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Early Childhood Development in Emergencies

Early Childhood Development (ECD) services in humanitarian and fragile settings are increasingly recognized as essential to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under five, support healthy brain development in young children, and drive economic recovery and peacebuilding in children's and parents' communities and countries. However, ECD is not well represented in humanitarian response plans, and where it is, implementation of each component is inconsistent and lacks coordination.

Tools:
UNICEF has developed tools and interventions to address the critical need for ECD services in humanitarian and fragile settings. These tools are being refined and adapted through tests and evaluations, both in their content and utilisation.

FACTS

An estimated **29 million babies globally** were **born in areas affected by conflict in 2018**.[1]

Approximately **5 million pregnant women and 34 million women of reproductive age live in humanitarian and fragile settings**.[2]

An estimated **60 per cent of preventable maternal deaths and 53 per cent of under-five deaths take place in settings of conflict, displacement and natural disasters**.[3]

ECD in 2018 Humanitarian Response Plans

The percentage of ECD interventions recommended by the United Nations Nurturing Care Framework and incorporated into 26 active humanitarian response plans include only[4]:

58 per cent for **nutrition**

24 per cent for **safety and security**

22 per cent for **health**

10 per cent for **responsive care**

9 per cent for **early learning**

1. Estimate is based on projections using UN-DESA, 2019, *"2019 Revision of World Population Prospects"* accessed at https://population.un.org/wpp/, filtered for conflict-affected areas based on population density projections published by the Center for International Earth Science Information Network - CIESIN - Columbia University. 2018. Gridded Population of the World, Version 4 (GPWv4): Population Count, Revision 11. Palisades, NY: NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center (SEDAC). https://doi.org/10.7927/H4JW8BX5, and data on "organized violence" incidents (including state-based armed conflict, non-state conflict, and one-sided violence) from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/#d3; and for countries where no UCDP-GED data existed, drawing on data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED); acleddata.com, screened for "political violence" events with fatalities, all using the definition of conflict zones/areas impacted by conflict consistent with the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) definition as "areas within 50km from where one or more conflict incidents takes place in a given year, within the borders of a country". See definitions in Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University: http://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/ (all websites as accessed 09-09-2019).
2. UNFPA. (2019). *Humanitarian Action, 2019 Overview*. United Nations Population Fund: New York. p.3
3. UNICEF. (2016). *Strategy for Health 2016-2030*. United Nations Children's Fund: New York. p.3
4. Bouchane, Kolleen. (2018). Paper commissioned for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, *Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls*.

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ECD Kits for Emergencies

The ECD Kit for Emergencies was created in 2009 to strengthen the response for young children caught in conflict or emergencies. The kit complements basic services related to young children's hygiene and sanitation, health and nutrition, protection and education. It contains materials to help caregivers create a safe learning environment for young children, aged 0–8, and offers children access to play, stimulation and early learning opportunities. Each kit is designed to reach up to 50 children. Between 2009 and 2018, UNICEF distributed 142,235 ECD Kits for Emergencies across 104 countries, reaching more than 7 million children.

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Contents include: puzzles, games, counting circle, boxes to stack and sort, board books, puppets for storytelling, art supplies, soaps, and water containers.

A recent evaluation found the ECD Kit for Emergencies to be well designed, providing a variety of toys for children of different ages and good logistical assets for caregivers. The evaluation also identified opportunities to strengthen the kit's efficient and effective use in practice. It recommended a greater focus on resources for parents, and sourcing toys through local toy-making with parents and caregivers to reflect traditional forms of play.

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Care for Child Development

The Care for Child Development (CCD) training package was developed to support caregiver practices that improve child development. Particularly in emergencies, it is important for families to buffer young children from risks like toxic stress by providing a safe, stable and nurturing environment. The CCD training aims to increase caregiver capacity to raise happy, healthy children, and builds frontline worker skills to activate family and community supports for caregivers and children. The package groups guidance into developmental age groups within the 0-3 age range and uses 2 central practices with caregivers: communicate and play. It has been widely adapted and implemented in low resource settings.

Caring for the Caregiver

The Caring for the Caregiver (CFC) training module aims to build front-line workers' skills to support caregivers. The module recognizes that helping young children thrive in areas where risks are high and resources limited depends upon the quality of care and support provided to their caregivers. The training module uses a strengths-based counselling approach that increases caregivers' confidence and helps them to develop stress management, self-care and conflict-resolution skills. It has been tested in two countries and will continue to be adapted according to country and regional contexts, and further tested. UNICEF will also extend the training to additional entry points, such as community leaders and mother support groups, and develop approaches to support the sustainability of the CFC package.

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