Inclusive early childhood care and education

From commitment to action

UNESCO – a global leader in education
Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

The Global Education 2030 Agenda
UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Cover photos: fotogestoeber/Shutterstock.com; Smileus/Shutterstock.com

Designed and printed by UNESCO

Printed in France

SHORT SUMMARY

Early childhood care and education for each and everyone!

Inclusion should be a principal commitment from early childhood. According to the latest estimates from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the number of children not enrolled in pre-school in the year before primary school has decreased over the past decade, from 52.1 million in 2009 to 47.2 million in 2018.

Despite this progress, the large number of children still excluded from pre-school is a major concern, given the strong evidence linking access to inclusive early childhood care and education (ECCE) with school success, overall development, and well-being. Early childhood services aim to provide for all children equally, but when the most vulnerable children are excluded or ignored, universal participation is unattainable. Many children are denied access because of gender, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic location, language, refugee or displaced status, or due to a humanitarian crisis or natural disaster. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this exclusion. Today, more than ever, it is vital to intensify advocacy and concrete efforts to guarantee the right of every child to ECCE by mobilizing the multiple actors working to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and its targets related to inclusive early childhood education.

This publication presents and discusses both qualitative and quantitative data for a renewed, action-oriented global commitment to universal and inclusive early childhood services. The recommendations have emerged from a literature review and consultations with experts, practitioners, and academics from multiple countries. It is intended for policy-makers, managers of ECCE programmes and services, practitioners, development partners, families, and research institutions.

Today, too many young children are still deprived of an inclusive education from early childhood.

It recommends measures to be taken by policy-makers in consultation with relevant actors in order to make ECCE more inclusive. The measures are supported by research and illustrated by inspiring examples from across the globe.

This publication supports all stakeholders who are committed to make inclusion from early childhood a reality.

"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF BOXES

FOREWORD

The first thousand days of our lives are among the most critical to our future. Hence, quality early childhood education lays a strong foundation for young children's future well-being, development and learning. It also contributes both to reducing and preventing social and learning difficulties and to the identification of developmental delays and disabilities at an early stage when effective intervention can provide appropriate support.

The international community must redouble its efforts to reach all young children, taking into account factors such as humanitarian crises, disability, ethnicity, gender, mother tongue, and poverty that still deny many young children's rights to early education, health and protection. Already severely insufficient in the majority of countries before the COVID-19 pandemic, early childhood services are experiencing closure or suspension of many services critical to child development. There is, therefore, an urgent need to focus on building resilient ECCE systems and programmes to ensure a solid foundation for all children, boys and girls, within a lifelong learning perspective and in accordance with the fundamental principles of inclusion, equity and non-discrimination.

Access to quality inclusive ECCE programmes requires the development of cross-sectoral policies that take into account the diversity of learners' needs. These policies must be translated into educational practices that seek to meet the needs of each child and that provide initial and ongoing training for professionals and communities of practice

with a view to developing the skills of the ECCE workforce. Research must play a key role in supporting and evaluating these changes. Finally, a robust and productive partnership framework is essential in order to optimize available resources and to advance the ECCE agenda and make it more inclusive. UNESCO is convinced that inclusive education from early childhood onwards will build welcoming communities and inclusive societies.

With that in mind, in January 2021 UNESCO launched a Global Partnership Strategy for ECCE with the aim of mobilizing countries and partners alike to achieve Target 4.2 of SDG4 for education.

We hope that this publication will help countries move towards an inclusive system of ECCE that offers every child the best chance to contribute to the inclusive and sustainable development of their community and society.

Stefania Giannini
Assistant Director-General for Education,
UNESCO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The first years of life represent a crucial period for young children. Within just a few years, children develop many skills that will contribute to their adaptation, participation, and interactions throughout life. Certain conditions provide better support for this process of early development. Accordingly, inclusive ECCE is a commitment to ensure all children benefit from enabling conditions in their earliest years, without exception.

But what is understood by inclusive early childhood care and education?

ECCE reflects a holistic view of the care (e.g. health, nutrition, hygiene, safety and security, responsive caregiving) and education (e.g. early stimulation, education, developmental activities) of young children from 0 to 8 years of age (UNESCO, 2016). Quality ECCE provision looks different in different cultural and country contexts and leverages a variety of resources to meet the specific needs of each child. Special attention needs to be paid to children living in precarious circumstances, such as in refugee camps, and to young children experiencing natural disasters, including pandemics.

Inclusion in ECCE shares this holistic perspective, emphasizing children's access to and participation in a variety of learning opportunities, activities, settings, and positive social interactions, regardless of their characteristics or needs, while ensuring gender equality and recognizing the central role played by the family. In fact, the family is the first and most important environment in which the young child develops. As they grow, young children are exposed to a range of contexts, places and social interactions that also contribute to their full development.

The concept of inclusive education was initially used to describe the physical and learning adaptations needed to fully include children with disabilities.   Over time, there has been a broadening of the meaning of inclusive education to consider the needs of all learners, regardless of their characteristics or the groups to which they belong. It is a shift from accepting difference to valuing diversity. Thus, inclusion has a universal scope. Inclusion embraces a vision of diversity not as a problem to be solved, but as a lever for social justice and equity. It is a recognition of basic human rights and a vehicle for addressing inequalities.

This vision of inclusion involves improving the quality of education for all children. It consists not only of removing barriers, but also of creating an enabling environment for quality ECCE. It places the responsibility on education and care systems to understand and adapt to the needs of all learners. Inclusion involves access, full participation, and availability of the necessary support for each child in a way that favours success for everyone, without exception.

The benefits of inclusion are many. Quality inclusive programmes value each child and seek optimal development of all children, and notably the most vulnerable, who benefit the most from a wealth of opportunities for daily

interaction and learning with other children. Early experiences are critical for developing the skills and values children will need throughout their lives. Indeed, the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) for early childhood development—launched by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the World Bank (2018)—emphasizes the importance of the early years and the universal conditions that must be in place for every child to develop to his or her full potential. Under the globally accepted NCF, the optimal environment is the one that provides nurturing care for the child in conditions that promote good health, adequate nutrition, opportunities for early learning, responsive caregiving, and security and safety. Children need all five domains of the NCF to reach their full potential, as every aspect of their development is interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Inclusive settings help to ensure these conditions by providing opportunities for diverse participation and social interaction. Inclusive early childhood settings, which are often the first places where young children encounter and learn about difference, offer opportunities for participation and interaction that are socially diversified.

Inclusive ECCE settings exert a positive influence on all children. In inclusive contexts, young children develop capacities to interact with children who have different characteristics. This early acceptance of differences creates the foundation for building attitudes of openness to diversity with peers, at school and eventually, in adult life. In addition to promoting developmental gains for all (Weiland, 2016), inclusive ECCE settings offer a compelling opportunity to develop knowledge and attitudes about difference.

Target audience

This document is intended for all those who are working to make inclusion a reality for all young children. Policy-makers, practitioners (from education, child care, early childhood, health and social services, community, humanitarian aid), civil society, international organizations, families, and scientists, are invited to take advantage of the many opportunities to translate this inclusive vision into concrete action. The ideas presented in this publication are intended to inspire and support the actions needed immediately to ensure inclusive care and education for every young child.

Objectives of this publication

This document aims to:

- Identify new knowledge to support the implementation of inclusive policies and practices in ECCE;
- Share examples of positive, promising, and innovative policies and practices across countries and regionally;
- Formulate recommendations and suggest possible courses of action to support those involved in inclusion;
- Inspire innovations that encourage inclusive education for all, especially the most vulnerable;
- Mobilize local, regional, national, and international actors to contribute to the development of innovative solutions to promote inclusion.

METHODOLOGY

Document development process

This document is based on a non-exhaustive literature review, which used databases, search engines, and websites of recognized international organizations engaged in inclusive education, including UNESCO, the World Bank, and UNICEF. It covers documents published in English, French, or Spanish mainly between 2016 and 2020. The review sought to include resources from a variety of regions and countries and contexts (e.g. children with special needs, children from immigrant backgrounds, marginalized children), and to span socioeconomic strata. Approximately 100 documents were selected for full-text analysis. This analysis was conducted according to the following specific themes of early childhood inclusion:

- Management practices, policies and leadership in support of inclusion
- Family, community and multi-sectoral collaboration and collaboration among professionals
- Initial and ongoing training, coaching and professional development of the ECCE workforce
- Educational practices, interventions, learning and pedagogical approaches
- Screening and evaluation
- Transitions (from family to childcare, from childcare to school)
- Diversity
- Inclusive assessment

The analysis of the documents for each theme was carried out using extraction grids developed by the authors. Following an initial analysis, a summary of key ideas from the literature was developed and some earlier research (pre-2016) was consulted. The decision was made to keep this action-oriented document simple and easy to use. The development of this publication relied on documentary research and the opinion of experts in the field including practitioners, academics and staff of international organizations, all of whom contributed to reflection and exchange. Inspiring examples were generously shared by collaborators from the academic, policy and practice communities. Examples have been selected according to the themes covered and to reflect the realities of different countries and regions. The aim of the document is to inspire and advance inclusive ECCE for all young children.

Scope and limitations

This is an action-oriented document informed by scientific literature, the experiences of inclusion stakeholders and the opinions of many experts. A range of challenges were encountered in developing it. First of all, ECCE has both political and educational dimensions. Each of the themes covered maps to a "Learn More" section at the end of the document, which offers in-depth resources that address multiple perspectives of different stakeholders. Another challenge was to assess the state

of inclusive ECCE globally. This publication suffers as a result of the limitations of the available data in existing databases. The data are particularly ill-suited to providing a holistic overview that links protection and education in a variety of inclusive settings. Information on the characteristics of ECCE and care settings that support or hinder inclusion in ECCE is therefore essential.

Lack of data on the most vulnerable children. The lack of data about certain groups of children is even more glaring. For example, as the recent Global Monitoring Report on Education (UNESCO, 2020) illustrates, the reality of some marginalized children is documented only lightly or not at all, and this includes children with disabilities. The same is true for more complex situations where multiple factors of vulnerability interact.

The diversity of actors involved in ECCE. The structure of pre-school education (number of years, ages of children) and childcare services vary from country to country making cross-country comparisons challenging. Likewise, there is great diversity in the types of community resources and health and social service institutions involved in delivering ECCE. Inclusive ECCE involves a holistic vision. It therefore engages multiple resources in the lives of children and their families, resources that also vary according to the age of the child. While recognizing that many international definitions of early childhood extend from birth through early primary school (0-8 years), in developing this publication the choice was made to orient the scientific literature review activities towards the period from birth to 6 years of age in order to focus on the first years of life (0 - 3 years) and pre-school (3 - 6 years).

Section 1

Sustainable Development Goal 4: Where are we now in early childhood?

A child's right to education is recognized by international conventions and documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination (1960), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). However, these instruments, and related obligations, need to be accompanied by measures at national level to ensure their effective implementation. Unfortunately, several exclusion factors still impede access to quality inclusive ECCE. Gender, ethnicity, disability, environment (urban vs. rural), mother tongue, or humanitarian crises and conflicts deprive many children of opportunities that support their full development (World Development Report, 2018).

SDG4 calls for ensuring equal access to quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities. For young children, target 4.2 recommends that by 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood care and development and pre-school education that prepares them for primary school. However, the minimum of one year of free, compulsory, quality early childhood education is a reality for too few countries. A recent study by UNESCO in 2021 highlights that, out of 193 national legal frameworks reviewed, 63 countries have opted for free pre-school education, 51 countries have made it compulsory, while 46 have made it both free and compulsory. The majority of countries with compulsory pre-school education are located in the same regions and most of them belong to the upper-middle and high-income groups of countries. In addition, qualitative data collected from public sources in 17 countries showed that specific legal provisions target vulnerable groups for easier or priority access to pre-school education.

Poverty remains one of the main barriers to inclusive ECCE (UNESCO, 2020). In addition, disabilities, mother tongue, ethnic origin, gender, conflict, natural disasters, and the intersection of these factors, all lead to the exclusion of young children.

The latest Global Monitoring Report on Education (UNESCO, 2020, p.76) reports that, 'Data from responses provided by 14 low- and middle-income countries in 2017-19 indicate an average prevalence of disability among children of 12%, ranging from 6% to 24%. Compared to their primary school-age peers, children with sensory, physical, or intellectual disabilities are 4 percentage points more likely to be out of school.'

The inequality of opportunity is particularly acute in emergency and conflict situations, depriving young children and their families of the resources essential to their survival. For some, the refugee camp has gone from being a temporary solution to a living environment.

Crises, as evidenced by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbate factors of exclusion and inequality and primarily affect the most vulnerable children and families, especially girls (Fund, 2020). The closure of schools affects girls more negatively than boys (Akmal et al., 2020), and they are particularly vulnerable to violence when they are out of the school system. In addition, during times of school closure, children with disabilities suffer from the lack of services and resources often available within educational settings (e.g. specialized staff, environments, and adaptive technology support for learning). The lack of services or resources and the longer-term

consequences on the child's development are, for many families, a major concern that adds to an already higher level of stress than exists in the general population (Neece et al. 2020).

Digital technology, which now seems to be emerging as a solution to limit teaching-learning losses in times of crisis, risks reinforcing inequalities and widening the exclusion gap for children who are most likely to need ECCE services.

The global COVID-19 crisis brought significant interruptions to the lives of young children through disruptions of various services and the major economic impact on the families.

Access to regular health services has been affected in most countries with a significant impact on regular preventive care, access to medicines, and the capacities of services to monitor children's development and provide support to families.

A study (Orsander et al., 2020) was conducted among Save the Children programme participants and partners in 37 countries in different regions of the world (Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America, and Oceania). This global sample included 16,110 children, of whom approximately 15 per cent are 4 years old and younger and 30.6 per cent are 5 to 10 years old. Of this sample, 3.9% had a disability. The results of this study show that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequities for children with disabilities and their parents. The following impacts were identified: more limited access to health and hygiene services and medical supplies and support (including food security); less learning during school closures (more likely to not have access to learning materials, receive less learning support, and encounter other barriers to learning); and exhibit higher distress-related signs.

1.1 What is the global access to early childhood education?

The results presented below were extracted from the World Inequality Database on Education (World Inequality Database on Education [WIDE]) via the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, which were conducted between 2006 and 2019 depending on the country. The WIDE data used are for attendance in pre-primary settings.

1.1.1 Access to pre-primary education

The following figure illustrates access to early childhood education services at the pre-primary level from 1986 to 2019.

Figure 1. School enrolment in pre-primary
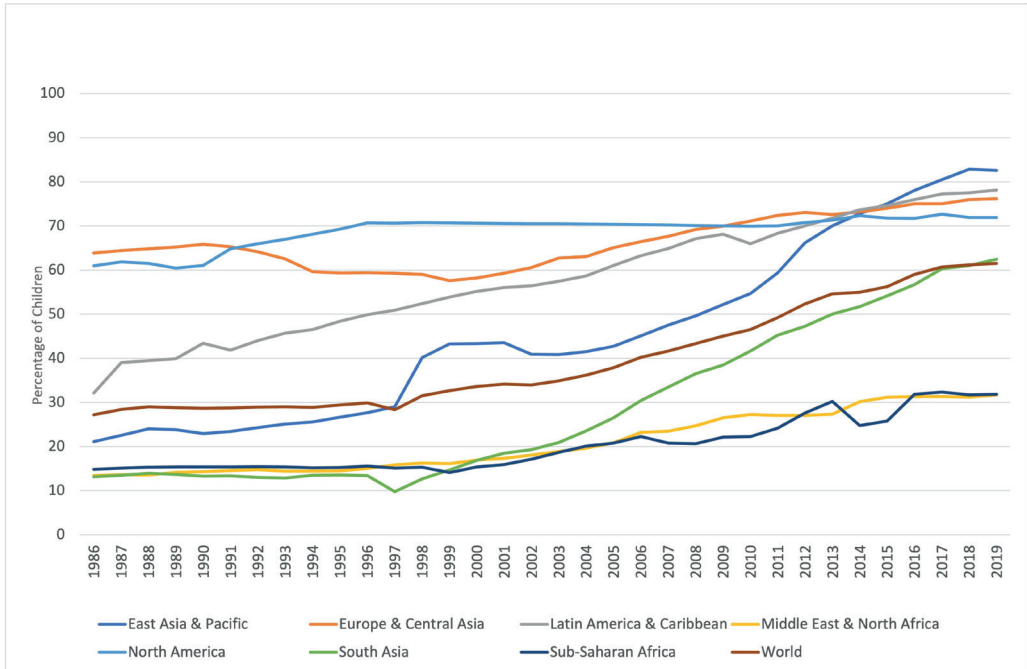
Data source: The World Bank: Edstats

Globally, access to early childhood education services has doubled over the past 33 years, from an overall average for all countries of approximately 30% of children in early childhood services in 1986 to an average of just over 60% in 2019.

This increase appears to be greater for countries in South and East Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The countries of the Middle East and Africa have lower percentages on average than the countries in these other regions.

1.1.2 Access to services by gender, population density (urban/rural) or ethnicity

The statistics provide a check on the level of equity in access to services based on the child's gender, urban-rural classification or ethnicity.

Figure 2. Gap in school enrolment between boys and girls in pre-primary
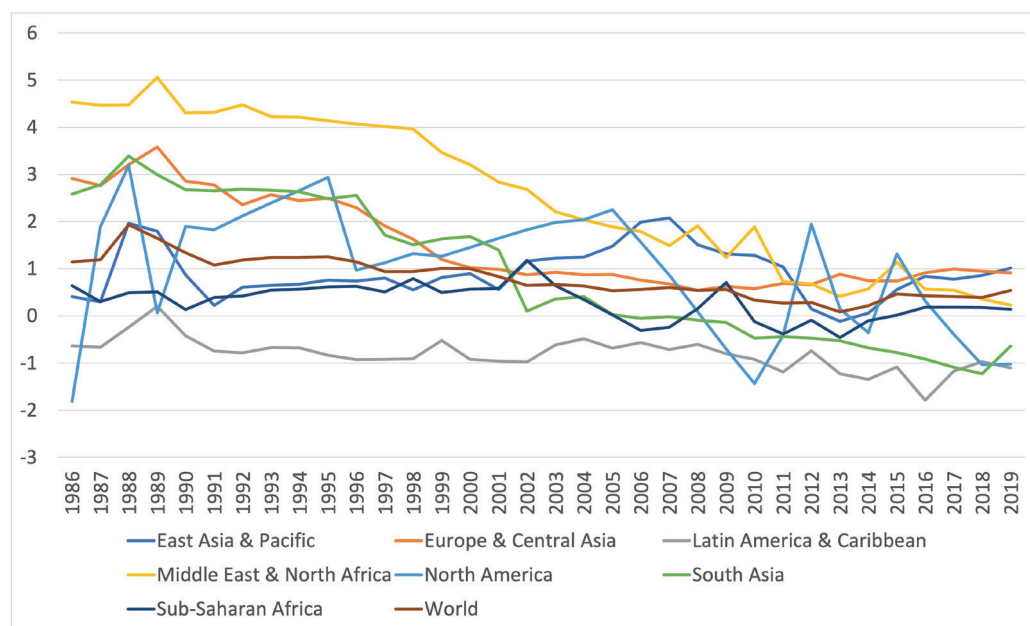
Data source: The World Bank: Edstats

In terms of gender, equity can be assessed based on the difference between the proportion of boys and girls attending early childhood education services. Globally, the percentage gap between boys and girls has decreased by about 1% over the past 33 years. Between 1986 and 2019, the average gap between boys and girls decreased in all regions of the world, suggesting that overall equity has improved.

This portrait, however, conceals disparities within each of its sub-regions, based on data available on the WIDE website, which lists statistics from 2012 to 2015. The largest gap is observed in Malta, where 56% of girls attend education services compared with 33% of boys. A higher proportion of boys attend pre-primary education in Ireland (+10%), Uruguay (+9%), Ghana (+7%), Lithuania (+7%), Moldova (+7%), Colombia (+5%), Kenya (+5%) and Chad (+5%). Conversely, a higher proportion of girls attend pre-primary education in Northern Macedonia (+8%), Albania (+7%), Guyana (+6%), Belize (+6%), Serbia (+5%), Denmark (+5%), Mexico (+5%), the United Kingdom (+5%), El Salvador (+5%) and Djibouti (+5%). In other countries, the gap is less than 5%.

Figure 3. Countries where the proportion of children attending pre-school was 5% higher or more for boys
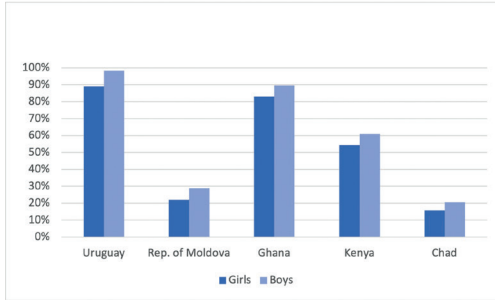
Figure 4. Countries where the proportion of children attending pre-school was 5% higher or more for girls

Data source: World Database on Inequalities in Education (WIDE), https://www.education-inequalities.org
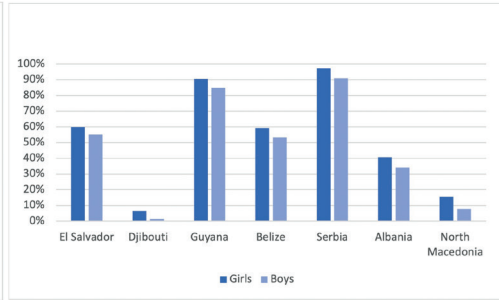
Data reflecting the proportions of children attending pre-primary education services based on residence in urban or rural areas are available for 67 countries on the WIDE website. Guinea-Bissau presents the greatest disparity. According to the reported data, 49% of children in urban areas attend pre-primary education services, compared with 11% in rural areas. A substantial difference is also noted in Georgia, where the percentage difference is +36 % for urban children compared with rural children.

In some countries including Ukraine, Nepal, Mongolia, Belize, Gambia, Eswatini and Laos, a difference of +20% to +15% is observed. Note, on the other hand, that a small number of countries have a higher proportion of children in rural areas who attend educational services. This is particularly true in Suriname (+11%), Rwanda (+9%), Kenya (+9%), Mexico (+6%), Moldova (+6%) and Tunisia (+6%).

Figure 5. Countries where the proportion of children attending pre-school was 15% higher or more in urban areas
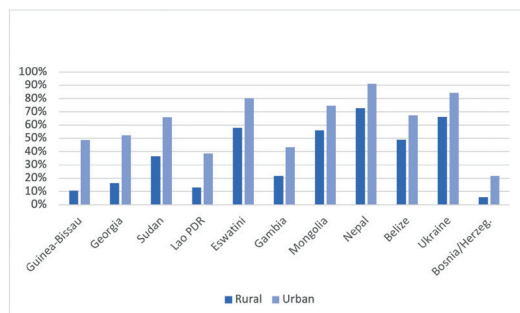
Figure 6. Countries where proportion of children attending pre-school was 5% higher or more in rural areas

Data source: World Database on Inequalities in Education (WIDE), https://www.education-inequalities.org
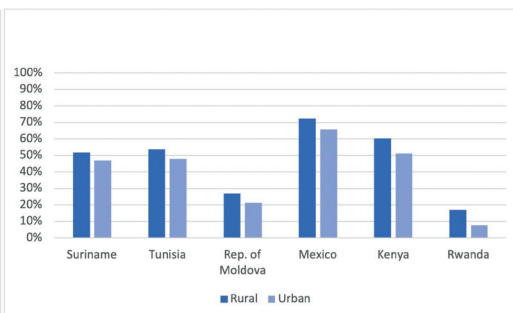
Finally, data regarding pre-primary education attendance based on ethnicity is available for 20 countries. In those such as China, Trinidad and Tobago, Serbia, Moldova and Viet Nam, there is a certain level of equitable access to education attendance by ethnicity. Other countries, however, reveal significant ethnic disparities in educational participation. Such is the case, for example, in Gambia, where 55% of Jola children attend educational services compared with 22% of Wolof children. Belize also demonstrates a wide disparity. Of Garifuna children, 83% attend pre-primary educational services, compared with only 33 % of Mayan children. Finally, Georgia is a further example of a country with significant ethnic differences. There, 37% of Georgian children attend pre-primary educational services compared with just 4% of Azerbaijani children.

1.1.3 Access to early childhood education development programmes

Attendance data for early childhood educational development programmes are available for the years 2014 to 2019. According to the WIDE website, 72 countries have available data for at least one year between 2014 and 2019. Of these countries, 16 (22.2%) have data for all six years, 27 (37.5%) for five years, 10 (13.9%) for four years, and 19 (26.4%) for three years or less.

Attendance rates are highly variable, ranging from less than 1% of school-age children attending these programmes to almost 90% of the children. Regarding the 46 countries for which data were available in 2014 and 2018, attendance rates increased by an average of 3.2 %. This difference ranges from a decrease of 13.7% observed in Australia to an increase of 27.2% observed in Israel. Among the 46 countries, Australia and Thailand experienced a decrease

in attendance of more than 10%, while South Korea, Serbia, Indonesia and Israel experienced an increase of over 10%. For the majority of countries, attendance in these programmes has remained relatively stable.

The attendance discrepancy between boys and girls also varies from country to country, but for most countries where this information is available, the difference is less than 2%. In 2018, a higher proportion of boys attended these programmes, with a 6% difference in attendance between boys and girls. In contrast, other countries report higher attendance among girls. This is the case in Namibia (5.7% difference) and Indonesia (8.2% difference).

Based on the available data, Indonesia has experienced a significant increase, going from 17.9% attendance in these programmes in 2014 to 40.7% in 2018. Mexico remains marginal at just over 3% between 2014 and 2018, with almost no difference between boys and girls.

1.1.4   Financial investments in early childhood education

Quality ECCE is recognized as the most impactful investment in human capital which brings far-reaching economic and social benefits for individuals and societies. ECCE prepares children for further education and helps them stay in education longer, which helps their future families and supports the country's economic growth. ECCE is a powerful opportunity to break intergenerational cycles of inequity. The greatest impact and return are realized by investments that target society's most vulnerable individuals and families.

Country funding for early childhood is defined as a proportion of the spending allocated to this sector relative to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The GDP enables a comparison of the efforts of each country based on their financial capacity. For this indicator, data are available for 136 countries. Data availability varies from year to year. We therefore calculated an average value of the available data over a 10-year horizon, from 2004 to 2014. The average percentage of expenditures for these 136 countries is 0.29% of the GDP, ranging from 0.001 for Burundi to 1.55% for Moldova.

These financial investments are very inadequate. As a reminder, the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) proposed a minimum of 3.1% of GDP for low-income countries, 2.2% for middle-income countries and 1.2% for high-middle-income countries in ECCE programmes.

The analyses illustrate that countries in Europe and North and South America spend the largest percentage of their GDP on early childhood education and services. In this regard, we observe that African and Middle Eastern countries spend a smaller percentage of their GDP on the same services. Global investments in early childhood education services vary widely and strongly influence access to these services for young children. A study by Zubairi et al. (2019) indicates that between 2015 and 2017, financial support for preprimary education decreased by 27%, affecting millions of the world's youngest children, especially girls, children with disabilities and vulnerable children. One of every two pre-school children in

countries receiving international aid lives in a country affected by conflict. These countries received less than one-third (only 31%) of the aid devoted to pre-school education in 2017. A study by Walker and Baboo (2020), supported by Open Society Foundations, illustrates that in Mozambique, it is estimated that only 4% of children had access to development support resources in 2019. Burkina Faso receives 0.1% of financial aid while 0.01% of aid goes to Mozambique.

riopatuca /Shutterstock.com

Section 2

Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education: required actions

Successful inclusion depends on a combination of multisectoral and intersectoral actions made by policy-makers, implementers, educators, and families.

Dialogue and better coordination is required in order to generate greater impact. Strong linkages between the local, regional and national levels allow for the identification of barriers and the sharing of innovations.

The key messages which follow were developed in collaboration with key actors from across this spectrum for each of these levels which are interdependent and require involvement. A non-exhaustive list of key stakeholders has been developed to help them initiate action at each level.

2.1 National policy actions for inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education

The Key Messages proposed in this section involve policy-makers. Governments in different countries must assume leadership to translate these Key Messages into reality. While ministries of education, health, and social services and protection are crucial to propose legislative reforms, develop policies, and ensure their implementation, they benefit from working with their partners in other relevant ministries, such as the innovation, social development, economic, and higher education sectors.

Key Message 1: Increase access to quality inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education for the most excluded children by adopting diversity-focused policies and anti-discrimination legislation

- **Policies that promote diversity.** Instead of removing barriers to inclusion, policies must support a cultural shift towards diversity. Inclusive values and the relevance of ECCE must be affirmed and reaffirmed by advocating their contribution towards building fairer and equitable societies. Inclusion becomes a lever to develop quality services for everyone. In addition to providing incredible learning opportunities for all children, inclusion also supports social cohesion and solidarity as well as gender equality. Park et al. (2018, p.19) exemplify this reality with an example from Sweden, where legislation and the national pre-school curriculum promote inclusive education for young refugee children. Pre-school education should supply opportunities for all children to develop their native language and culture, while providing a framework for the location of newcomers in order to promote inclusive classes and avoid geographic segregation. According to the authors, 'Designing inclusive early childhood systems that are able to respond to evolving linguistic and cultural diversity will be an invaluable vehicle for social cohesion.'

Box 1. The principles of an inclusive early childhood culture in Ireland

Inclusion requires the development of teacher competencies in inclusive practice and pedagogy but also in inclusive culture. The latter is defined in the Irish professional development programme, 'Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years (LINC)' as follows (Ring, E. et al., 2019):

'All children are welcome.

All children are valued.

Emphasis is placed on promoting respectful interactions.

Expectations for all children are high.

Partnership with parents/guardians is actively encouraged.

Difference is recognized and celebrated.

The environment meets the needs of all children.

All policies are inclusive policies. '

LINC was launched in 2016 leveraging in-person and online coaching by expert tutors. LINC is accompanied by a 5-tiered evaluative framework including assessment of the relevance of content and process to the needs of learners through to assessment of impact in children and families. A mixed-methods approach including online questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, literature and discourse analysis, and children's own perceptions are considered. The authors report encouraging preliminary results via very high learner satisfaction percentages. The 2017/2018 results show a 97% satisfaction rate specifically on their level of readiness to take leadership in developing an inclusive culture in early childhood. These levels are equally high for inclusive practices (95%) and inclusive pedagogy (96%).

For more information:

https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:d8c95d7d-2d75-40a8-9f65-b6582908c08d

- **Cross-sectoral policy development, adoption and evaluation.** The holistic perspective of ECCE requires cross-sectoral policy development. Policy development must take into account, from the outset, the different early childhood care and development domains (education, health, child care, non-governmental organizations, foundations, etc.) in order to take a more holistic approach to services and a more comprehensive view of supporting child development. Given the variety of early childhood service organizations and governance structures, it is critical to identify the appropriate people to involve in the process. Of course, ministries or governance structures related to education and health are essential. Also, other ministries (e.g. finance, protection, social and or community development, etc.) and members of civil society should be included (Vargas-Barón, 2016). The participation of members of communities most particularly affected by exclusion is also essential. Through their experience, they have relevant and valuable knowledge which enables a better understanding of the mechanisms involved in their marginalization. Their presence will

also allow the development of solutions that are adapted to the realities and which are more sustainable.

- **Planning phase.** The planning phase is particularly critical to ensure that the work undertaken goes beyond simply coordinating sectoral efforts. Cross-sectoral planning allows the identification of mutually defined actions. To this end, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive definition and a shared vision of inclusive ECCE which will support greater adherence across all sectors. International conventions are useful in this regard. Policies supporting inclusive ECCE are consistent with, and sometimes even exist within, general ECCE policies.

- **Implementation phase.** It is necessary to determine which responsibilities remain centralized and which ones can and should be decentralized, including those related to allocating financial resources. Leadership supporting inclusive ECCE involves different levels of responsibility including local, regional and national levels. It is worth clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each level. The planning process must include cross-sectoral collaboration and communication processes. It is also crucial to provide the financial investment required for policy development, implementation, and monitoring. Another concern is ensuring that the financial support system does not increase the stigmatization of some children.

- **Assess policies for inclusive early childhood care and education.** Assessment strategies must be developed to support policy implementation. This follow-up is essential to identify difficulties and make the necessary adjustments. The identification of cross-sectoral targets for improvement is fundamental to translating vision into action. Monitoring improvement targets and progress enables the intensification of specific efforts and the readjustment of others. It is vital to assess access to inclusive ECCE for children and their families while focusing, in particular, on those whose characteristics make them vulnerable to exclusion from early childhood education and protection programmes and structures. The assessment must also evaluate the cross-sectoral actions at the core of the policies.

Box 2. The Colombian strategy: « De cero a siempre »

'De cero a siempre' is the Colombian policy for the holistic development of young children. It serves as a law of the Republic and was sanctioned in 2016. This strategy focuses on intersectorality and involves the public and private sectors, civil society organizations and international cooperation in early childhood. The Intersectoral Commission, chaired and coordinated by the Presidency of the Republic, conducts work for the development and implementation of plans, programmes, projects and actions for integrated early childhood services.

The Intersectoral Commission includes several ministries (National Education, Culture, Health and Social Welfare, etc.) as well as Colombian government agencies and institutes. The functions performed by the Intersectoral Commission are multiple. It is in charge of adopting the national action plan, but also of guiding the implementation of the strategy for the different actors involved, from the national to the municipal level. Other functions of the Commission include the creation of a single national information system on the early childhood population and support for the structuring of public-private partnership programmes. The Intersectoral Commission performs many other functions related to improving services for young children and their families. The 'De cero a siempre' policy is implemented by the governors of each department and the mayors of the municipalities, which makes it possible to consider the realities of each region. They may be called upon to document the situation of children in their territory and implement the integrated care pathway while monitoring the policy's guidelines.

With regard to this policy, a study on institutional evaluation and its effects has been carried out for the years 2011 (creation of the policy strategy) - 2017. A mixed methodological strategy was used, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. In terms of the evaluation of effects, these were measured according to the actions prioritized by the policy. Among the positive outcomes, there was an increase in access to early childhood services, from 566,429 children, girls, pregnant and lactating women in 2011 to 1,197,634 in 2017. Access to these services for the rural population has increased by 48%. The same is true for access to books through the construction of 307 reading rooms and the distribution of 17 million books, including a specialized early childhood collection 'Leer es mi Cuento'.

For more information:

https://www.icbf.gov.co/evaluacion-institucional-y-de-resultados-de-la-politica-de-atencion-integral-la-primera-infancia-de

At a more operational level, policies in support of inclusion must set out the conditions that enable ECCE programmes and institutions to achieve inclusion by specifying, among other things, the expected roles of school staff and management. The New Brunswick Inclusive Education Policy, adopted in 2013, is an example of this (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013).

Key Message 2: Increase access to inclusive, quality early childhood care and education for the most vulnerable children in times of pandemic and natural disaster

It is necessary to ensure that, in a health emergency context where all are affected, those already marginalized and excluded do not suffer disproportionately. In contexts of extreme poverty, economic vulnerability, and crisis, gender disparities in education have been shown to increase dramatically (Giannini and Albrectsen, 2020). Innovative solutions must be developed to reach the most vulnerable children and their families and provide access to education. In addition, increased support for these children and their families over a longer period of time is needed to reduce the impacts on their development.

Orsander et al. (2020), following a study of the impacts of COVID-19 for children with disabilities and their families, propose the design and implementation of a social protection system that is sensitive to the reality of people with disabilities and compensates for the additional costs.

In terms of learning, they recommend preparing for the return to school and ensuring the continued development of teachers' skills on gender-sensitive inclusive education. In addition, effective, flexible, and inclusive distance learning should be promoted and access to a variety of learner-friendly learning materials and resources provided.

Where virtual intervention or instruction is preferred, ensure that additional support is provided to compensate for the limitations of the virtual mode. This additional support may include more meetings, closer follow-up with the family, and the use of assessment and intervention tools compatible with the family environment.

2.2 Actions to support policy implementation by the early childhood care and education programmes and structures

While policy-makers must remain engaged in monitoring national policy implementation, leadership is required from ECCE settings and their regional and local stakeholders. Thus, the directors of educational and early childhood institutions, whether they are pre-schools, educational childcare settings, health and social services institutions or community resources, must be involved.

Key Message 3: Increase regional and local resource mobilization for inclusion in ECCE and increase collaboration among cross-sector partners

It is essential to focus on local expertise to develop the best and most original solutions to challenges to inclusion. Moreover, local experts are often better qualified to translate the inclusive vision developed at the policy level into sustainable concrete actions and commitments. To ensure the implementation of these strategies in the everyday lives of children and families requires collaborative leadership. This leadership needs to be shared with multiple stakeholders and resources in the community: parent associations, social leaders, non-profit organizations, etc.

The adoption of operational policies by early childhood care and education programmes and structures that provide clear guidance for welcoming all young children should be promoted. These policies and procedures for ECCE services should specify, in particular, the educational approaches used, the partnerships and the methods used for the mechanisms for collaboration with families, and the services and supports available to families.

Box 3. Inclusive early education reform in Georgia

The development of inclusive early education in Georgia is rooted in the reform of inclusive education at the school level. Early education reform has also been supported by the introduction of innovative projects implemented in cooperation with the academic world and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and Norway began a pilot project on inclusive education. This initiative facilitated the development of the national inclusive education policy. Between 2007-2011, civil society organizations and UNICEF played a crucial role in developing the national early childhood intervention system, eventually expanding inclusive early childhood education throughout the country.

The first small-scale early childhood intervention programme led to inclusive education pilot projects in Georgia supported by local governments. The Open Society Foundations began supporting these efforts in 2011 through a partnership between civil society organizations and the Georgian government. This collaboration achieved impressive progress toward the establishment of a national early childhood intervention system. Services, provided by an NGO in Tbilisi in 2006, grew into an early intervention programme with 24 organizations covering most regions of Georgia by 2020.

Another important factor, contributing to the quality and sustainability of the inclusive early childhood education projects supported by Open Society Foundations, is the involvement and collaboration between academic staff and NGOs working in the field.

This collaborative partnership has helped maintain the quality of model pre-schools and facilitated the integration of new practical knowledge about inclusive early childhood education into university programmes. This collaboration has been vital to establishing inclusive early childhood education legislation, standards, and practice regulations.

The Law on Early and Pre-school Education (2016) serves as the basis for further growth in the field. In 2017, the Government of Georgia, with support from UNICEF, developed national standards for pre-school education and a professional competency profile for educators. These documents incorporate the values and best practices regarding inclusive early childhood education (Evaluation Report of the Project, 2019; UNESCO & the International Bureau of Education, 2007).

Source: Khatuna Dolidze and Nino Tsintsadze, Ilia State University, Georgia.

To ensure quality, inclusive ECCE, collaboration is essential at all levels, including between early childhood care and education programmes and structures, institutions, agencies and partner services (Allen and Kelly, 2015; Bricker et al., 2020; Corr and Santos, 2017). This collaboration, of course, needs to be congruent with cross-sectoral policies and must also be reflected in everyday practices with both children and their families.

In order to foster inclusion, support for collaboration must be put in place (Bricker et al., 2020; Odom et al., 2011). Collaboration requires time and opportunities for exchange between stakeholders in order to establish a shared vision of inclusive ECCE, values and goals. Particular attention should be paid to understanding the needs and realities of the environments so that the joint planning of activities is adjusted to context (Weglarz-Ward et al., 2019).

Work between cross-sectoral partners calls for a clear and powerful collaborative approach. A written protocol, such as a service plan, is a valuable instrument for coordinating actions, clarifying expectations, and fostering trust and collaborative practices between partners (Erwin et al. ,2012). The perspective is one of shared responsibility between each of the partners with the aim of successful inclusive education and care for every child.

Key Message 4: Adopt a family-centred approach by encouraging family participation

Inclusive ECCE cannot be thought of without the contribution of families (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017; European commission, 2014; Guralnick, 2020). A significant body of research illustrates that to have greater impact, partnering with parents is a must (including: Dunst et al., 2007; Ma et al., 2016). While efforts have been made in this direction, work remains to be done to truly engage parents in decisions about them and their child. The ability to collaborate relies on sharing information with families to support their decision-making. Recognition of parents' skills and abilities to support their child's development is one of the conditions for this change in approach and interventions must build on the skills already present. To ignore the in-depth knowledge that parents have of their child is to deprive ourselves of an important source of information and expertise. Working closely with families, especially for those whose child is not yet proficient in the language of instruction, can help identify alternative strategies to support learning (Aghallaj et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2015).

Finally, in order to support family involvement, the use of appropriate materials is necessary. The programmes used, the activities proposed, and even the preferred means of communication must consider the diversity of families and be compatible with the family's environment, its resources, routines, and cultures.

Box 4. A family-centred early childhood intervention model in Serbia

In 2016, a family-centred early childhood intervention (ECI) model was introduced by the Early Childhood programme of the Open Society Foundations, Open Society Foundation Serbia, and UNICEF Serbia in partnership with the Belgrade Psychological Center, a non-governmental organization as well as public health, education, and social welfare institutions.

This model was focused on quality ECI service provision, aiming to empower parents/caregivers of young children with developmental delays or disabilities, to support their development and mitigate early risk factors, based on family priorities, in the child's natural environment, and integrated into daily routines.

The situational analysis conducted in 2017 has identified the main enabling factors for the national ECI system development and highlighted the need for better legislation, increased funding, improved multi-sectoral collaboration and the overall development of the ECI system. Furthermore, results revealed the need for changes to support the shift from a medical model to a social perspective.

This process was followed by an ongoing effort to support the professional development and transdisciplinary management of staff and institutional capacities in health, early childhood education, and social welfare institutions. Cross-sectoral advisory committees were established at national and local levels, focusing on awareness-raising among policy-makers and the scientific community. The whole process resulted in improved skills of 61 professionals who have been providing early intervention to 75 families and children with disabilities, including early identification, referral procedures, routine family interviews, comprehensive functional assessments, and provision of individualized family support through home visits.

Further legislative and practical efforts in creating the national ECI system will be informed by mid-term external evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability, and sustainability of the ECI model and independent final evaluation planned in 2022 (UNICEF Serbia, 2020).

Source: Author Mirjana Đorđević, Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Key Message 5: Evaluate inclusion and its quality in ECCE programmes and services

Inclusive ECCE involves multiple components. Models to understand and evaluate the inclusive quality of ECCE have been proposed based on the systems involved. Different assessment tools have been developed to support the identification of improvement guidelines. These tools help identify the actions required to support quality inclusive ECCE.

Some instruments focus more on adherence to inclusive principles and values; others on the quality of the educational programme and the practices of the staff who work with children on a daily basis. They assess, for example, the use of daily activities as learning opportunities, the various adaptations to the environment and materials, the support for peer interactions, and collaboration with the family and other professionals. Assessing the quality of inclusive environments should systematically consider the quality of inclusion and, more broadly, the efforts to promote diversity. These instruments are valuable for supporting the practice improvement within early childhood care and education programmes and structures. Inclusion quality is evaluated through the structural characteristics of these programmes, for example, the child-to-educator ratio, the educators' training requirements and the quality of professional development offered. The quality of inclusion is also assessed in terms of the perspectives of the child and family. Thus, for the children, it is important to focus on their participation, learning and

interactions, as well as their sense of belonging to the group of children in which they grow up. The experience of the children and their families must be considered within a process of continuous improvement.

2.3 Actions on educational practices for inclusive early childhood care and education

These Key Messages propose the adoption of educational practices in support of inclusion, by teachers and educators, as well as by professionals educational psychologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.) in health and social services, ECCE programmes and institutions. Even when the conditions for adopting positive practices are provided by service directors, a strong commitment from teachers and educators who interact with children and families on a daily basis is required.

Key Message 6: Implement educational approaches that meet the needs of individual children

Diversity must be a foundation for preprimary educational curricula. Early childhood curricula are powerful instruments for shaping the future of a child and a community and the principles of equity, gender equality and diversity must be reflected in them. The early years provide an opportunity to embed the values of openness and respect. Learning social interactions based on respect, conflict resolution and openness to others must be supported. To do this, culturally sensitive practices are proposed which recognize diversity as an asset to learning and which use materials that reflect this diversity in daily life with the children.

In educational practice, individual needs become the norm. Recognizing the different needs of every child means recognizing that the means and methods to support learning vary. Approaches such as the Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018) and the Multilevel System of Support for Early Intervention (Buysse and Peisner-Feinberg, 2013) and inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Sretenov, 2021) highlight the need for differential learning support practices. From this perspective, the focus is not on what distinguishes children, but rather on a continuum of strategies and intensity of support to meet the developmental needs of everybody. Educational, material, or environmental adaptations or modifications to maximize the participation of children who require more support, as well as individualized

and specialized interventions, when needed, are possible in inclusive ECCE settings. Specialized interventions, however, must be integrated into the daily routine of inclusive settings.

A systematic review by Gunning et al. (2019, p. 59) identifies the use of peer interventions to support the skill development and social interactions of young children with autism in inclusive settings.

Such practices are inseparable from a collaborative approach to educational intervention. Indeed, the diversity of children's needs makes it necessary to rely on a wide range of expertise. Communication methods promote information and knowledge-sharing among the various people involved, including parents. Furthermore, concentrated efforts are needed to plan the objectives and the means to meet children's needs and to achieve them based on the perspective of shared responsibility for actions and results. The aim is to support individual needs while promoting the active participation of each child and encouraging a sense of belonging.

Since the inclusive approach relies on differentiated practices, an awareness of each child's needs is crucial. Developmental assessment is therefore necessary to guide the planning of adaptations to meet the developmental and learning needs of every child. Due to their recognized usefulness in intervention, 'authentic' assessments (focusing on the evaluation of functional skills useful to the child on a daily basis in his or her different environments) are preferred over standardized measures that quantify the child's development. An American survey by Bagnato et al. (2014) of approximately 1,500 early childhood educators reveals that authentic

assessments are considered superior in terms of usefulness, sensitivity in demonstrating children's progress, and adaptability to different child characteristics. They also promote collaboration with the family and other caregivers.

> ## Key Message 7: Identify developmental or learning disabilities early through developmental screening in collaboration with children's families and in support of inclusion

The early identification of developmental or learning difficulties has often proved to be stigmatizing for young children and is the beginning of exclusion from regular educational programmes. Families are understandably reluctant to participate in the evaluation of their child's development if exclusion is the anticipated outcome. A shift in perspective is therefore required. Screening for developmental difficulties in children is an expression of attentive vigilance. Developmental surveillance and screening are used to identify children at risk for developmental difficulties so they can receive appropriate services as early as possible. Developmental surveillance is also characterized by the flexibility of its processes. It considers the observations of parents, or any other person involved in the child's life, as well as the use of screening tools (Marks & LaRosa, 2012). In order to do this, transparent communication with the family is required. Screening should be considered an ongoing

process as difficulties may arise at any time in the child's development. Thus, the role of developmental vigilance is assumed to be a shared responsibility. In truth, screening activities only make sense if a clear referral system is established providing access to resources for identified needs. The use of screening tools with solid psychometric properties and approaches that prioritize the participation of parents and utilize environments frequented by the children, considering their cultural and linguistic realities, are to be favoured.

The purpose of early identification of developmental difficulties is to better support children, their families and their living environments within inclusive contexts.

Box 5. An example of developmental screening supporting inclusion in Singapore

From 2023, every pre-school in Singapore will have inclusion coordinators. They will identify and provide enhanced support to children with developmental needs. They will ensure that children are properly assessed, and that parents and teachers have access to appropriate resources. These resources will be available in pre-schools to support the teachers. This will ensure that inclusive education is not the responsibility of teachers but of the entire school community.

For more information :
https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2021/04/15/inclusion-in-early-education-in-singapore-towards-more-equitable-foundations/

Box 6. Consider the identification of early childhood development difficulties as part of an inclusive curriculum in New Zealand

A study (Zhang, & Morrison, 2020) of one inclusive pre-school setting in New Zealand for children aged 2 to 5 years demonstrates that the process of identifying developmental difficulties can be implemented to comply with the national framework of the early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). This framework is based on four key principles:

- Empowerment, by helping children to learn and grow by strengthening their self-esteem and their right to well-being and protection from harm in an environment that gives them the opportunity to create and act according to their own ideas;
- Holistic development, by recognizing that the different dimensions of child development are closely related and interdependent;
- Recognition by family and community that children learn and develop better when the people in their lives help them make connections between different environments, and when parents and the community are encouraged to participate in and contribute to the curriculum;
- Importance of respectful relationships, encouragement, warmth and acceptance.

The cross-referencing of multiple sources of data (individual interviews, observations of life moments, and analysis of available documentation) collected from key players such as principals, teachers, parents, and stakeholders showed that it was possible to implement the four core principles outlined above.

Key Message 8: Prepare and support transitions for young children and their families

Understanding the needs of children also means recognizing the importance of preparing for and supporting the transitions that occur in their lives. Young children experience many transitions: from the family environment to daycare, community environment or pre-school and from pre-school to school. These are critical milestones calling for increased sensitivity.

These transitions may affect both the child and the family by triggering a variety of occurrences that may result in marginalized children dropping out of school. The importance of collaboration between resources, daycare and school personnel and the family must therefore be stressed (Ravenscroft et al, 2017). It also needs to be recognized that the transition from pre-school to school is a particularly important moment for vulnerable children. Detailed knowledge about the child's needs, developed over time, as well as successful interventions in pre-school or daycare settings should be transferred to the school setting. The school environment must offer inclusive services. Without capitalizing on this opportunity to pursue inclusion, the efforts made in inclusive daycare or pre-school settings will not be successful.

Support for transitions requires sensitivity and receptiveness from both sending and receiving environments in addition to advance preparation. Such preparation calls for support on the part of resource directors, who should allow time to the team to communicate and collaborate with the school community. Note that the transition period extends for several months before and after school entry. Different types of support such as transition plans and the use of portfolios can also be employed to assist with the introduction of the child.

> ### 🔍 Box 7. To ease a successful transition
>
> *Bridge of Hope* is an Armenian NGO that supports the rights and inclusion of youth with disabilities in the Yerevan and Tavush provinces in Armenia. *Bridge of Hope's SMILE for Children* programme supported by the Open Society Foundations creates an inclusive learning environment and facilitates a smooth transition from kindergarten to elementary school for children with disabilities. The programme involves training kindergarten teachers in inclusive learning methods and educating parents on the benefits of inclusion.
>
> The SMILE for Children programme employs a multi-method approach to increase inclusion in early childhood education and ensure that children with disabilities, parents, and teachers all experience a successful transition to elementary school. It offers capacity-building training for teachers on inclusive education including child-centred teaching and how to create a supportive learning environment. The programme also offers monthly mentoring visits to support the implementation of new practices.
>
> All parents are informed about the benefits of inclusion, and parents of children with disabilities are encouraged to participate in their children's education. Moreover, the SMILE programme encourages close and transparent cooperation between teachers and parents (Zero Project, 2021).
>
> In 2019, 145 children with disabilities were supported across 23 kindergartens. Seven kindergartens and seven elementary schools in Yerevan province and sixteen kindergartens and twenty-one elementary schools in Tavush province received support.
>
> For more information: https://bridgeofhope.am/news/the-zero-awardees-2020/

2.4   Actions for training and professional development for inclusive early childhood care and education

Inclusion of all children in high quality inclusive ECCE services will require a commitment to review and adapt pre-service and ongoing professional development and certification of the ECCE workforce to ensure they are fully prepared and supported. Education ministries, professional associations, pre- and in-service training institutions, international institutions, civil society organizations and directors of services are all important actors in the process of adopting and implementing effective policies, standards, training and ongoing professional development.

Key Message 9: Improve pre-service and in-service training of educators in support of inclusive ECCE

Staff from inclusive ECCE programmes and institutions often report a lack of training. They cite a discrepancy between the initial training they received and the specific situations they have to deal with (OECD 2019). Furthermore, difficulties persist in the application of theoretical knowledge acquired in real intervention contexts. Training is essential for quality educational and care services. Pre-service training programmes that provide adequate preparation for addressing the diverse needs of children and families are needed. Following a literature review conducted in four European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Slovenia and the Netherlands), the importance of professional competencies of teaching staff is highlighted to promote social inclusion (Fukkink et al., 2018). Among these, the ability and willingness to communicate in dialogue with parents, to manage disagreements, to learn from them, and to explore various angles of a subject in an open-minded way are mentioned.

These training programmes should not be limited to those working with young children. Initial training for managers and other supervisory personnel should also enable knowledge development to support the implementation of inclusive practices. Training content should include attitudes and perceptions regarding inclusion, the importance of differences, the promotion of diversity (cultural, gender, ethnic, linguistic, ability) and the development of collaborative ways of working. Indeed, to this end, collaborative skills should be articulated in professional standards as essential competencies (Bruder et al., 2019). These standards should aim to achieve essential knowledge and skills such as intervention with families, adoption of diversity-sensitive practices, interprofessional and intersectoral collaboration, individualization of interventions based on diverse learner profiles, transition processes, authentic assessment practices, and screening for learning and developmental difficulties.

Professional development opportunities must be made available by promoting the development of cross-curricular competencies that support existing skills. These should allow experimentation with different inclusive educational strategies. In addition, professional development must include support in real-life situations (Dunst et al., 2015). Thus, initial training should be oriented towards the application of knowledge from the start (Mitter et Putcha, 2018). There must also be a professional development process to learn from the experiences of everyday situations and thereby expand the range of possible solutions to the challenges encountered in supporting children. Professional development also allows practitioners to critically review their practice in light of available knowledge with a view to skills development (Eurofound, 2015).

It is essential to explore and experiment with innovative training options that involve different disciplines and sectors. The participation of those in practice settings (staff and managers as well as families) is a valuable component of these new approaches. Professional development can also support the experimentation and implementation

of innovative practices. Moreover, efforts must be made to improve accessibility to knowledge and training by encouraging access to free training, using various formulae and mediums, and by mobilizing community resources through training of trainers. Digital development offers multiple opportunities to reach, engage, and keep connected with early childhood stakeholders. The development of digital content for educational resources, managers, and parents can be encouraged as long as the principles of inclusion, equity, and accessibility are considered. Digital access is still limited in some contexts. It is important to increase the number of digital learning resources that respond to learners' needs and environments, allowing customized learning programmes. These resources can provide flexible and varied responses to educational demands. Digital technology offers the possibility of synchronous and asynchronous learning. It is critical to intensify the efforts to ensure accessibility to educational innovations. However, it is important to guarantee that digital technology does not become another exclusion factor. It is necessary to integrate it with more traditional means such as local radio, which has proven to be a useful tool in contexts where digital resources are limited. It is also essential to assure that educational staff are adequately trained to use digital tools and resources.

hikrcn/Shutterstock.com

Box 8. Sharing information and improving collaboration through use of an IT platform in Zimbabwe

Masvingo Community Based HIV/AIDS and Vulnerable Children Organisation (MACOBAO) is a community-based organization in Zimbabwe whose mission is to promote the right to education for children with special needs. The organization works to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive education through sensitization of parents and communities. To this end, awareness materials for the general public have been developed to raise awareness and increase the knowledge of educators, families, and communities in general.

Various activities are organized involving policy-makers, resources and community members as illustrated by the training of early childhood volunteers and paraprofessionals on mobilization and advocacy. The trained individuals take action to avoid stigma and discrimination. This approach is distinguished by the involvement of volunteers who extend the reach of the organization's activities and act as true agents of change. A web platform, jointly administered by MACOBAO and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, facilitates communication and collaboration between the different people involved by sharing challenges and successes, thus contributing to the creation of a real network focused on the best interests of children.

Box.9 Workforce capacity-building and educational reforms in Ukraine

From the late 1990s onwards the Ukrainian Step by Step foundation supported by the *Open Society Foundations* and the International Renaissance Foundation and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, began introducing inclusive education. These early projects piloted inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream pre-school and primary classrooms, promoted parent involvement and activism, introduced inclusive school improvement and engaged expertise in special schools to support teachers in inclusive mainstream schools.

Several reforms have supported inclusive education in Ukraine. In 2009, Ukraine ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, bringing about changes both at the policy and practical levels. In 2010, the teaching assistant profession was introduced in national legislation to support inclusive educational environments.

In 2017, the new Ukrainian Law 'On Education' introduced terms such as 'person with special educational needs' and 'universal design' with a view to ensuring an equal right to quality education for every child. Teacher training plays a crucial role in these educational reforms.

Therefore, in 2017, all elementary school teachers received integral training, and inclusive education was part of that training programme.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science plans to develop similar standards for pre-school teachers in 2021.

Recognizing the role of other specialists in supporting inclusion, the Ministry of Education and Science in 2018 issued an order specifying the operational aspects of the establishment of psycho-pedagogical teams. Parents were recognized as equal and active members of these teams.

Moreover, it was considered important to train specialists in early intervention and to make early intervention a central point of the policy of the Ministry of Social Policy and the Ministry of Health Protection.

This resulted in a decree by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in 2019 for the development of the system of early intervention services. An online course titled 'Introduction to Early Intervention', which is free and open to all, is being developed and placed on the EdEra platform thanks to the support of the Open Society Foundation.

Source: Natalia Sofiy, Ukrainian Institute of Education Development, and Anna Kukuruza, Charity Foundation Early Intervention Institute

🔍 **Box 10. Practical training: an experience in Viet Nam**

In Viet Nam, improving the quality of early education provided in pre-schools by active teaching and learning is a priority for the Ministry of Education and Training of Viet Nam and the VVOB organization (Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance).

In 2015, a pilot study within the framework was carried out in 8 pre-schools for children from 3 to 5 years old within three ethnically diverse districts of Northern and Central Viet Nam. Teachers (n = 40) and other stakeholders in early childhood education were involved: they included principals (n = 8), educational trainers (n = 8), and provincial and district representatives (n = 4). This project included a variety of professional development activities, proposed over a six-month period. These include: training sessions offered to all stakeholders in the educational community, development of their ability to observe and recognize clues to children's level of engagement, creation of a profile of the children done by the teachers, identification of the obstacles and actions to take with respect to the profile, support for schools in identifying progress and obstacles to the implementation of the approach, workshops with teachers and provincial and district representatives on the experience of implementing the observation process and action plan, and improvement of the teachers' action plan according to the discussions and support.

The total sample of students consisted of 519 pre-school children from 14 different ethnic groups, including Kinh (231), Co Tu (137), Tay (65), H'Mong (37), and other ethnic groups (49). Throughout the study, teachers, previously trained in observation and screening techniques, collected information on the involvement and well-being of these children. Between data collection at the beginning and end of the school year, teachers reported higher scores on well-being and/or engagement for 71% of children. For 27% of the children, the scores remained the same.

Based on the findings of the pilot research, this approach demonstrated its effectiveness and relevance in the Vietnamese context. By 2021, this approach will be implemented among 3400 pre-school teachers and benefit 62,000 children in 22 low-income districts (Anna *et al*., 2018; Lenaerts et al., 2017).

For more information: https://www.ukfiet.org/2018/pre-schools-in-vietnam-innovative-approach-for-better-learning-and-participating/

Box 11. Training: the perspective of staff in early childhood care and education programmes and settings

Quality inclusive ECCE involves trained and well-supported staff. This is one of the dimensions addressed by the STEPP (Survey of Teachers of Pre-primary Education) project. STEPP is a UNESCO-OECD initiative to collect information about the factors that affect the quality of teaching and learning in pre-primary education. STEPP conducts an international survey of pre-primary education personnel in the following countries: the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Indonesia, Namibia, the Philippines, Togo and Viet Nam. STEPP provides an opportunity for teachers and directors of early childhood settings to express their views and discuss the challenges they face in their work, thus helping to improve practice.

This survey builds on the 2018 Starting Strong Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS Starting Strong) conducted by the OECD among ECCE staff. This survey examined the main factors that ensure the development of a quality workforce in ECCE settings. To accomplish this purpose, ECCE staff and managers in nine countries (Chile, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Republic of Korea, Norway, and Turkey) were interviewed.

Some findings regarding training and professional development:

Between 64% and 97% of respondents report having received initial training focused on child-related work. Across all countries surveyed, more than 75% of staff report attending in-service training, although this is more common for teachers than for assistants.

In all countries, more pre-service and in-service training enables better adaptation of practices across a range of needs.

Professional development models embedded in the receiving environment, such as peer observation or mentoring, remain less common than off-site training activities.

Staff in ECCE programmes and structures who are more engaged in collaborative practices are more likely to participate in training.

And what about diversity?

Across countries, staff in early childhood care and education programmes and structures are generally confident about their ability to promote social-emotional development, although they are less confident about working with a variety of children and using digital technology to support children's learning (Ahmedandal., 2020; OECD, 2019).

2.5 Research actions for inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education

The research community, including those that fund research, also have an important role to play in promoting inclusive ECCE.

> *Key Message 10: Increase research activities to assess the state of inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education and encourage partnership research activities*

Having scientific data to assess the status of ECCE is essential. The lack of available data to assess access to and quality of inclusive ECCE needs to be addressed as a priority. How can inclusion be assessed from the perspectives of the multiple agencies involved? What data are needed to target priority actions? What evaluation strategies, indicators, and tools are useful for evaluating policies supporting inclusive ECCE, for evaluating inclusion in early childhood care and education programmes and institutions, and in early childhood care settings? How can inclusion be evaluated from the perspective of the child and his/her parents? In addition, there are several dimensions associated with quality that need to be considered such as: staff training, the use of inclusive pedagogy using Universal Design for Learning instruction, and the overall quality of educational programmes. Given this lack of information, the impacts of policies and interventions for young children remain difficult to assess.

Developing and sharing innovative solutions with inclusive settings is important. It is essential to encourage research that leverages reciprocal links between partners, where the co-production of knowledge in the search for innovative solutions is at the heart of exchanges and is part of a process of continuous collaboration and mutual learning. It is about promoting the creation of open innovation spaces focused on young children where a range of partners (childcare, health and social services, education, families, civil society representatives) participate jointly in the development of practices. This type of research takes place in a real contexts, with practioners in constant interaction with research partners to develop innovative solutions to existing problems based on both scientific knowledge and relevant tacit knowledge. This collaboration also allows the highlighting of good practices and innovations realized by the practice settings. Thus, the development, testing and feedback processes allow for the testing of proposed solutions and their potential use in other contexts. For example, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada supports the development of partnerships between university researchers and social, cultural and economic partners.

Intensify collaborations between international partners. This allows cooperation and mutual learning to better identify and understand the challenges

and solutions related to early childhood inclusion. Essentially, it recognizes the contribution of each country in accelerating the knowledge required for the implementation of inclusive practices. The goal is not to standardize practices or to develop a universal instrument, but rather to gain a better understanding of the adaptations required to ensure that the means, strategies and instruments used meet various needs. This collaboration could contribute to a virtual network on an international scale, taking advantage of local solutions and proximity networks.

nije.salam/Shutterstock.com

CONCLUSION

Support for early childhood development must be inclusive, accessible, and of high quality for all, with particular attention to the needs of children from vulnerable groups.

Even before the pandemic, too many children were denied access to ECCE services. The pandemic presents a powerful opportunity to rethink the shape of basic social services, including education and health, among others. The early childhood sector must no longer be the weakest link in social responses, especially in education.

In the post-pandemic period, the urgency will be to improve data on disadvantaged populations, identify and implement effective policy, programmatic, and financial approaches to reach them, and expand their access to a full range of early childhood health, nutrition, care, education, and social protection services. This will involve diversifying formal and non-formal delivery modes, including parent education and support, as well as home-, community-, centre- and school-based programmes. In collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare, all Ministries of Education will also need to develop inclusive pre-primary services that support the transition of children with disabilities or living in disadvantaged communities to inclusive primary schooling.

This will require the most up-to-date data on the diverse living conditions of families and their young children, so that the most appropriate distance learning strategies (including digital, television, radio, and paper-based learning) can be adopted in national or international exchanges. Ministries of education will need to work with other ministries and the private sector to address the digital divide and promote equitable access to platforms, while ensuring the protection of children online.

Policy-makers, ECCE programmes and institutions, non-governmental and humanitarian organizations, international organizations, and education and community services are all invited to design and fund cross-sectoral policies that make this support possible. All these actors must reaffirm that inclusion is not an option, but a right for all, including young children.

ANNEXES

To learn more about inclusion and its benefits:

Barton, E. E. and Smith, B. J. (2015). The pre-school inclusion toolbox. How to build and lead a high-quality   . Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Guralnick, M. J. and Bruder, M. B. (2016). Early childhood inclusion in the United States: Goals, current status and future directions. Infants & Young Children, 29(3), 166-177. https://doi.org/10.1097/IYC.0000000000000071

Odom, S. L., Buysse, V. and Soukakou, E. (2011). Inclusion for young children with disabilities: A quarter century of research perspectives. Journal of Early Intervention, 33(4), 344-356. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815111430094

UNESCO. (2020). Ressources sur l'inclusion dans l'éducation. https://fr.unesco.org/themes/inclusion-education/ressources

Wertlieb, D. (2019). Inclusive early childhood development (IECD): A twin-tracking approach to advancing behavioral health and social justice. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 89(4), 442-448. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000351

To learn more about the impacts of COVID-19 on young children:

Akmal, M., Hares, S. and O'Donnell, M. (2020). Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 School Closures: Insights from Frontline Organizations. https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/gendered-impacts-covid-19-school-closures-insights-frontline-organizations.pdf

Fund, M. (2020). Girls' education and Covid-19: What past shocks can teach us about mitigating the impact of pandemics. Malala Fund, 6. https://downloads.ctfassets.net/0oan5gk9rgbh/6TMYLYAcUpjhQpXLDgmdIa/dd1c2ad08886723cbad85283d479de09/GirlsEducationandCOVID19_MalalaFund_04022020.pdf

Nations Unies. (2020). Note de synthèse: l'impact de la COVID-19 sur les enfants. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/note_de_synthese_-_limpact_de_la_covid-19_sur_les_enfants_0.pdf

Neece, C., McIntyre, L. L. and Fenning, R. (2020). Examining the impact of Covid-19 in ethnically diverse families with young children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 64(10), 739-749. https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12769

UNESCO. (2020). COVID-19   Education   Response   Webinar, Ensuring quality of learning and well-being for young children in the context of the COVID-1915 July2020DONGSEON KIM/Shutterstock.com

UNICEF. (2020). Children with Disabilities: Ensuring their inclusion in COVID-19 response strategies and evidence generation. https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-with-disabilities-ensuring-inclusion-in-covid-19-response/

UNICEF and Save the Children (2020). Retrieved from https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/blogs/2020/children-in-poor-households-to-soar-by-millions-covid-1

UNICEF. (2021). Fact sheet on Covid and children. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/regression-and-covid

Yoshikawa, H., Wuermli, A. J., Britto, P. R., Dreyer, B., Leckman, J. F., Lye, S. J., Stein, A. (2020). Effects of the global Coronavirus Disease-2019 pandemic on early childhood development: Short- and long-term risks and mitigating program and policy actions. The *Journal of Pediatrics, 223*, 188-193. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2020.05.020

To learn more about diversity:

Hoger, D. (2019). Creating an inclusive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environment for the early years. Educating Young Children: Learning & Teaching in the Early Childhood Years, 25(3), 12-14.

Qureshi, S., Malkani, R. and Rose, R. (2020). Achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Dans R. Papa (dir.), Handbook on Promoting Social Justice in Education (p. 3-32). Cham, Suisse: Springer.

Taylor, B. (2017). Toward reconciliation: What do the calls to action mean for early childhood education? Journal of Childhood Studies, 42(1), 48-53. https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs. v42i1.16887

Tobin, J. (2020). Addressing the needs of children of immigrants and refugee families in contemporary ECEC settings: Findings and implications from the Children Crossing Borders study. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28(1), 10-20. https://doi.org/10. 1080/1350293X.2020.1707359

Vandekerchkhove, A. and Aarssen, J. (2020). High time to put the invisible children on the agenda: Supporting refugee families and children through quality ECEC. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28(1), 104-114. https://doi.org/10.1080/135029 3X.2020.1707366

To learn more about management practices and leadership for inclusive ecce:

Abel, M. B., Talan, T. and Masterson, M. (2016). Whole leadership: A framework for early childhood programs. https://mccormick-assets.floodlight.design/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/3-22-17_ WholeLeadership-AFrameworkForEarlyChildhoodPrograms_05.pdf

Ackah-Jnr, F. R. (2018). System and school-level resources for transforming and optimising inclusive education in early childhood settings: What Ghana can learn. European Journal of Education Studies, 5(6), 203-220.

To learn more about cross-sectoral collaboration practices:

Bricker, D. D., Felimban, H. S., Yu Lin, F., Stegenga, S. M. and O'Malley Storie, S. (2020). A proposed framework for enhancing collaboration in early intervention/early childhood special education. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 1-13. https://doi. org/10.1177/0271121419890683

Fukkink, R. G. and van Verseveld, M. (2020). Inclusive early childhood education and care: a longitudinal study into the growth of interprofessional collaboration. Journal of interprofessional care, 34(3), 362-372. https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820.2019.1650731

Green, A., Abbott, P., Luckett, T., Davidson, P. M., Delaney, J., Delaney, P., … DiGiacomoa, M. (2020). Collaborating across sectors to provide early intervention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disability and their families: A qualitative study of provider perspectives. Journal of Interprofessional Care, 34(3), 388-399. https://doi.org/10.1080/13561 820.2019.1692798

Laxton, D., Cooper, L., Shrestha, P. and Younie, S. (2020). Translational research to support early childhood education in crisis settings: A case study of collaborative working with Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar. International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education, 3-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2020.1813186

To learn more about collaborative practices with families:

Fan, S. and Yost, H. (2019). Keeping connected: exploring the potential of social media as a new avenue for communication and collaboration in early childhood education. International Journal of Early Years Education, 27(2), 132-142. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1454301

Majoko, T. (2019). Inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream early childhood development: Zimbabwean parent perspectives. Early Child Development and Care, 189(6), 909-925. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2017.1350176

UNICEF. (2014). Parents, family and community participation in inclusive education. Webinar 13 – Companion technical booklet. https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/IE_Webinar_Booklet_13.pdf

To learn more about inclusion evaluation:

Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (2011). Index for Inclusion developing learning and participation in schools (3rd ed.). Frenchay, United Kingdom: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education.

Love, H. R. and Horn, E. (2019). Definition, context, quality: Current issues in research examining high-quality inclusive education. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education. 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121419846342

Soukakou, E. P. (2012). Measuring quality in inclusive pre-school classrooms: Development and validation of the Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP). Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27(3), 478-488.

Soukakou, E. P., Winton, P. J., West, T. A., Sideris, J. H. and Rucker, L. M. (2015). Measuring the quality of inclusive practices: Findings from the inclusive classroom profile pilot. Journal of Early Intervention, 36(3), 223-240.

Van Rhijn, T., Maich, K., Lero, D. S. and Irwin, S. H. (2019) Assessing inclusion quality: The SpeciaLink early childhood inclusion quality scale. Exceptionality Education International, 29(3), 92-112. https://doi.org/10.5206/eei.v29i3.9389

To learn more about inclusive education approaches in early childhood:

Buysse, V. and Peisner-Feinberg, ES. (dir.publ.) (2013). Handbook of response to intervention in early childhood. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children, National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Head Start Association. (2013). Frameworks for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood: Description and Implications. Communication Disorders Quarterly, 35(2),108-119. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525740113514111

Florian, L. and Sretenov, D. (2021). From Special School to Resource Centre: Supporting Vulnerable Young Children in Central and Eastern Europe: A Guide for Positive Change. https://www.issa.nl/content/special-school-resource-centre

Lohmann, M. J., Hovey, K. A. and Gauvreau, A. N. (2018). Using a universal design for learning framework to enhance engagement in the early childhood classroom. Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship, 7(2).

Odom, S. L., Buysse, V. and Soukakou, E. (2011). Inclusion for young children with disabilities: A quarter century of research perspectives. Journal of Early Intervention, 33(4), 344-356. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815111430094

To learn more about authentic assessment:

Bagnato, S. J., Goins, D. D., Pretti-Frontczak, K.; Neisworth, J. T. (2014). Authentic assessment as 'best practice' for early childhood intervention: National consumer social validity research. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 34(2), 116-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121414523652

Bricker, D. (2006). Programme EIS Évaluation Intervention Suivi. Traduction et adaptation auprès d'une clientèle québécoise sous la direction de C. Dionne en collaboration avec C.-A. Tavarès et C. Rivest. Montréal, QC: Chenelière éducation

Bricker, D., Dionne, C., Grisham, J., Johnson, J. J., Macy, M., Slentz, K. L. and Waddell, M. Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Young Children, Third Edition (AEPS®-3). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Johnson-Martin, N. M., Hacker, B. J. and Attermeier, S. M. (2004). The Carolina Curriculum for Pre-schoolers with Special Needs (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

To learn more about screening:

Bricker, D., Squires, J., Frantz, R. and Xie, H. (2016). A comprehensive and additive system for child-focused assessment and evaluation in EI/ECSE. Journal of Intellectual Disability - Diagnosis and Treatment, 3(4), 187-197.

Sjö, N. M., Kiil, A. and Jensen, P. (2021). Teachers' perspectives on strength-based and deficit-based instruments for assessing socioemotional development in early childhood. Infants & Young Children, 34(1), 33-45. https://doi.org/10.1097/IYC.0000000000000180

Zhang, Q. and Morrison, V. (2020). Early identification within inclusive early childhood curriculum: An ethnographic study from New Zealand. Early Child Development and Care, 190(3), 310-321. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2018.1471472

To learn more about the transition:

Alcott, B., Banerji, M., Bhattacharjea, S., Nanda, M. and Ramanujan, P. (2020). One step forward, two steps back: Transitions between home, pre-primary and primary education in rural India. Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 50(4), 482-499. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1527214

Lazzari, A., Balduzzi, L., Van Laere, K., Boudry, C., Rezek, M. and Prodger, A. (2020). Sustaining warm and inclusive transitions across the early years: Insights from the START project. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28(1), 43-57. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2020.1707361

Ravenscroft, J., Wazny, K. and Davis, J. M. (2017). Factors associated with successful transition among children with disabilities in eight European countries. PloS one, 12(6), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0179904

To learn more about initial and continuing education:

Bruder, M. B., Catalino, T., Chiarello, L. A., Mitchell, M. C., Deppe, J., Gundler, D., … Ziegler, D. (2019). Finding a common lens. Competencies across professional disciplines providing early childhood intervention. Infants & Young Children, 32(4), 280-293. https://doi.org/10.1097/IYC.0000000000000153

Enabling Education Network. (2020). Inclusive early childhood education training videos. https://www.eenet.org.uk/inclusive-early-childhood-education-training-videos/

International Step by Step Association. (2020). Early childhood workforce initiative. https://www.issa.nl/workforce

Majoko, T. (2016). Inclusion in early childhood education: Pre-service teachers voices. Early Child Development and Care, 186(11), 1859-1872. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1137000

Ring, E. and O'Sullivan, L. (2019). Creating Spaces Where Diversity Is the Norm: An innovative competency-based blended learning teacher education programme in Ireland, Childhood Education, 95(2), 29-39. https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2019.1593758

To learn more about partnership research:

Borg, M., Karlsson, B., Kim, H. S., and McCormack, B. (2012). Opening up for many voices in knowledge construction. Participatory Qualitative Research, 13(1). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-13.1.1793

Nyström, M.E., Karltun, J., Keller, C. and Gäre, B. A. (2018). Collaborative and partnership research for improvement of health and social services: researchers' experiences from 20 projects. Health Research Policy and Systems, 16(46). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-018-0322-0

REFERENCES

Aghallaj, R.; Van Der Wildt, A.; Vandenbroeck, M.: Agirdag, O. (2020). Exploring the partnership between language minority parents and professionals in early childhood education and care: a systematic review. In C. Kirsch and J. Duarte (Eds), Multilingual approaches for teaching and learning: from acknowledging to capitalising on multilingualism in European mainstream education (p. 151-167). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429059674-12

Ahmed, S.; Walker, M.; Kaga, Y. (2020). Survey of Teachers in Pre-primary Education (STEPP): Lessons from the implementation of the pilot study and field trial of international survey instruments. UNESCO.

Akmal, M.; Hares, S.; O'Donnell, M. (2020). Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 School Closures: Insights from Frontline Organizations. https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/gendered-impacts-covid-19-school-closures-insights-frontline-organizations.pdf

Allen, L. and Kelly, B. B. (2015). Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. National Academies Press. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK310532/

Anna, M.; Dachy, A.; Lenaerts, F.; VVOB. (2018). Pre-schools in Vietnam: innovative approach for better learning and participating.

Bagnato, S. J.; Goins, D. D.; Pretti-Frontczak, K.; Neisworth, J. T. (2014). Authentic assessment as 'best practice' for early childhood intervention: National consumer social validity research. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 34(2),116-127.

Bricker, D. D.; Felimban, H. S.; Lin, F. Y.; Stegenga, S. M.; Storie, S. O. (2020). A proposed framework for enhancing collaboration in early intervention/early childhood special education. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121419890683

Bruder, M. B.; Catalino, T.; Chiarello, L. A.; Mitchell, M. C.; Deppe, J.; Gundler, D.; ... Ziegler, D. (2019). Finding a common lens: Competencies across professional disciplines providing early childhood intervention. Infants & Young Children, 32(4), 280-293.

Bureau de l'UNESCO à Bangkok et Bureau régional pour l'éducation en Asie et dans le Pacifique. (2016). New horizons: A review of early childhood care and education in Asia and the Pacific.

Buysse, V., Peisner and Feinberg, ES. (dir.publ.). (2013). Handbook of response to intervention in early childhood. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Camargo Abello, M. and Castro Rojas, A. L. (2013). Estrategia de atención integral a la primera infancia: Fundamentos políticos, técnicos y de gestión. De cero a siempre. http://www.deceroasiempre.gov.co/QuienesSomos/Paginas/Documentos.aspx

CAST. (2018). Universal Design for Learning. Guidelines version 2.2. http://udlguidelines.cast.org

Comisión intersectorial para la atención integral de la primera infancia. (2020). Informe de la implementación de la Política de estado para el desarrollo integral de la primera infania de cero a siempre. http://www.deceroasiempre.gov.co/Prensa/Paginas/centro-documentacion-informes.aspx

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada. Gouvernement du Canada. https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/

European Commission. (2014). Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care. Report of the Working group on early childhood education and care under

the auspices of the European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec- quality-framework_en.pdf

Corr, C. and Santos, R. M. (2017). 'Not in the Same Sandbox': Cross-Systems Collaborations Between Early Intervention and Child Welfare Systems. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 34 (1), 9-22. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-016-0470-4

Department of Children and Youth Affairs. (2016). Diversity, equality and inclusion. Charter and guidelines for early childhood care and education.

Dunst, C. J., Bruder, M. B., & Hamby, D. W. (2015). Metasynthesis of in-service professional development research: Features associated with positive educator and student outcomes. Educational Research and Reviews, 10(12), 1731-1744.

Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M. and Hamby, D. W. (2007). Meta-analysis of family-centered help giving practices research. Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews, 13 (4), 370-378. https://doi.org/10.1002/mrdd.20176

ECDAN (n.d.). Benchmarking ECD investment: an options brief. https://www. ecdan.org/assets/investment-benchmark-for-ecd_options-brief_fnl-28-06-2018.pdf.

Eurofound (2015). Working conditions, training of early childhood care workers and quality of services – A systematic review. Luxembourg: European Commission.

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (2017). Inclusive Early Childhood Education: Literature Review. (F. Bellour, P. Bartolo and M. Kyriazopoulou, Éds). Odense, Denmark.

Erwin, E. J., Puig, V. I., Evenson, T. L. and Beresford, M. (2012). Community and Connection in Inclusive Early-Childhood Education: A Participatory Action Research Investigation. Young Exceptional Children, 15(4), 17-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096250612451759

Evaluation Report of the Project: Guidance for Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Georgia, 2019.

Florian, L. and Sretenov, D. (2021). From Special School to Resource Centre: Supporting Vulnerable Young Children in Central and Eastern Europe: A Guide for Positive Change. https://www.issa.nl/content/special-school-resource-centre

Fukkink, R., Negenman, M., Vandekerckhove, A., Jørgensen, N. J., Larsen, V. and Jager, J. (2018). A polyphonic perspective on socially inclusive early childhood education and care: Urban views from Belgium, Denmark, Slovenia and the Netherlands. Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, 1-26.

Fund, M. (2020). Girls' education and Covid-19: What past shocks can teach us about mitigating the impact of pandemics. Malala Fund, 6. https://downloads.ctfassets.net/0oan5gk9rgbh/6TMYLYAcUpjhQpXLDgmdla/dd1c2ad08886723cbad85283d479de09/GirlsEducationandCOVID19_MalalaFund_04022020.pdf

Giannini, S. and Albrectsen, A. (2020). COVID-19 School Closures Around the World Will Hit Girls Hardest. https://plan-international.org/blog/2020/03/covid-19-school-closures-hit-girls-hardest

Gunning, C., Breathnach, Ó., Holloway, J., McTiernan, A. and Malone, B. (2019). A systematic review of peer-mediated interventions for pre-school children with autism spectrum disorder in inclusive settings. Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 6(1), 40-62.

Gunning, C. ; Breathnach, Ó. ; Holloway, J. ; McTiernan, A. ; Malone, B. (2019). A systematic review of peer-mediated interventions for pre-school children with autism spectrum disorder in inclusive settings. Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 6(1), 40-62.

Guralnick, M. J. (2020). Applying the Developmental Systems Approach to Inclusive Community-Based Early Intervention Programs: Process and Practice. Infants and young children, 33(3), 173-183. https://doi.org/10.1097/IYC.0000000000000167

Lenaerts, F., Braeye, S., Nguyen, T. L. H., Dang, T. A. and Vromant, N. (2017). Supporting Teachers in Vietnam to Monitor Pre-school Children's Wellbeing and Involvement in Pre-school Classrooms. International Journal of Early Childhood, 49(2), 245-262.

Ma, X., Shen, J., Krenn, H. Y., Hu, S. and Yuan, J. (2016). A Meta-Analysis of the Relationship Between Learning Outcomes and Parental Involvement During Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary Education. Educational Psychology Review 28 (4), 771-801. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9351-1

Marks, K. and LaRosa, A. (2012). Understanding developmental behavioral screening measures. Pediatrics in Review, 33(10), 448-458.doi: 10.1542/pir.33-10-448

Ministry of Education. (1996). Te whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2017). Te whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum. Wellington: Auteur.

Ministère de l'Éducation et du Développement de la petite enfance du Nouveau-Brunswick. (17 September 2013). Politique 322: Politique sur l'inclusion scolaire. https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/biling/eecd-edpe.html

Mitchell, L., Bateman, A., Ouko, A., Gerrity, R., Lees, J., Matata, K. ; Xiao, W. (2015). Teaching and learning in culturally diverse early childhood settings. Hamilton, New Zealand: Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, University of Waikato. https://www.waikato.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/257246/Teachers-and-Learning-for-website_2015-03-05pm.compressed.pdf

Mitter, R. and Putcha, V. (2018). Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce: Training and Professional Development. Washington, D.C.: Results for Development.

Neece, C., McIntyre, L. L. and Fenning, R. (2020). Examining the impact of Covid-19 in ethnically diverse families with young children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 64(10), 739-749. https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12769

Odom, S. L., Buysse, V. and Soukakou, E. (2011). Inclusion for Young Children With Disabilities: A Quarter Century of Research Perspectives. Journal of Early Intervention, 33(4), 344-356. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815111430094

OECD. (2019). Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa. (2019). Getting it right: Inclusive early childhood development and education rights. Disability-inclusive responses, lessons and policy considerations from Southern Africa.

Orsander, M., Mendoza, P., Burgess, M. and Arlini, S. M. (2020). The hidden impact of COVID-19 on children and families with disabilities. London, Save the Children International.

Park, M., Katsiaficas, C. and McHugh, M. (2018). Responding to the ECEC needs of children of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe and North America. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Ravenscroft, J., Wazny, K. and Davis, J. M. (2017). Factors associated with successful transition among children with disabilities in eight European countries. PloS one, 12(6), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0179904

Ring, E. ; Kelleher, S. ; Breen, F. ; Heeney, T. ; McLoughlin, M. ; Kearns, A. ; Stafford, P. ; Skehill, S. ; Campion, K. ; Comerford, D. ; O'Sullivan, L. (2019). Interim Evaluation of the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) Programme.

https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:d8c95d7d-2d75-40a8-9f65-b6582908c08d

UNESCO (2016). New horizons: A review of early childhood care and education in Asia and the Pacific. UNESCO Bangkok.

UNESCO (2019) http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/new-methodology-shows-258-million-children-adolescents-and-youth-are-out-school.pdf

UNESCO. (2020). Rapport mondial de suivi sur l'éducation. Inclusion et éducation: tous, sans exception. Paris, France.

UNESCO. (2021). Right to pre-primary education: a global study.

UNESCO and the International Bureau of Education. (2007). Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education Eastern and South Eastern Europe.

UNICEF Serbia. (2020, April 16). Together on the right track.

Vargas-Barón, E. (2016). Policy planning for early childhood care and education: 2000-2014 in Prospects Education. https://doi 10.1007/s11125-016-9377-2

Walker, J. and Baboo, N. (2020). Global report - Leave No Child Behind: Invest in the early years. Light for the world.

Weglarz-Ward, J. M., Santos, R. M. and Timmer, J. (2019). Factors That Support and Hinder Including Infants with Disabilities in Child Care. Early Childhood Education Journal, 47(2), 163-173. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-018-0900-3

Weiland, C. (2016). Impacts of the Boston prekindergarten program on the school readiness of young children with special needs. Developmental Psychology 52(11), 1763-1776

World Bank (2018). World development report 2018: Learning to fulfill the promise of education. https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018

World Education Blog. (15 April 2021). Inclusion in early education in Singapore: towards more equitable foundations. https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/

World Health Organization, UNICEF, and World Bank (2018). Nurturing care for early childhood development a framework for helping children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272603/9789241514064-eng.pdf

Zero Project. (2021). Supporting smooth and inclusive transitions from pre-school to primary school.

Zhang, Q. and Morrison, V. (2020). Early identification within inclusive early childhood curriculum: An ethnographic study from New Zealand. Early Child Development and Care, 190(3), 310-321.

Zubairi, A., Rose, P. and Moriarty, K. (2019). Leaving the youngest behind: Declining aid to early childhood education.

Inclusive early childhood care and education

From commitment to action

The development of inclusive programmes and services for early childhood care and education is a priority of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education to which the international community has committed itself to achieve by 2030.

This publication calls for a renewed global commitment to early childhood inclusion through the presentation of qualitative and quantitative data and action-oriented thinking. It presents lessons from country practices and recent research to provide policy-makers, partners, and ECCD practitioners with guidelines for action.

The publication contains key messages that stakeholders can draw upon for actions that address the diversity and trajectory of each child.

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Sustainable Development Goals