



Early Childhood Development A Pathway to Sustainable Peace: Marking 25 Years of Global Impact



**Proposal for Ambassadorial Support for an
Event at UNGA 78**



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Introduction

The Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) invites the missions of the United Nations to host a side event during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 78). This event will highlight the need for increased Early Childhood Development (ECD) awareness and collaboration as a means of promoting peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion across the world. The event has the potential to be an accelerator strategy for the transformative power of quality multisectoral ECD policies and services.

This event will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the 20th Anniversary of the International Network of Peace Building for Young Children, and the 10th Anniversary of the formation of the ECPC.

For over 25 years the United Kingdom/Irish Governments, the European Commission [through the PEACE programmes¹], and other pioneering countries have been collaborating in the development and delivery of novel and new fidelity tested Early Childhood Development initiatives. With support from the ECPC², these best practice programmes have been delivered worldwide and continue to be refined to meet changing and more complex needs.

We are seeking support from the United Nations Ambassadors to host this event.

This event will aim to reinforce children's rights for all children living in conflict and post-conflict societies by:

1. **Underscoring** the importance of accessible social services, particularly ECD services, in creating a culture of peace, respect for diversity, social cohesion, and reduction of conflict and violence in communities worldwide.
2. **Demonstrating** the effectiveness of ECD services in promoting peace and social cohesion across the world (Supporting UNSDG 4: Quality Education and 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions).
3. **Identifying** opportunities and support for global collaboration to support the continued need for research and ECD implementation in countries emerging from/at risk of conflict.

Background

In periods of increasing conflicts and inequalities, it is vital to invest in solutions that will disrupt cycles of violence, build strong foundations for sustainable development and social cohesion, and promote a “culture of peace”.

Interstate and international conflicts are increasing. While conflicts impact people of all ages, children are particularly vulnerable. The impact on children is magnified by the increased stress experienced by themselves and their parents when needing to adapt to an unfortunate set of new realities in their daily lives.

Exposure to this type of adversity at an early age can cause children to experience “toxic stress”, which is related to a broad range of negative outcomes later in life, including major emotional and behavioral problems, and marginalization that can become self-perpetuating cycles that continue for generations.

Tragically, as a direct result of increased conflict, the number of children living in conflict zones has increased since 2000, putting millions of children at great risk of not reaching their full developmental potential.

1 [Northern Ireland PEACE programme | Fact Sheets on the European Union | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

2 <https://ecdpeace.org/>

For example, in 2021:

- Approximately **1.6 billion children** (69%) were living in a conflict-affected country.
- Approximately **449 million children** – over one in six – were living less than 50km from where the actual fighting took place. This constitutes a 2% increase from 2018.
- Some **230 million children** lived in high-intensity conflict countries with more than 1,000 battle-related deaths in one calendar year. This is an alarming 9% increase from the previous year.³

The absence of ECD services in conflict-affected regions exacerbates these negative effects, perpetuating cycles of poverty, inequity, division, and violence.

The Impact of Effective ECD Policies and Services

Investing in ECD services that promote a culture of peace and respect for diversity can create stable environments for children to reach their full developmental potential. Programmes that engage parents have been shown to reduce harsh punishment and psychological violence within families and promote confidence in their dealing with issues of diversity.

ECD services promote respect, social justice, and equality and can break down barriers in deeply divided societies. They do so by strengthening social cohesion and delivering interventions that include community processes to strengthen the capacities of institutions, social groups, and the private sector, especially in remote areas that in the case of many conflicts are the most affected.

By addressing both the consequences and the root causes of conflict and violence, ECD interventions can contribute to the development of more stable and peaceful societies. To date, our work has supported over 54,000 children and families in countries including Colombia, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Nepal, Palestine, Serbia, South Africa, Tajikistan, Turkey, and the Western Balkans.

ECPC Recommendations

1. **Increase** investment in ECD services and systems, particularly in conflict-affected regions and marginalized communities, to ensure accessibility and quality for all children.
2. **Encourage** collaboration among governments, civil society, the media, and other stakeholders to create a unified approach to ECD services and peacebuilding initiatives.
3. **Support** the development and implementation of family-based interventions to minimize conflicts and promote pro-social behaviors in children.
4. **Promote** parenting support programmes that foster social cohesion and empower communities to address the root causes of violence.
5. **Strengthen** international institutions and partnerships to enhance cooperation for the construction of peace.
6. **Deliver** research and evaluation of ECD interventions to better understand their impact on peace and social cohesion and to inform evidence-based policymaking.

Call to Action

The Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) invites missions of the United Nations having strong interest in peacebuilding and the Children's Rights Agenda to host this event at the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. We also request support to continue advocating for Early Childhood Development and Peacebuilding and to develop new international collaborative networks that will support countries to implement, scale-up, and evaluate quality ECD programmes.

³ Strømme, A., Fylkesnes, G.K., Denselow, J., Mangan, R., Podieh, P., Kamøy, K., et al. (2022). *Stop the war on children: The forgotten ones*. London, United Kingdom: Save the Children.



Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC)

The **ECPC** is a global consortium of United Nations agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, academia, practitioners, and the private sector focused on sharing scientific and practice-based evidence on how investment in early childhood development (ECD) can contribute to sustainable peace, social cohesion, and social justice. We recognize that investing in ECD is a powerful and cost-effective strategy for reducing violence, poverty, and exclusion and for building peaceful societies.

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