advice on child interaction and support. See <a href="#">MAMI Counselling Cards and Support Actions Booklet</a> (cards 8-10)</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Capacity-building</b> Capacity of frontline workers and partners in inclusive ECD and nurturing care is strengthened</p>	<p>Build the capacity of nutrition frontline workers to foster child development, improve the care of young children and support caregivers; these actions boost the quality of programmes and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Care for Childhood Development</b> is a training package for frontline responders created by UNICEF and WHO that helps understand early childhood development and how to better engage with families and children. See online AGORA course <a href="#">Introductory course in Care for Child Development</a></li> </ul>

# Package Example

## No Time to Waste



# Emergency Tools for the youngest children



NEWBORN, BIRTH UP TO 1 WEEK	1 WEEK UP TO 6 MONTHS	6 MONTHS UP TO 9 MONTHS	9 MONTHS UP TO 12 MONTHS	12 MONTHS UP TO 2 YEARS	2 YEARS AND OLDER
<p><b>Your baby learns from birth</b></p>  <p><b>PLAY</b> Provide ways for your baby to see, hear, move arms and legs freely, and touch you. Gently soothe, stroke and hold your child. Skin to skin is good.</p>	 <p><b>PLAY</b> Provide ways for your child to see, hear, feel, move freely, and touch you. Slowly move colourful things for your child to see and reach for. <i>Sample toys:</i> staker rattle, big ring on a string.</p>	 <p><b>PLAY</b> Give your child clean, safe household things to handle, bang, and drop. <i>Sample toys:</i> containers with lids, metal pot and spoon.</p>	 <p><b>PLAY</b> Hide a child's favourite toy under a cloth or box. See if the child can find it. Play peek-a-boo.</p>	 <p><b>PLAY</b> Give your child things to stack up, and to put into containers and take out. <i>Sample toys:</i> Nesting and stacking objects, container and clothes clips.</p>	 <p><b>PLAY</b> Help your child count, name and compare things. Make simple toys for your child. <i>Sample toys:</i> Objects of different colours and shapes to sort, stick or chalk board, puzzle.</p>
 <p><b>COMMUNICATE</b> Look into baby's eyes and talk to your baby. When you are breastfeeding is a good time. Even a newborn baby sees your face and hears your voice.</p>	 <p><b>COMMUNICATE</b> Smile and laugh with your child. Talk to your child. Get a conversation going by copying your child's sounds or gestures.</p>	 <p><b>COMMUNICATE</b> Respond to your child's sounds and interests. Call the child's name, and see your child respond.</p>	 <p><b>COMMUNICATE</b> Tell your child the names of things and people. Show your child how to say things with hands, like "bye bye". <i>Sample toy:</i> doll with face.</p>	 <p><b>COMMUNICATE</b> Ask your child simple questions. Respond to your child's attempts to talk. Show and talk about nature, pictures and things.</p>	 <p><b>COMMUNICATE</b> Encourage your child to talk and answer your child's questions. Teach your child stories, songs and games. Talk about pictures or books. <i>Sample toy:</i> book with pictures.</p>

### CFC puzzle

**Connect with caregiver:**

- Tune in and connect to the emotional needs of the caregiver.
- Encourage the caregiver's ability to cope with emotions and stress.

**Support for caregiver:**

- Engage support from partners and family and help resolve conflict.
- Problem-solve barriers to accessing resources and services in the community.

**Connect with child:**

- Encourage coping enables emotionally responsive and attentive caregiving.
- Increased caregiver confidence encourages stimulation and learning.

**Support for child:**

- Partner and family engagement reduces caregiving burden.
- Families create the environment for learning in everyday playful activities.

## Building a case study: Lebanon as an inclusive model



Other country  
examples and  
other types of  
emergencies:

1. Conflict in  
Ukraine
2. Displacement  
and refugees in  
Colombia
3. Floods in Peru  
and Pakistan

# Monitoring & Evaluating: Development beyond growth

- **Core developmental indicators:** gross and fine motor skills, communication skills, socioemotional status and cognitive capacities.
- **Proxy indicators for poor development:** stunting, poverty, poor mental health and well-being of parents, air pollution and other environmental factors.
- **Proxy indicators for positive development:** positive engagement and responsive caregiving from fathers and mothers, play and learning opportunities and stimulating environments.
- **Sample tools:**
  - UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
  - ECD Index 2030
  - HOME Scale to measure child-parent interactions



**Proportion of children under age 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being (SDG Indicator 4.2.1)**

**IMPACT**

**OUTCOME**

**OUTPUT**

	Goal Area 1	Goal Area 2	Goal Area 3	Goal Area 5
	<p><b>1.12. % children receiving early stimulation and responsive care from their parents or caregivers</b></p>	<p><b>2.3 Gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education</b></p>		<p><b>5.5. # countries taking action to support care through Family Friendly Policies</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RA4: Child health and development</b> 1.4.1. # countries that have integrated ECD in primary health care</li> <li>• <b>RA5: Mental health</b> 1.5.2. # countries implementing multisectoral approaches to caregiver mental health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RA1: Access to learning</b> 2.1.1. % countries with inclusive and gender-equitable system for access to learning opportunities 2.1.4. # OOSC supported to participate in education</li> <li>• <b>RA2: Improved learning &amp; skills.</b> 2.2.1. % countries with effective teacher development system 2.2.2. % countries with effective learning assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RA1: Protection from violence</b> 3.1.2. # mothers, fathers and caregivers reached through parenting programmes</li> </ul>	
	<p>Focus on age group 0-5 (disaggregation)</p>	<p>Focus on pre-primary level</p>	<p>Focus on age group 0-5 (disaggregation by curriculum)</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RA6: Early childhood nutrition</b> 1.6.1. # children U5 benefitting from programmes to prevent stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies/overweight and obesity</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RA2: Promotion of care and mental health</b> 3.2.7. # children, adolescents, parents/caregivers provided with community-based mental health and psychosocial support</li> </ul>	<p>In SP 2022-25: Elevated as Outcome indicator in GA5 (In SP2018-21: Output Indicator in Change Strategy)</p>
			<p>Focus on age group 0-5 (disaggregation)</p>	

**Change Strategies**

**Community engagement, social and behavioral change**

H2.8. # countries that meet organizational benchmarks for integrated parenting support programs

Thank you.

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for every child