

We NEEDED

Act for

Early Years

**A call for a global movement to support
the world's youngest children**

Your HELP.

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Chair of Theirworld**

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Finally, thanks to Theirworld's President Justin van Fleet who has steered the creation of this report and campaign from the start and is on paternity leave for its launch.



LISTEN Up Foreword



Around the world, the situation for the youngest members of society and the people who take care of them - parents, carers, nursery teachers, teaching assistants - is worsening and suffering from a lack of investment and interest.

There is truly a global crisis in the early years. The high cost or poor availability of adequate childcare is the main reason why women leave their jobs, which leaves their families less able to afford all the things that their children need. In low- and lower-middle income countries, nearly eight out of 10 children don't even have access to childcare. If and when they do start primary school, they are at a major disadvantage compared to children who have benefitted from some level of early learning. Inequality is embedded at an early age.

For a child, the first five to six years are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. That is when 90% of brain development occurs and patterns of learning and behaviour are set for the future. But this opportunity is being wasted for so many children on a global scale.

Towards the end of this report, we list interventions and innovations that will help the world's youngest children achieve the best possible start in life. However, good ideas will amount to nothing without the most essential change that needs to happen - a change of attitude among governments, policy-makers and donors. They must begin to see the early years not as a cost but as an investment, and one of the smartest investments that a society can make, as an abundance of evidence shows.

Providing for children in their early years must be treated as a public good, not a private test of a family's financial strength. Parents around the world should no longer be reduced to hoping for the best, crossing their fingers that the inadequate care they are often forced to use isn't a risk to their child's safety or their future prospects in life.

In launching the Act For Early Years campaign, Theirworld and our partners are making the case for a global revolution in how the youngest children are provided for. It's an argument that really shouldn't have to be made, but it will be so much stronger with your support, united in a single voice to demand the change that the under-fives deserve.

Please join us.

Sarah Brown
Chair
Theirworld



early
years
ARE our
BEST
CHANCE
ever



Action

Executive summary

It's what any parent wants. It's what anyone should want for any child. The best start in life. A healthy beginning. A foundation for the future.

Yet in every country and most communities across the world, the opportunities offered to a newborn child are based on the luck of the draw, predetermined before birth and perpetuated by inequality and lack of services.

Eight years ago, world leaders set a target that by 2030 every girl and boy should have access to "quality early childhood development, care and education", so they are properly prepared for primary school. But this target is off track and there is no recognised plan in place to achieve it.

Around the world:

- More than half of all young children (349 million) do not have the access they need to childcare, and around half of pre-primary-aged children are not enrolled in any form of early education.
- At least 175 million children are not enrolled in pre-primary education programmes (UNICEF 2010).
- One in four children aged five have never had any form of pre-primary education (UNESCO 2022).
- Malnutrition and stunting impact an estimated 250 million children under five, thwarting their development at a critical moment in their lives (Ndayizigiye et al 2022).
- Of the world's 100 million displaced people, just under 12 million are estimated to be children under the age of five (Moving Minds Alliance, 2022).

It's time to end this crisis in early years services, a crisis which is both very local and global in its nature.

The high cost or lack of availability of early years support is the main reason why women leave the workforce, sometimes never to return. When this happens, it is not only the women and their families

who suffer – businesses lose valuable employees, economies lose productivity and tax revenues decline. The first years of childhood are quite literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Research has shown that up to 90% of a child's brain development takes place between birth and the age of five, when more than one million neural connections are formed every second, a rate that is never matched again.

Without adequate support, children are at risk of going through life with poorer physical and mental health. They face a struggle to learn and, later, to earn a living.

Investment in the early years supports future learning, health and wellbeing, and upholds the right of every child to survive and thrive. It also promotes social equity and higher economic returns, because failing to give children the best start in life perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality.

The early years is when inequality sets in. Children from more prosperous, educated backgrounds tend to begin primary school ready to learn, but more than 40% of children in low- and middle-income countries – almost 250 million children – are at risk of not attaining their full development potential due to poverty, inadequate nutrition, exposure to stress and lack of early stimulation and learning (Black et al. 2017; Lu, Black, and Richter 2016).

Despite the science and evidence in favour of investing in the early years, this critical period in a child's life receives some of the lowest levels of investment from governments around the world, with the situation only worsening in recent years. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in millions of young children missing out on vital care and learning. With funding often diverted to other sectors, rising energy prices, increases in the cost of living and staff shortages, millions of families were left without access to quality affordable care, preschool, primary health and nutrition services.

The opportunity

When the early years are done right, a child's life chances – their health, employment and wider contribution to their community – can be transformed.

It is therefore critical to provide a comprehensive package of care – good-quality education and learning, constructive play, sound healthcare, nurturing care, nutrition and protection – for the youngest children.

Research has shown that:

- Among children from disadvantaged backgrounds, quality care and early education meant they were 17% less likely to be suspended from school, 26% more likely to be employed and 11% more likely to enjoy good health (Heckman 2021).
- Early years interventions can help narrow the wide gaps in outcomes and opportunities that exist between children from higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds and also the gender gap between boys and girls (G20).
- Expanding the childcare economy offers substantial employment opportunities. The expansion of the childcare workforce to meet current needs could create 43 million jobs globally (World Bank, 2021).

the
start of
EVERYTHING



The Act for Early Years Campaign

We need to see a revolution for the early years that radically improves investment, policy and practice. Theirworld, working with partners around the world, is seizing on the opportunity and launching a global campaign calling for urgent action to end the early years crisis.

It will bring together governments, business, international agencies, parents, frontline workers, civil society, youth campaigners and grassroots groups behind a single banner to improve the lives of the world's youngest children. And it will give voice to members of our society who are too young to express their needs for themselves.

The early momentum is there. Around the world, community groups are organising for change. High-profile activists and politicians have called for the early years to be treated as part of a country's essential infrastructure, like roads, hospitals and telecommunications.

A significant number of countries have put in place commitments to improve early childhood development - which covers the package of care and learning that a child needs to thrive in the first five years of life. Delivery is so far mostly lacking, but a small number of countries have taken meaningful action, making the early years the priority they deserve to be. Several international commitments and pledges have, encouragingly, recognised the importance of the first years of a child's life, but without binding signatories to action.

The Act For Early Years campaign wants to wake up government officials in key posts at finance and other ministries who still do not fully grasp the importance of the early years, but who have the power and ability to improve dramatically the prospects of our youngest children. It is high time that the early years are treated as an investment, not a cost.

We want decision-makers, donors and policy-makers to follow the science of early childhood and start focusing on the things that would make the biggest difference for children. With these commitments, we will transform the prospects of an entire generation.

The campaign's chief demands to government at national and local level, and the international community, are:

- Give universal access to affordable, quality childcare, with high-quality, proven interventions available to every child, spanning education and learning, health, nutrition and social protection.
- Invest in a fully-trained, qualified and funded early years workforce.
- Deliver on the internationally-agreed target to invest 10% of education funding in pre-primary education and learning, and agree similar targets across all sectors.
- Deliver an integrated approach to early years interventions across sectors and government, with senior government leadership.
- Prioritise and track early years investments in all aid budgets and programmes, especially those addressing emergencies and targeting refugee communities.
- Stage the first ever International Financing Summit on the early years by 2025 to kickstart an international decade of action on the early years and prioritise the needs of marginalised children.

(See pages 39-41 for the full list of recommendations)



act FOR
Early Years

Quality, proven early years interventions

Fortunately, strong guidance on effective reforms already exists. What needs to be added is the global political commitment that will result in the financial investment and delivery needed at national and local level to produce meaningful, long-lasting change. The internationally-recognised guide produced by the World Bank identifies 25 essential early years interventions that can be delivered through five integrated packages at different stages in a child's life, spanning the education and learning, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and social protection sectors. These five packages of interventions are:

- (i) Family support
- (ii) Pregnancy
- (iii) Birth
- (iv) Child health and development
- (v) Preschool

The Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development

In 2018 experts launched the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development during the 71st World Health Assembly. The Framework provides an evidence-based roadmap for action and outlines how integrated, multi-sectoral policies and services can support parents, families, other caregivers and communities in providing nurturing care for young children. It calls for attention to be paid to communities where children are most at risk of being left behind.

Act For Early Years: the way forward to transformation

At Theirworld, we have shown that big change is possible only when there is collaboration across the traditional divides of government, business and civil society. In this report we set out an Act For Early Years campaign pathway to deliver a decade of action and increased investment.

The campaign will draw on our longstanding partnerships to build practical, effective responses to the early years crisis and drive action at the highest levels of national and international governance. We aim to shape the political conversation, the media debate and levels of investment for the early years, spearheading a revolution in outcomes for the next generation of children.

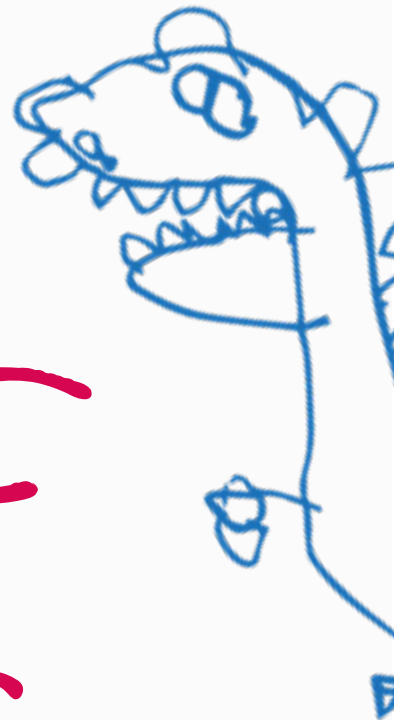
Cooperation doesn't always come easily to groups from different disciplines across the early childhood development sector. But when organisations within a broad interest area do collaborate - such as on climate, maternal mortality or HIV/Aids - the campaign results can be spectacular, transforming political attitudes and action in those respective areas. The Act For Early Years campaign will be another example of a global movement affecting long-lasting change.

It is now time to work together to end the global early years crisis. The world's youngest children deserve nothing less.

Find out how you can Act For Early Years at actforearlyyears.org

Terminology

We have chosen to use the term "early years" throughout this report to incorporate all the key interventions and frameworks for early childhood - from birth through to the preschool years and the transition to school. At times, for variety, we have used "early childhood development (ECD)". Both terms can be regarded as encompassing all sectors relevant to the early years: healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, safety, protection, play, childcare, nurturing care and education etc. and other acronyms such as ECE, ECCE and ECE. Though partners focus on different age groups, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Comment) defines early childhood as below the age of eight.



PLEASE

give US

The best start in life



World leaders, we need action!
We all deserve a fair start in life.
With access to quality childcare, education and learning,
When our brains are growing fastest
And our potential is biggest.
Early years are the start of everything.
Why do only half of us get to start life right?
It's not fair to leave half the world's children behind.
We are a global movement
Asking you to act for early years:
To invest in quality childcare and preschool,
To prioritise primary healthcare,
And nutrition services,
And unlock bright futures
For young children everywhere.
Act for Early Years

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Early Years

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Why the early years matter



“She’s very happy and more sociable. It’s good for her to be with other kids. It’s very good for kids to be in a community. They learn how to be together, they learn to play group games together, to be kind to each other. In the end, they’ll grow to be more sociable.”



Shima Soleimani, mother of Nilia, aged three, who fled Afghanistan and attends the Heal Together project in Greece, organised by the Amna Refugee Healing Network, a programme focused on providing early years education to refugee children, supported by Theirworld.

Early years: the potential

The human brain is an amazing organ, and never more so than in the first years of life, when children’s cognitive and social skills develop at an extremely rapid pace.

Social scientists began examining the benefits of quality early childhood development in the 1960s. The pioneering Perry School Program, led by Prof James Heckman in Michigan, showed that disadvantaged children who were given quality care and early education had significantly better life outcomes than control participants. Following the initial Perry participants over five decades, Prof Heckman found that a quality early childhood improved their outcomes well into middle age (Heckman, 2019). Other studies including The Lancet series (The Lancet 2016) and in Jamaica (World Bank 2018) built on those findings.

The evidence for investment in the early years in promoting social equity is hard to ignore. Expanding access to quality early years care and education services, especially for the most vulnerable children and families, could help to end the vicious cycle of intergenerational inequality that can take root even before birth.

Early childhood is a key step for building inclusive societies. Children who come from marginalised groups are more likely to suffer from malnutrition and poor health, and are less likely to attend preschool. Inclusive policies and interventions that are universal in scope but target specific ethnic groups or children with disabilities or specific needs can narrow the divide in future opportunities (UNESCO, 2021).

Getting it wrong: the consequences of failing in early years

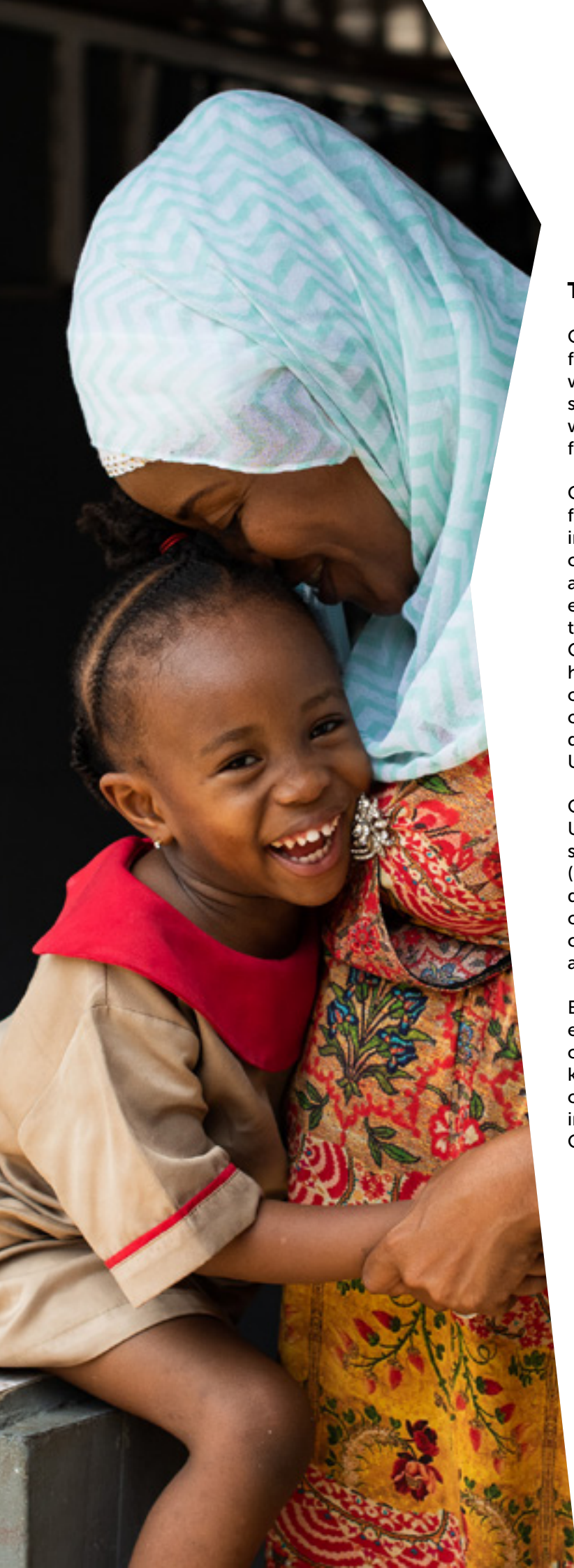
Despite everything we now know about the impact of adequate provision in early years, it is still far easier to find examples of failure than success in meeting the needs of very young children.

In 2016 the ground-breaking Lancet Early Childhood Development series alerted the world to the scale of the global early years crisis and set out the overwhelming scientific evidence behind investing in the early years.

The study estimated that 250 million children in lower- and middle-income countries may not achieve their full potential. Since the study was written the global pandemic has likely only made the situation worse, though it has yet to be measured in the same way.

Poor preparation is not just an issue in low- and middle-income country contexts. A study by Kindred², an early years charity in the UK, found that almost half of UK children were not ready for the first year of primary school, according to their teachers (The Times, 2023). Many pupils were unable to “use the toilet, eat independently or communicate clearly”, it said, in part because of the years of lost learning and socialisation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As our understanding of nurturing care has improved, we are also beginning to measure how stresses at a young age rebound through communities and across generations. Poverty, stress, violence and neglect can “overload biological systems” and lead to long-term adverse consequences for mental and physical wellbeing (Harvard, 2020).



The early years and climate change

Children will be the most affected by this huge issue for the planet's future. They will face more extreme weather events than their grandparents' generation: seven times as many heat waves, twice as many wildfires and three times as many droughts, crop failures and river floods (Save the Children 2021).

Climate education has the power to reduce future carbon emissions: if just 16% of children in middle- and high-income countries received climate education, it would have the same impact as removing 504 million cars from the road. This is equivalent to all the cars in Europe and one-third of the cars in the world (Brookings Institution 2021). One crucial impact of climate change is on children's health. It is estimated that 88% of the global burden of disease attributable to climate change occurs in children younger than five, in both industrialised and developing countries (Zhang et al., 2007; UNICEF, 2021).

Climate change is also affecting child malnutrition. Undernourishment rates have risen significantly since 2015, in part due to extreme weather events (Niles et al., 2021). While childhood malnutrition has decreased over the past several decades globally, one in three children in low- and middle-income countries still suffer from it, many of them under the age of five (UNICEF, 2019).

Effective interventions need to be integrated into existing systems in health, education, and social and child protection. Many measures are already well known, and some of the lowest-cost initiatives on climate adaptation have immediate, long-term and intergenerational benefits (Venton, 2011; Clark et al., 2020).

Big FACTS

Early Years - The Facts

Millions of the world's children are missing the crucial window of opportunity represented by the early years. The statistics are damning.

A global failure:

- Nearly half of all children (250 million) under the age of five in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of not reaching their development potential (The Lancet, 2016).
- 350 million children below primary-school-entry age around the world need childcare, but do not have access to it (World Bank, 2021).
- More than 175 million children globally, almost half of all pre-primary-age children, are not enrolled in pre-school. In low-income countries, only one in five are enrolled (UNICEF, 2019).
- In European countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, children under the age of three in low-income households are one-third less likely to participate in early childhood education and care than those in high-income households. (OECD, 2020).

Widespread inequality:

- On average in European countries children from birth to the age of two in low-income households are one-third less likely to participate in early childhood education and care than those in high-income households (OECD, 2020).
- In Cameroon 69% of the richest percentile three- to four-year-olds attend preschool compared to 2% of the poorest. In Malawi 67% of the richest percentile attend preschool compared to 27% of the poorest. (World Inequality Database on Education)

Funding is weak:

- OECD Countries spend on average 0.7% of GDP on early childhood education and care (OECD, 2022).
- The share of humanitarian aid supporting early childhood development in emergencies is just 2% (Moving Minds Alliance, 2020).

Rewards are strong:

Spending on early years shows a huge return on investment: every \$1 invested in early childhood care and development can lead to a return of as much as \$17 for the most disadvantaged children (Theirworld, 2019).

Improving access to quality childcare for families can help break the cycle of poverty, improve the skills and knowledge of children and adults, and promote fairness - all of which are important for a country's economic growth and productivity. Expanding the childcare industry could create many new job opportunities. It is estimated that meeting the current demand for childcare worldwide could create up to 43 million new jobs (World Bank 2020).

Well-structured childcare support policies can pay for themselves, since without support parents face obstacles to labour force participation which can lead to higher welfare expenditure, lost tax revenues, inhibited growth and wasted human capital (OECD 2020).



What the public says - our survey results





A survey commissioned by Theirworld, and conducted by Hall + Partners, talked to more than 7,000 parents and carers in the UK, US, Nigeria, Brazil, Turkey, India and the Netherlands. The countries were chosen to represent geographically and economically diverse regions.

The findings reveal the extent of a global early years crisis in which children are being deprived of education and care in their most formative years due to the spiralling cost of nursery and preschool fees.

The survey reveals that UK parents face a tougher struggle to afford nursery and childminder fees than their counterparts in the Netherlands, US, India, Brazil, Turkey and Nigeria.

Three-quarters of UK parents – 74% - say they find it difficult to meet childcare costs, compared to 52% in India, 57% in the Netherlands, 60% in Nigeria, 68% in the US and Brazil, and 72% in Turkey. Other effects of the early years crisis on parents were made clear: high childcare fees mean that more than eight in 10 parents in Nigeria (85%) have had to make major financial changes to their lives to make ends meet, compared to 82% in India, 81% in Turkey, 73% in Brazil, 66% in the US and 65% in the UK. Changes include taking on more work and reducing or ceasing to use formal childcare.

A third of parents in India (33%) who use childcare say they have been forced to quit their job or drop out of higher education to avoid paying childcare fees, more than in any of the other countries polled. In the US, the figure stands at 27%, in the UK 23%, in the Netherlands 22%, in Brazil 17%, in Turkey 16% and in Nigeria 13%.

On average, less than 1% of GDP globally is spent on early childcare and education, according to the latest OECD figures. In some countries, such as the US, Portugal, Ireland, Costa Rica, Cyprus and Turkey, it is as low as 0.3%. In the UK, it is 0.5%. Spending is highest in Iceland (1.7%), followed by Sweden (1.6%), Norway (1.4%), France (1.3%), Denmark (1.2%) and Finland (1.2%).

“Cost is a huge aspect, it [childcare] is expensive for not very much. There’s an over reliance on television and on staff who are uneducated.”

Survey response from a mother in the UK.

CARE for US

What parents and carers say

Our survey asked responders, “What would most improve the quality of childcare services?” Here is a selection of their answers:

Brazil:

“Have flexible hours in the morning or afternoon. Being able to take and pick up my daughter at the best time for me and improve cultural development, teaching more children's songs and a taste for stories. And also greater contact with nature, such as having a playground with trees and some domestic animals.”

India:

“It will be good if government give some more facility and faculties to them.”

“Childcare services must include an activity-based approach to teaching children. They should make learning more fun.”

The UK:

“The staff are under-trained and under-resourced. The only way to get a decent level of care with educated staff is privately in my experience. A more child-led, skills-learning and playful approach is needed for younger children. There's an over-reliance on television and on staff who are uneducated.”

“My childcare provider is often short-staffed and has occasionally even not been able to open without any notice. This is because childcare is underfunded, and it is hard to attract staff on very low wages.”

The US:

“In order to improve the quality of childcare services, I believe that it would be essential to invest in more training and qualification for professionals working in this area. This includes not only caregivers and teachers, but also managers and supervisors of these services.”

“More help from our government to help support those in the childcare services.”

Turkey:

“There needs to be caregivers with higher levels of education and more reasonable wages.”

“Places should be opened for more children, and it should be free, especially for working mothers and I expect caregivers to be competent.”

Nigeria:

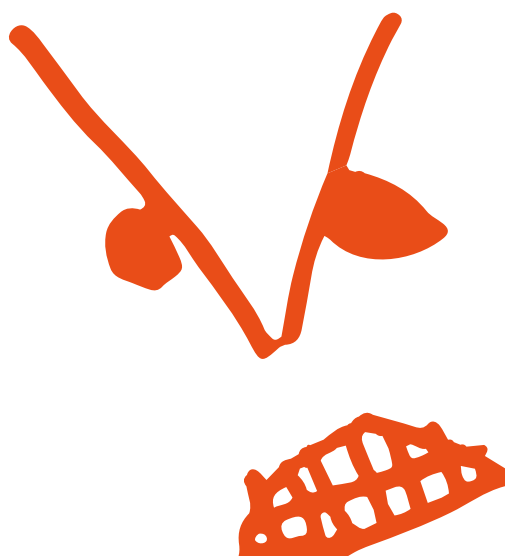
“Employing competent and experienced personnel with appreciable salary.”

“Ensuring conducive living environment for them and make available nutritionist to help them in their diets for quality mental development.”

The Netherlands:

“Increase wages and benefits for childcare workers to ensure they are adequately compensated for the important work they do.”

“Patience is the most important quality a childcare provider should have.”





Three

International and national commitments to the early years

“It's just such a crazy economic model if we can't actually arrange for women to have childcare for their children.”

Professor Dame Lesley Regan, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Imperial College London St Mary's Hospital Campus, and the Women's Health Ambassador for England, speaking at Theirworld's International Women's Day event, 2023



The current international conversation

2022 was marked by two significant global gatherings: UNESCO's World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, and the Transforming Education Summit (TES).

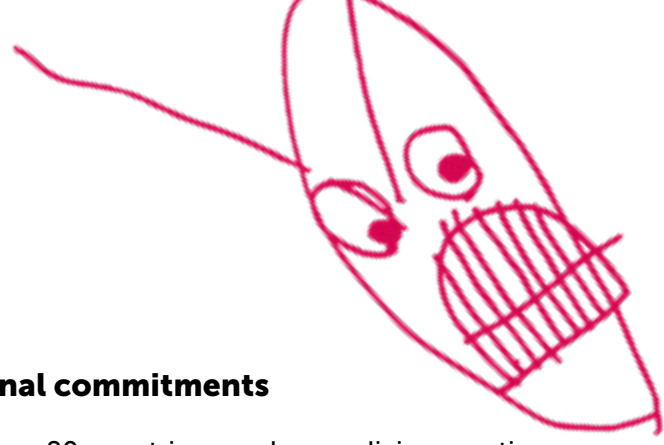
TES was convened by the UN Secretary-General to address the global learning crisis and to elevate education to the top of the global political agenda. More than 130 countries committed to rebooting their education systems and approved the launch of the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd), which will generate billions of dollars to help some of the poorest countries improve their school systems. Commitments were made to improve foundational literacy and numeracy skills (35% of national commitments) and early childhood care and education (more than 60% of national commitments).

The UNESCO conference, hosted by the Government of Uzbekistan, marked the first time that an international gathering had signed up to the 10% budget commitment to ECE that campaigners, including Theirworld, had been advocating for nearly a decade. In adopting the Tashkent Declaration, representatives of 147 countries also committed to ensure that salaries and working conditions of pre-school personnel are at least on a par with those of primary education teachers.

For this report Theirworld reviewed the level of political prioritisation of early years issues throughout 2022 at regular major annual global meetings (World Bank Spring Meetings, World Bank Annual Meetings, World Economic Forum, World Health Assembly, New York and regional Climate Week meetings), as well as keynote speeches from major summits. We found that while many strategies and political statements mention the specific needs of young children and the value of investing in the early years, in many cases this does not translate to substantial prioritisation of the early years in sectoral strategies. Many international meetings missed any serious focus on early years in their formal agendas.

Even on social media Theirworld found that a snapshot of Twitter accounts belonging to departments and leaders responsible for foreign assistance (aid) mentioned early years-related issues in just 2.6% of their overall output in 2022. For accounts from international organisations - such as the World Bank and UN entities - this increased to 6%.

Another snapshot from the research is that in 2022 fewer than 2% of online news articles and social media mention issues related to the early years, nutrition or infant feeding. Nearly 70% of the media coverage concerned care, as the childcare crisis in many countries hit the headlines.



International commitments to children's rights and development

1989: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) upheld the right of every child to survive and thrive.

2006: The United Nations published 'Implementing child rights in early childhood', to draw states parties' attention to their obligations towards young children.

2015: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the UN General Assembly include target 4.2: "By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education."

2016: The Lancet Early Childhood Development series alerted the world to the scale of the global early years crisis and set out the overwhelming scientific evidence behind investing in the early years.

2018: World leaders met in Argentina and launched the G20 Initiative on Early Childhood Development calling for urgent action, funding and leadership.

2017-2019: Several regional commitments to early childhood development were made by the African Union, the Kathmandu Statement of Action, the Buenos Aires Declaration, the EU Council Recommendation and the Dubai Declaration on Early Childhood Development.

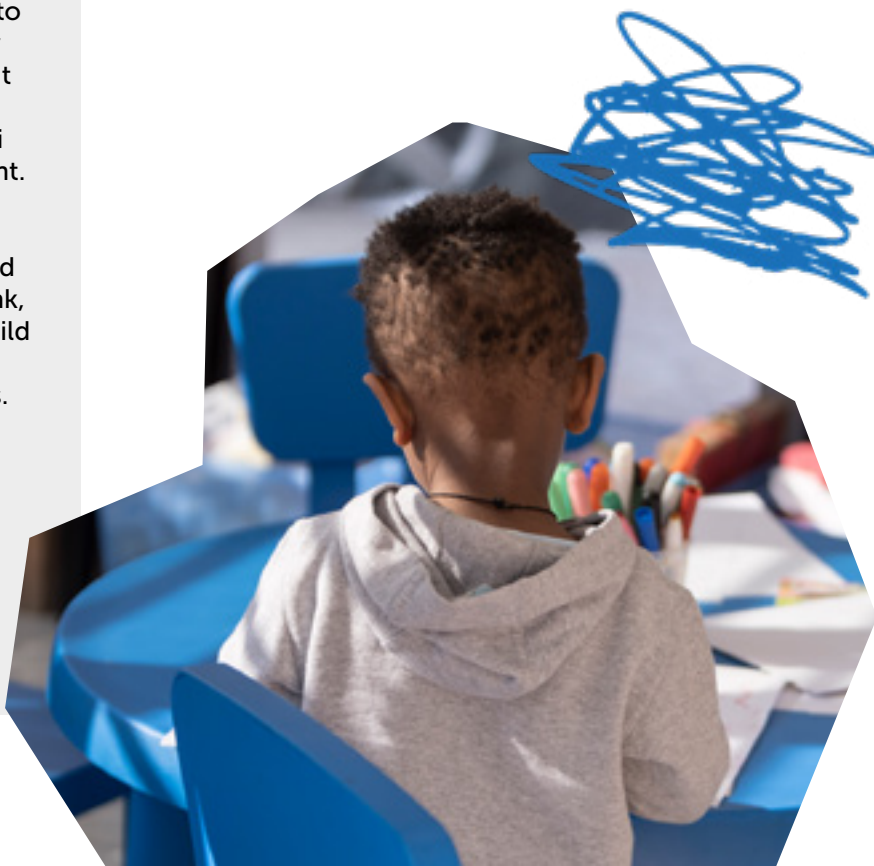
2018: The Nurturing Care Framework was launched, a collaboration between the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) and other partners.

2022: 147 UN member states and partners attending UNESCO'S World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education signed the Tashkent Declaration, which included a breakthrough commitment that 10% of education funding should be devoted to preschool education.

National commitments

More than 80 countries now have policies or action plans to promote holistic childhood development (UNICEF, 2020), while 63 countries have adopted free preschool and 51 have adopted compulsory preschool. Government spending on preschool education also increases once laws have been passed to introduce free or compulsory preschool education (Bianchi et al. 2022)

Early learning has been positioned on national policy agendas in several countries thanks to the efforts of high-level political champions, including Brazil, Chile, Jordan and Kenya. In 2006, Chile launched Chile Crece Contigo, a multi-sectoral effort aimed at addressing inequality in child development outcomes and providing support to young children and families through universal and targeted health, education and care services. International agencies, NGOs and foundations have contributed by providing technical guidance and funding to encourage national governments to implement reforms in early childhood education. There have been significant improvements in early childhood development outcomes in many countries, which can be attributed to the coordinated efforts of domestic and international actors alike (Neuman and Powers, 2021).



Tracking progress *so far*

Estonia: Making early childhood a priority

In Estonia spending on early childhood care and education is among the highest in the OECD, at 1.17% of gross domestic product.

Attendance at preschool is not compulsory, but all children aged 18 months to seven are offered a place, which are mostly heavily subsidised. The strength of services provided means that most parents in the country work full-time, with 87% of children aged between 18 months and three in nursery school (kindergarten), rising to 93 % for four- to six-year-olds.

Preschool follows a national curriculum that includes language skills, mathematics and self-management, but the classes aren't highly formal and learning through play is part of the syllabus.

Unlike in the US or the UK, early years teachers in Estonia must have a degree, while teaching assistants must have completed at least one year's training.

Recognising that recruitment was a problem, preschool teachers' salaries increased to 80%, 85% and 90% of the minimum salary of primary teachers in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively. If they have a master's degree, preschool teachers achieve the same salary as primary teachers. By contrast, 44% of UK childcare workers claim public benefits or tax credits because their pay is so low.

Since Estonia joined PISA, which tests mathematics, science and reading at 15, in 2006, it has become the highest-performing country in Europe and is placed in the top 10 globally. It is also one of only five countries where children's attainment and life satisfaction levels are both high.

Tracking progress

Good intentions or policies at the national or regional government level often fail to materialise (UNESCO 2022). Reasons for this include weak coordination between different departments and sectors involved with early years interventions, and confusion about responsibility "both horizontally and vertically". Sometimes, policy commitments do not receive the budget allocation necessary to put them into practice (UNICEF 2020).

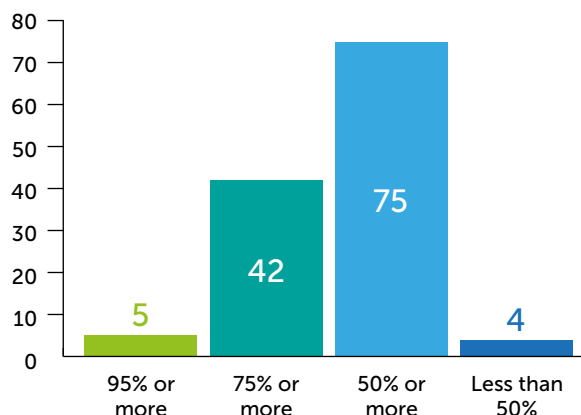
However, important work has been undertaken to gather data and track progress in early childhood development, which is essential to consolidating improvements in the medium- and long-term.

Countdown to 2030 is a collaboration of academics from global, regional, country institutions, UN agencies, the World Bank and civil society organisations, which tracks progress of interventions in the early years. Countdown to 2030 tracks 42 ECD indicators in 197 countries that encompass 99.8% of the world's children younger than five years.



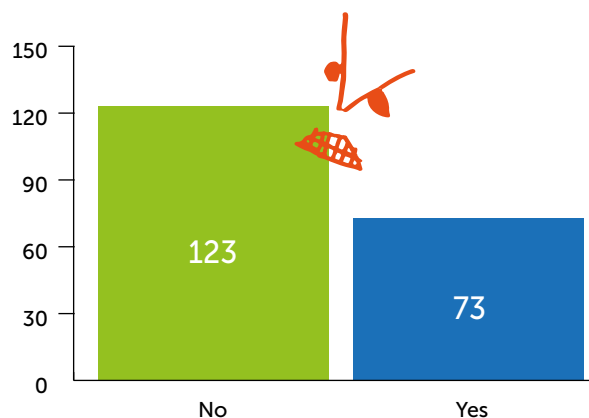
Young children at risk of poor development

Number of countries with % of children developmentally on track, according to UNICEF's Early Childhood Development Index (data available for 79 countries)

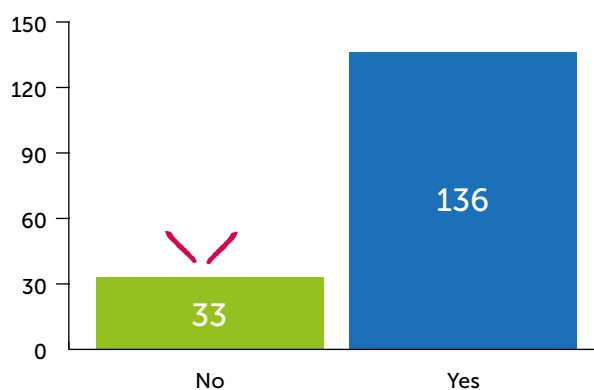


Number of countries with facilitating environments for Early Childhood Development

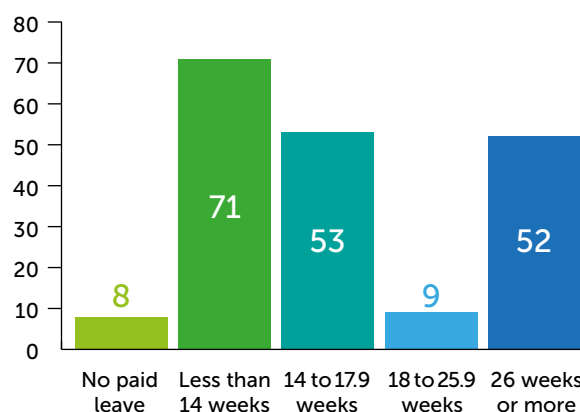
Child and family social protection (data from 196 countries)



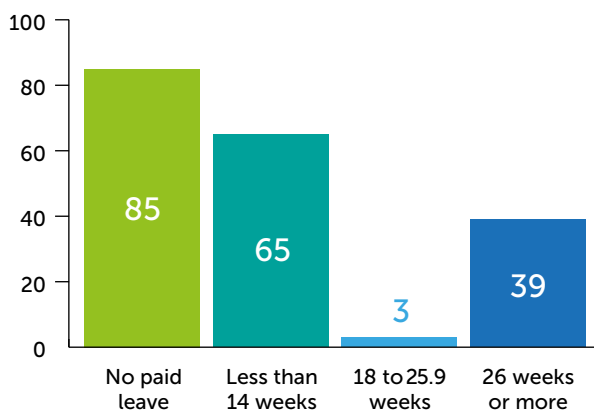
National minimum wage (data from 169 countries)



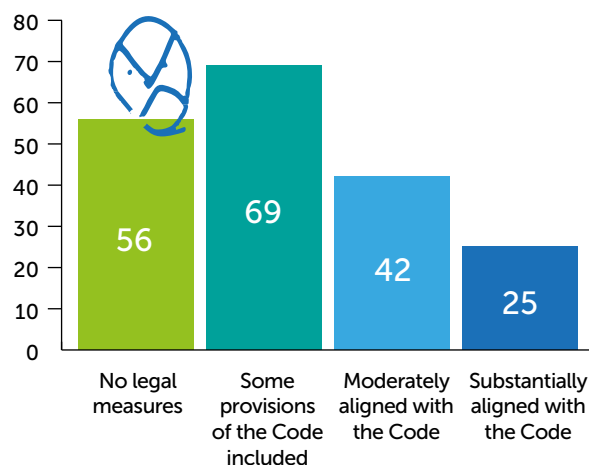
Paid maternity leave (data from 193 countries)



Paid paternity leave (data from 192 countries)

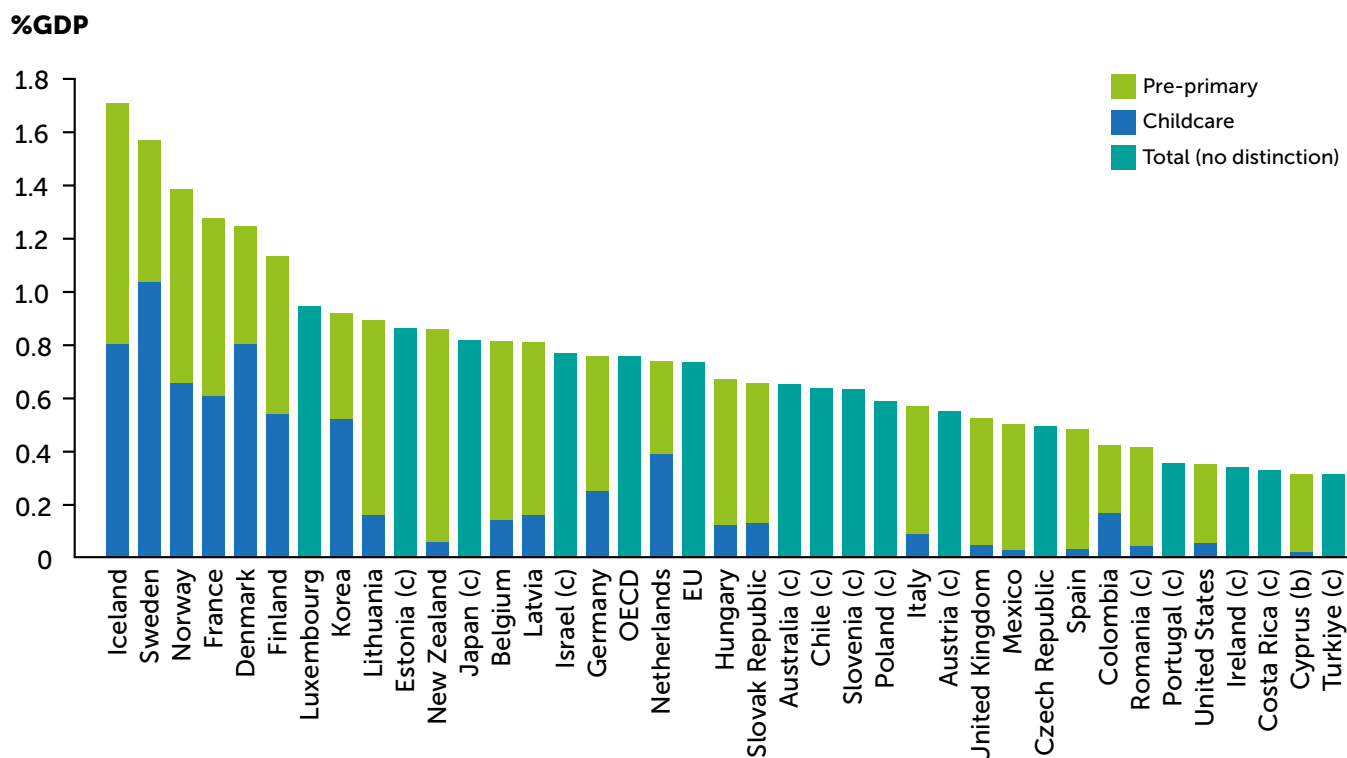


International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (data from 192 countries)



Source: Countdown to 2030 / UNICEF

Public spending on early childhood education and care



Public expenditure on childcare and pre-primary education and total public expenditure on early childhood education and care, as a % of GDP, 2019 or latest available. Source: OECD

Tracking progress on government expenditure

There is very little comparable data on either government expenditure or foreign assistance across all aspects of ECD. Experts and campaigners have called for comparable data to be published annually and minimum benchmark investment targets to be set and tracked.

After the G20 launched its initiative for ECD, a selection of experts formed a working group to make recommendations on how to track the investments underpinning the commitment. The group argued that “despite evidence of high returns, investment in early childhood development remains insufficient” and called for “closer examination of national investments in early childhood development”.

Recent research published by the OECD showed public spending on early childhood development among the organisation’s countries is woefully low, averaging 0.7%. There is considerable disparity in investment. The US for example is at 0.3% of GDP, the UK at 0.5% and the Netherlands at 0.7%, while Sweden puts nearly 2% of its spending toward early child services (OECD 2022).

The financing of early years interventions faces competition from other sectors and services at a time when resources are limited by the extra demands that the pandemic has put on government budgets. The pre-existing lack of political will to support early years services only exacerbates these challenges.





An example of advocacy progress – tracking investments in pre-primary education

Over the past five years Theirworld has worked in partnership with the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, University of Cambridge to identify a minimum investment funding target for pre-primary education and to rank donors' performances on tracking progress.

Our first analysis in 2017 showed that pre-primary education had not achieved the level of priority necessary in domestic policies and budgets, with nearly all low-income countries dedicating less than 5% of their domestic education budgets to pre-primary education. The report recommended that "national governments should... allocate at least 10% of their education budget to this sector".

In September 2017, UNICEF published *Early Moments Matter for Every Child*. In this flagship report on early childhood development, UNICEF called for governments and partners to "allocate 10% of all national education budgets to pre-primary education".

In recognition of this continued chronic underfunding, at the September 2022 United Nations General Assembly, the attendees affirmed: "UNICEF has called upon States to spend 10% of national education budgets on pre-primary education and upon donors to allocate 10% of aid to it." (UNGA, 2022).

After this, representatives of about 150 UN member countries, as well as experts from all over the world, gathered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in November 2022 for the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education and backed the call for funding. The Right To Education Initiative responded by welcoming the call for countries to increase pre-primary spending to at least 10%, recognising that "the realisation of ECCE rights, including the right to at least one year of free pre-primary education, will only be possible with adequate funding".

There are some encouraging signs that the early years are becoming a stronger priority for donors, but it is clear both they and policy-makers need to make the early years a much stronger priority. Progress has been made, but starting from a very low base. Other areas of education are still a higher priority, and with one or two honourable exceptions, aid donors are not adopting a "progressive universalism" approach that would increase investment in education across the board.

Tracking progress on aid expenditure

Between 2002 and 2020 the volume of aid to the early years increased five-fold, from \$1.5 billion to \$7.5 billion, but ECD's share of total aid spending fell from 3.8% to 3.3% between 2015 and 2020 (Zubairi and Rose/Theirworld, 2022).

The share of total aid spent on ECD (3.3%) is significantly less than the share of the global population aged between birth and five, which in 2020 made up 10% of the global population. Young children are significantly under-represented in aid spending (United Nations Population Division, 2020.) There are examples of countries turning this around. By law, every US federal department and agency should incorporate early childhood development into foreign assistance programmes that serve vulnerable children and their families and promote the rights and inclusion of the world's most marginalised and underserved children. The Global Child Thrive Act recognises that the future health, prosperity and stability of individuals and societies require promoting and protecting young children's development, which necessitates coordination and integrated approaches across various sectors, including health, nutrition, child protection, water, sanitation, and hygiene and education.





Early childhood development in emergencies: Where Early Years Matters Most

Children are severely affected by humanitarian crises, such as conflict, disaster and displacement, which can cause significant stress. A lack of support can have lifelong effects on their health and wellbeing. Early years interventions should be a critical component of every humanitarian response. They can protect young children from the worst effects of crisis, providing nurturing care and psychosocial support, and restoring a sense of normality and routine to help mitigate the harmful effects of a crisis.

However, essential care and education services for young children are often overlooked in humanitarian responses, despite increasing recognition of the importance of ECD generally. Approximately 3% of global development assistance to crisis-affected countries, and only 2% of humanitarian assistance, is dedicated to ECD; and early education is one of the least-funded components of ECD in humanitarian response (Moving Minds Alliance, 2020).

The scale of the problem

In 2018 alone, more than 29 million babies were born in conflict zones and in the three years from 2018 to 2021, more than 1.5 million babies were born in refugee settings (UNHCR, 2022).

Across countries affected by some level of conflict or emergency, Theirworld research found that there are estimated to be as many as 118 million pre-primary school-aged children out of school, equal to 55% of affected children in those countries.

Over the past decade, emergencies have become increasingly protracted and larger in scale, whether armed conflict, wars, climate-induced disasters, pandemics or mass displacement. The United Nations Secretary-General described the way in which global trends are “converging into a mega-crisis of conflict, climate disruption, hunger and the rising cost of living”.

International community action

At UNESCO’S World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education in November 2022, it was agreed that the international community should urgently protect and guarantee the right to early childhood development during and after emergencies and protracted crises.

The prioritisation of early years care, protection and learning in emergencies and conflicts is a key goal of the Act For Early Years campaign.

“Some [children] came shy and reserved, some aggressive, some indifferent... We watched them change, relax, grow”

– a caregiver at Amna Refugee Healing Network in Greece, a programme focused on providing early years education to refugee children up to six years old, and supported by Theirworld.

Nurturing care in humanitarian childcare situations

UNICEF (2022) recommended adapting the Nurturing Care Framework to humanitarian childcare contexts with the following interventions:

1. Training and mentoring should always be given to childcare providers.
2. Childcare programming should include interventions to help children cope with trauma.
3. Childcare spaces should be safe, comfortable, and encourage play and learning.
4. Childcare services can be used to deliver other aspects of early childhood development, such as nutrition and health services.
5. Parents and primary caregivers should be helped to meet their children’s needs and promote their wellbeing.

FOUR

The case for investing in the early years

“Investing in early childhood is crucial to reduce social inequalities, which begin even before birth. For a long time, early childhood has been a blind spot in public policy. Increasing funding, both national and international, will make a difference for future generations.”

Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General

Current levels of investment in the early years are not in line with the evidence of its benefits to individuals, families, communities and whole economies. When governments invest adequately in the youngest children, this helps them develop the cognitive and emotional skills and sense of belonging needed to succeed when they reach school and for the rest of their lives. It also creates more equal societies and empowers women to be able to work and provide for their families.

When public funding is low and services are scarce on the ground, the burden often falls on parents to pay for childcare and early education, meaning private enrolment in ECD programmes is high, with households contributing substantial resources. For example, a recent study of four peri-urban areas in sub-Saharan Africa found that in Mukuru slum in Nairobi, over 80% of four- and five-year-olds were enrolled in preschool, with 94% of them attending informal private schools. (R4D 2016).

While household contributions support needed ECD services, they can be burdensome and lead to inequitable delivery and concerns about quality.

In China, it can cost more for a child to attend preschool than university due to the abundance of government subsidies for higher education in comparison to those at the pre-primary level. However, some countries have been able to reduce the household burden for financing pre-primary education by subsidising services for children most in need. In France, families pay for crèche services on a sliding scale, which is based on income. In Chile, a mix of public and government-subsidised providers offer pre-primary education.

WE
WANT
OUR
FUTURE
BACK





Big actions small GAPS

When governments and donors invest in the early years, health outcomes improve, incomes rise, economies grow and societies become more cohesive.

- Every \$1 invested in early childhood care and development by a government can lead to a return of as much as \$17 for the most disadvantaged children (Zubairi & Rose/Theirworld, 2017).
- For children from disadvantaged backgrounds, quality care and early education means they are 17% less likely to be suspended from school, 26% more likely to be employed and 11% more likely to enjoy good health (Heckman 2021).
- Early years interventions can help narrow the wide gaps in outcomes and opportunities that exist between children from higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds, and the gender gap between boys and girls (G20).
- Expanding the childcare economy offers substantial employment opportunities: the expansion of the childcare workforce to meet current needs could create 43 million jobs globally (World Bank, 2021).
- Across sub-Saharan Africa, every dollar spent towards tripling preschool enrolment would yield a \$33 return on investment (Zubairi & Rose/Theirworld 2019/Copenhagen Consensus Centre 2016).
- Prof. Heckman's research has highlighted how investing in early childhood development can prevent the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers persisting into later life (Heckman, 2012; Heckman, 2017).
- The World Bank found that in Jamaica, providing toddlers with psychosocial stimulation increased earnings by 25%, but these returns only



Five

**Building a global
movement to
Act for Early
Years**



“Radical change is needed in how we provide for the under-fives and their families. It needs to become a global priority, with not just proper investment but bright ideas and bold policy-making across the board. Only then will we give all children the start in life they deserve.”

Justin van Fleet, President, Theirworld.

Everybody we
need action!

Early momentum

Around the world the global early years crisis is generating news headlines and political attention:

- US President Joe Biden has set the goal of establishing universal preschool care and education for the two years before primary education starts.
 - In Canada, President Trudeau has announced a C\$30 billion national plan to subsidise childcare, aiming to reach fees of C\$10 a day by 2026.
 - In March 2023, the UK government announced that it would provide 30 hours of childcare a week for one- and two-year-olds during the school term, aiming to permit 60,000 parents to return to the workforce.
 - Prominent campaigners and politicians have begun calling for the early years to be treated as infrastructure, like roads, hospitals and telecommunications networks. Melinda Gates has said: “It’s time to start treating childcare as essential infrastructure - just as worthy of funding as roads and fibre optic cables. In the long term, this will help create more productive and inclusive post-pandemic economies.”
- Plans to slash early childhood development worker wages in Kenya have resulted in widespread news headlines and protests
 - Street protests have been held by:
 - Childcare workers in Australia in September 2022, demanding “improved wages, conditions and respect”, in the “largest action of early educators” the country had ever seen.
 - Thousands of care workers in Ireland, protesting against a lack of funding that threatened to close hundreds of local services.
 - 12,000 protesting mothers in the UK who joined “the March of the Mummies” outside parliament in London.

END

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CRISIS

Campaign goal

Our goal is to end the early years crisis by driving political action and spearheading a transformation in early years outcomes for the next generation of children. To do this Theirworld is working with partners around the world to launch Act For Early Years. This is a broad international campaign of frontline workers and experts, youth and business leaders, media and civil society, to ensure a decade of action for the early years.

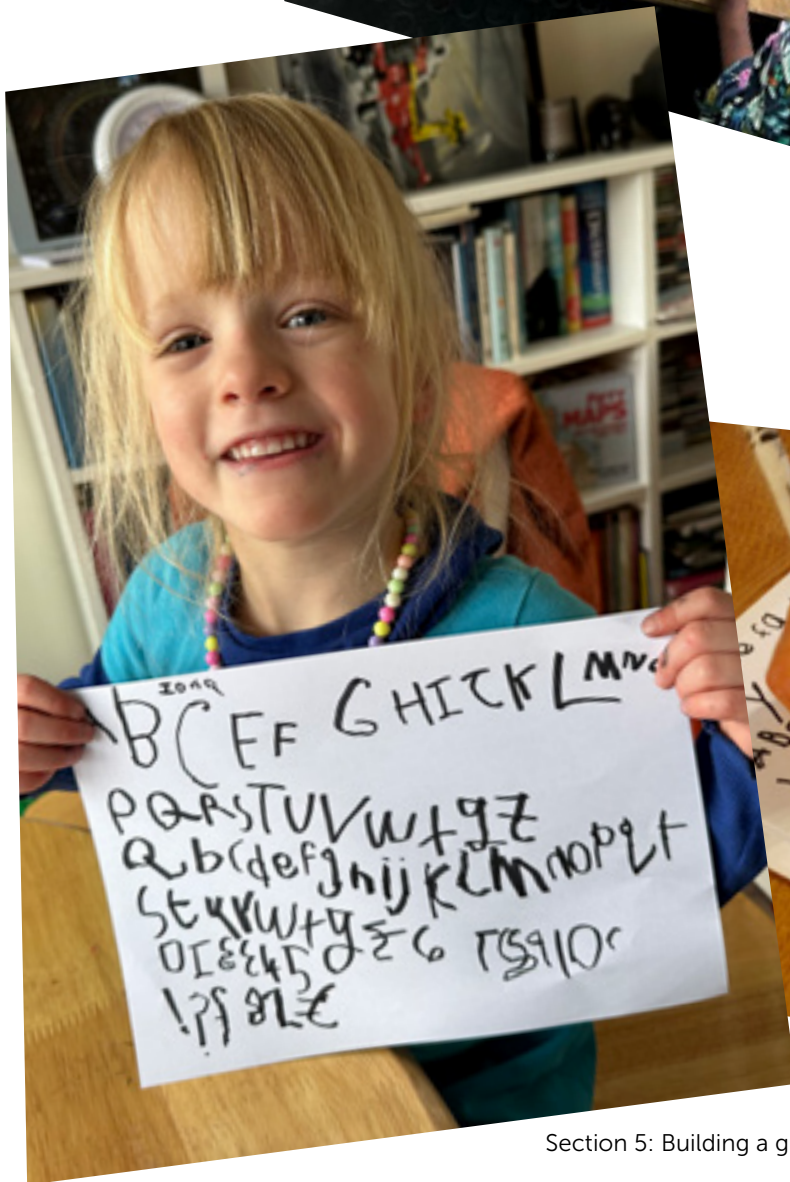
LISTEN

to

US!

Young children are the world's greatest persuaders.

But they don't have a voice at the table to ask for urgent change. That's why Act For Early Years uses the child voice to persuade the world to act for our youngest children. The Act For Early Years fonts have been created by a team of children from South Africa, North America and Europe, and adapted to Theirworld's existing fonts and branding.



We need to **Unity and collaboration are key** work TOGETHER

We believe that only a broad international campaign of frontline workers and experts, parents and carers, youth and business leaders, media and civil society can ensure a decade of action on the early years that will create the transformation required for every child around the world. The fragmentation of the early years development community “complicates global efforts to mobilise resources and influence policy” (R4D 2022).

Similar campaign movement models that have connected the diversity of local experiences to global campaigning – such as climate, maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and girls’ education - have transformed political attention and action in these areas.

Expert coalitions

There are a range of expert networks who are working together to guide interventions, create programme frameworks, share evidence and best practice, and undertake advocacy and direct support of governments and other stakeholders. These include the ECD Action Network (ECDAN), the Early Learning Partnership (ELP), the Moving Minds Alliance (MMA), the Invest in Childcare Fund, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents (GFF), Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development (NCF), Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

UNESCO’s Global Partnership Strategy for Early Childhood (GPS) includes the following:

Agencies and organisations

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)
Bernard Van Leer Foundation
Ensemble pour l’Éducation de la Petite Enfance
Education Cannot Wait
Fondation Babilou
Global Partnership for Education
Inter-American Development Bank
International Labour Organization
Hilton Foundation
Novak Djokovic Foundation
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Plan International
Right to Education Initiative
Right to Play
RISE Institute
Save the Children
Sesame Workshop
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its Institutes and Chairs
United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
Volunteer Service Overseas
World Bank
World Health Organization
World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) and its regional and national networks





Audley Harrison, Sarah Brown, Stephen Fry and Bonnie Wright at the LA launch of #5for5 in October 2016.



Networks

ECD Action Network (ECDAN)
 ECD Task Force for Children with Disabilities (ECDtf)
 Regional ECD networks
 Africa for Early Childhood Network (AfCEN)
 Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD)
 Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)
 International Step by Step Association (ISSA)
 Inter-country Quality Node on ECCE of the Association of the Development of Education in Africa (ICQN on ECCE - ADEA)
 Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development (PRC4ECD)

Civil society and community groups

Around the world - and especially in low- and middle-income countries - civil society, parents and frontline workers play a crucial role in advocating for systemic change and providing services (UNICEF, 2019), energy that will be harnessed by the Act For Early Years campaign.

For instance, in Turkey, a robust civil society advocacy movement launched a national campaign that raised public awareness about the importance of early childhood education and persuaded the government to make preschool mandatory. As a result, preschool enrolment more than trebled from 19% in 2005 to 67% in 2012 (Results for Development, 2015).

Women pay the cost of inadequate investment in early years care

Due to the lack of investment in the early years, a large burden falls on women's shoulders.

It is women who are most often forced to give up work to look after young children, meaning they and their families are worse off and damaging their ability to develop a career or sustained employment. Yet there is plenty of evidence that improving and expanding public childcare would be beneficial to all. It is estimated that providing adequate childcare for women around the world would add \$3 trillion to the global economy every year (World Bank 2022).

It is also estimated that expanding the childcare economy and building the childcare workforce could also create up to 43 million new jobs, allowing many women to return to or join the workforce (World Bank, 2022).

In India, small community-based studies have shown that on average women workers' incomes double when they have access to full-day, comprehensive, quality childcare (Gates Foundation, 2022).

Janet Mbugua, activist and head of the Inua Dada Foundation, whose mission is to create a supportive and accessible environment for schoolgirls, spoke about the situation facing working mothers in Kenya at Theirworld's 2023 International Women's Day event.

"There are women who need to go to work, right? There's not enough centres where these women can leave their children. And if they are there, they're not supervised, they're not gazetted, so we don't really know what level of care they're being given. But there's also not much of a choice or an option. And there's poverty that compounds this issue.

"If the centres are there, the staff are essentially underpaid or not paid at all. We don't even know the number of centres or day care centres that exist. That number isn't there, that data isn't there. So what you're looking at is probably a massive growing issue that's really deprioritised and not looked at because there's other things and issues that we need to think about."



The March of the Mummies protest in the UK October 2022.



PLEASE

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Six

Recommended interventions



“Our early years shape us in ways that are far more fundamental and foundational than we realised for a long, long time. In this journey of working within education and hoping for a better world, the starting point should be to focus on those foundational years and making them the best they can be for the largest number of children around the world.”

Sanjana Sanghi, actor and activist from India

For this report Theirworld consulted our partners and other experts in the field to gauge which interventions would be most valuable, as well as surveying existing recommendations.

High-quality, proven early years interventions

In 2014 experts came together to publish a practical guide for policy-makers and practitioners about how to invest in young children. The World Bank’s guide identifies 25 essential early years interventions that can be delivered through five integrated packages

at different stages in a child’s life, spanning the education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and social protection sectors. These five packages of interventions are:

These five packages of interventions are:

- (i) Family support
- (ii) Pregnancy
- (iii) Birth
- (iv) Child health and development
- (v) Preschool

Five Packages of Essential Interventions for Young Children and Families

Pregnancy	Birth	12 Months	24 Months	36 Months	54 Months	72 Months
1: Family support package	Parental Support for Vulnerable families: Planning for family size and spacing; Maternal education; Prevention and treatment of parental depression; Social assistance transfer programs; Child protection regulatory frameworks Health, Nutrition, and Sanitation for Families: Access to healthcare; Access to safe water; Adequate sanitation; Hygiene/handwashing; Micro-nutrient supplementation and fortification					
2: Pregnancy package	3: Birth package					
Antenatal care; Iron and folic acid; Counselling on adequate diets	Attended delivery; Exclusive breast feeding; Birth registration					
	4: Child Health and Development Package			Immunisations; Deworming; Prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition; Complimentary feeding and adequate, nutritious, and safe diet; Therapeutic zinc supplementation for diarrhea		
				5: Preschool package	Preschool education early childhood and preliminary programs; Pre-primary education; Continuity to quality primary schools	

Source: World Bank 2014

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/earlychildhooddevelopment/publication/stepping-up-early-childhood-development>

Action on Map

Nurturing Care Framework

In 2018 the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the World Bank Group, in collaboration with the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health and the Early Childhood Development Action Network, launched the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development during the 71st World Health Assembly.

The framework provides an evidence-based roadmap for action and outlines how policies and services can support parents, families, other caregivers and communities in providing nurturing care for young children from birth to three. It calls for attention to be paid to communities where children are most at risk of being left behind.

The framework shows how nurturing care protects young children from the worst effects of adversity and promotes physical, emotional and cognitive development. As our understanding of nurturing care has improved, we are also beginning to measure how stresses at a young age rebound through communities and across generations. It generates lifelong and intergenerational benefits for health, productivity and social cohesion.



Family-friendly policies

In 2019 UNICEF developed a set of family-friendly policies that every government and business can put in place to redesign the workplaces of the future, to enable parents to give their children the best start in life, while boosting productivity and women's empowerment. Their proposal identified four core principles:

Their proposal identified four core principles:

- Paid parental leave to care for young children
- Support for breastfeeding
- Affordable, accessible and quality childcare
- Child benefits

A multi-sectoral approach is crucial

Implementing nurturing care demands a multifaceted approach (Salunke & Lal, 2017) with coordination across sectors. Multi-sectoral coordination can help eliminate barriers to policy implementation (Ansell and Gash, 2008) and can also improve collective effectiveness and efficiency of financial resources (Zaidi et al, 2018). Achieving these benefits requires government ministries to work together, as well as collaborating with non-governmental organisations. Successful implementation of multi-sectoral approaches hinges on effective governance, including strong leadership, clear decision-making, accountability and oversight. (Simasiku, 2022).

Source: Nurturing Care Framework, <https://nurturing-care.org/>

World Leaders We Need Action

Based on our consultations and existing recommendations, we have produced the following list of recommended interventions to achieve the vision of universal quality childcare.

Governments at national and local level should:

- Invest in proven early years interventions spanning the education, health, nutrition and social protection sectors (see above).
- Invest in a fully-trained, qualified and funded early years workforce.
- Provide sufficient financing to guarantee universal access to affordable quality childcare, preschool education and learning, primary healthcare and nutrition services where needed.
- Put in place the policy and legal frameworks to ensure the right of every child not only to survive but also to thrive and develop to their fullest potential, as inscribed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Put in place family-friendly policies such as income support programmes, parental leave and affordable childcare for working parents.
- Publish annual data on government expenditure on early childhood development.
- Deliver an integrated approach to early years interventions across sectors and government, with senior government leadership.
- Set and deliver early years investment targets - as a total percentage of GDP and for each sector in line with 10% of education funding to early childhood education.

The international community should:

- Set early years minimum investment targets (as a total percentage of GDP and across each sector in line with 10% of education funding to early childhood education).
- Stage the first International Financing Summit on the early years - led and/or hosted by two champion countries - by 2025 to kickstart an international decade of action on the early years and to prioritise the needs of marginalised children.
- Conduct a five-year review of the G20's 2018 Initiative for Early Childhood Development and revitalise with new pledges.
- Prioritise and track early years investments in all aid budgets and programmes, especially those addressing emergencies and targeting refugee communities.

Conclusion

As Sarah Brown says in her foreword to this report, there should be no need for the Act for Early Years campaign, because the case for greater investment in the early years is so obvious and so well supported by the evidence.

Even if there wasn't a world of data to support the argument, we instinctively know that placing more importance on the early years is the right thing to do, as the benefits can be seen with our own eyes, in our own communities.

Yet the necessity of the campaign could not be clearer. Under-investment in and low prioritisation of the early years have gone on too long.

Only a global movement can bring together the different networks, campaigns and voices that are already urging change into the unified force needed to produce an everlasting early years revolution.

With your support, the Act For Early Years campaign will make sure that the interests of the youngest members of our society are listened to, even if they

are too young to express them themselves. By 2030, we should see a world which is well on course to providing universal, quality childcare, where the place you were born and the wealth of your parents are not the greatest determining factors of success and stability in life.

Leaders are beginning to wake up to their responsibility to pre-primary-level children, and to appreciate which policies will work. Parents and childcare providers have a powerful voice with which to demand a better deal, while civil society understands that so much more can be achieved working in collaboration than alone. Transformational change is within our grasp.



act FOR
Early Years



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6 Ukrainian refugee siblings at a day care centre play with paint in Rzeszow, Poland. Image credit: UNICEF/UN0684299/Moskalenko

12 A pregnant mother and her five-year-old daughter in Monrovia, Liberia. Image credit: UNICEF/UN0533098

13 Image credit: Hui Sang / Unsplash

15 A kindergarten class in Chhattisgarh, India. Image credit: UNICEF/UN0517165/Panjwani

19 Theirworld Global Youth Ambassador, Yuv Sungkur, speaks at the Transforming Education Summit in 2022. Image credit: Theirworld / Ilya Savenok

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21 A kindergarten in Estonia. Image credit: Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia / Lauri Kadajane

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35 Audley Harrison, Sarah Brown, Stephen Fry and Bonnie Wright at the LA launch of #5for5 in October 2016.

36 The March of the Mummies protest in the UK in October 2022. Image credit: Angela Christofilou

43 Children learning through action at the kindergarten JEP in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. Image credit: UNICEF/UN0794838/Dejongh

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