

Recommendations

IMMEDIATE

- **Maintain** and further **invest** in quality programmes and services for families and their young children that live in situations of conflict, military occupation (Watchlist) and displacement during the COVID-19 response efforts (J PEDS).
- **Ensure** that essential child protection services are recognised as lifesaving and continue to be provided and made accessible to all children even during lockdowns, quarantines and other types of restrictions.
- **Prioritise** protection of young children, who in this time of crisis are highly susceptible to neglect, abuse, violence, exploitation, and stigma as their parents/caregivers experience increased instability and stress, which may result in long-term and irreversible negative consequences.
- **Use mass media** – radio, television and social media – to promote psychosocial support, cognitive development, nutrition and physical activity. Ensure existing online resources are accessible and address pre-existing inequalities in fragile and conflict affected settings. Ensure children’s experiences are safe and positive during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF-f).

- **Invest** in new research to understand the impact of COVID-19 on children and their families: (i) the adverse impact of the pandemic on parents/caregivers and their ability to provide nurturing care for their children; (ii) the social-emotional impact of the virus and (the measures to control it) on children; (iii) the role children play as vectors of the infection; and (iv) the underlying biology and optimal treatment for the newly identified PMI syndrome that is associated with COVID-19. A more evidence-based understanding of these issues will help governments in their decision making about opening or closing ECD centres and schools at various stages of the pandemic.

MEDIUM-TERM

- **Ensure** an inclusive approach for all children and their families living in situations of conflict, military occupation and fragility, including migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, who have a right to the highest attainable standard of health (OHCHR). Those children should be entitled to protection for themselves and their families, including having access to testing and early detection for COVID-19, and the means to physically distance, self-isolate and take other appropriate physical and mental health measures (IASC).

- **Uphold** the rights of vulnerable children and their families as we emerge from this pandemic into recovery. It is vital to have ECD programmes that are multileveled, benefiting the child and parents/caregivers, the community, and institutions at national, regional and local levels. Programmes should be safe, protective, inclusive, accessible and most importantly, culturally sensitive, to allow children and their families the space they need to be the driving force for social change.

- **Protect** women’s and girl’s rights, without discrimination, and support community-based action through gender-based analysis to favour their empowerment and social inclusion.

LONG-TERM

- **Build** on the extensive body of international research on the power of ECD to promote peace and sustainable development.
- **Invest** in strengthening systems (e.g. through financial resources, capacity building, personnel training) with a holistic and whole-of-government (multi-ministry) approach.

Call to Action

- 1 **Reaffirm** commitment to human rights and the rights of children that are being undermined during the global pandemic crisis.
- 2 **Prioritise** investment in the survival, development and protection of children living in situations of conflict, military occupation, and displacement.
- 3 **Protect** and **prioritise** investments in Early Childhood Development programmes and services in the global pandemic response and recovery efforts.
- 4 **Ensure** that gender equality, inclusion and empowerment of children, parents/caregivers, families and communities be at the centre of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.
- 5 **Implement** more effective and **inclusive** policies and practices in all countries, ensuring that early childhood programmes and services are essential in promoting The Culture of Peace (UN Resolution A/RES/74/21) and in sustaining peace.

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RESOURCES / MATERIALS

For evidence-based resources including information and policy briefs developed by our Consortium of globalexerts, please visit “Future Child” by the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) at futurechild.org.

CONTACT US

To receive print copies of this Call to Action and/or to schedule a brief virtual or in-person presentation by a consortium member having expertise in your area of interest, please contact us at covid-19@ecdpeace.org. We will be pleased to meet you, provide you answers to questions, as well as supply you with additional materials to help you Build Back Better after Coronavirus COVID-19 using early childhood development strategies.

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