

Early Childhood Development and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Solution to Reducing Poverty and Inequality

A Global Call to ACTION!

Addressing the needs of young children in a Sustainable Development Framework must include ensuring:

- ✓ *Young children are identified as a high priority group.*
- ✓ *The 'protection, survival and development of children to their full potential, including through education' is a priority in this Framework.*
(Para. 11, Rio+20 document, Para. 11, Open Working Group Focus Areas Document, July 19, 2014)
- ✓ *Proposed goals and targets including those as set out in the reports of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the UN High-Level Panel and Education for All must be maintained in the Global Synthesis document and Zero Draft to be presented at the 2014 UN General Assembly.*
- ✓ *Targets and indicators must be disaggregated by age 0-2, 3-5, and 6-8 years.*
- ✓ *Heads of State and other champions must speak about ECD and advocate for the benefits of investing early in children's development, highlighting good practices and cost-effective ECD interventions.*

Key Messages: Over 200 million children under 5 years of age in low-income and middle-income countries – and increasing numbers in OECD countries and emerging economies – will face inequalities and not reach their full developmental potential because they grow up facing a broad range of risk factors, most notably poverty; poor health including HIV/AIDS and malnutrition; high levels of family and environmental stress and exposure to violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and inadequate levels of care and learning opportunities. This includes risks that result from emergencies related to conflict, climate change and global demographic shifts through migration and urbanisation.

Based on a growing and compelling body of cross-disciplinary research, we know that:

- *Inequalities in child development begin before a child is born, continue and often widen in the early years through poverty-related risks that impact children's developing brains*
- *The impact of these risk factors and adverse experiences on a child's future well-being, especially in health, education and learning outcomes and earning potential, can be mitigated through evidence-based strategies including: parenting interventions; early detection and intervention for developmental delays and disabilities; early childhood programs of care, support and learning, where possible integrated into home visiting programs; and targeted health, nutrition, sanitation and social protection services*
- *Increasing preschool enrolment rates by 25% could yield an estimated US\$10.6 billion through higher educational achievement and yield even greater dividends when they are coupled with community-based nutrition and parenting programmes*
- *Investments in good quality early primary education (grades 1-3), combined with quality ECD services prior to children entering school, can dramatically improve the efficiency of the schooling system by reducing repetition and drop-out and improving achievement, especially for girls and marginalised groups*

Effective Measures for Early Childhood Development:

For targets to be effective in encouraging action, they must be clearly defined and measurable. The proposed targets related to early childhood can be measured in part using existing indicators, but additional work is needed to fully define and measure proposed targets.

Child development and learning at the global and regional levels can be measured through UNICEF's MICS Early Childhood Development Index, for example, and several high-quality, reliable measures of child development and learning are also available within countries and regions. In Asia-Pacific, the East Asia Pacific Child Development Scale has been validated in several countries.

Areas in need of further measurement development include reliable and feasible measures of the quality of early childhood development programmes, and children's access to and participation in informal child development programmes, which are presently not measured in many countries and are central to measuring progress towards proposed targets.

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