

Advancing Early Childhood Development

Showcasing the work of ECDAN's Knowledge Fellows

April 9, 2025

Knowledge Fellows Program Overview

- Began in 2021 with support from the Bainum Family Foundation
- Aim: To create opportunities for early-career ECD professionals to receive mentorship, professional development, and networking connections while working on a project that advances ECDAN's learning goals
- 26 Knowledge Fellows from 18 countries to date have completed the program, in four annual cohorts
- Oversight provided by a Steering Committee



Knowledge Fellows Steering Committee



Aisha K. Yousafzai
Associate Professor of
Global Health at
Harvard T.H. Chan School of
Public Health



Beatrice Matafwali
Senior Lecturer in the
Department of Educational
Psychology, Sociology and
Special Education at the
University of Zambia



Elizabeth Lule
Executive Director
at Early Childhood
Development Action
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Frances E. Aboud (co-chair)
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University



Joy Millan Maler
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Development (ECD)
Specialist
at UNICEF Pacific



Kimberly Boller
Senior Director for Science
Affairs at the American
Psychological Association



Kim Foulds
Vice President, Content
Research & Evaluation at
Sesame Workshop



Lucy Basset
Associate Professor of
Practice at the University of
Virginia



Nirmala Rao (co-chair)
Serena H.C. Yang Professor
in Early Childhood
Development and Education



Steve Lye
Executive Director, Alliance
for Human Development at
the University of Toronto

Guides design of
the program,
assists with
recruitment and
selection of
Fellows, provides
feedback to
Fellows, fills gaps
as needed,
promotes the
program

Knowledge Fellows Program Structure

- 4-8 Knowledge Fellows per year, from the diverse locations across the globe
- Each Fellow is paired with a seasoned ECD professional to act as a mentor and supported by the Secretariat
- The 2024 cohort had former fellows as peer mentors
- Fellowship takes 6-9 months, ~10 hours per week
- Cohort meets monthly to share learning and build skills
- Projects can be reports, briefs, program reviews, etc.
- Outputs are shared on ECDAN's website (ecdan.org)



Mentor and Fellow Backgrounds



Mentors come from ECDAN partner organizations:

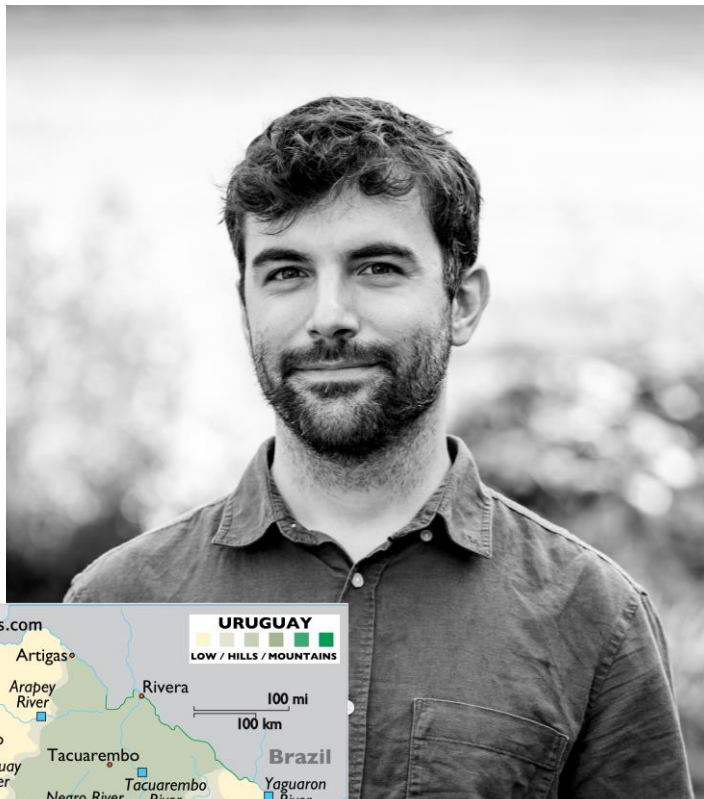
- Academia Brasileira de Ciências
- American Psychological Association
- Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
- Bangor University
- Billion Minds Institute
- BRAC International
- Brookings Institution
- Capita
- Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- NORC
- Research and Training Center for Development
- Save the Children
- Sesame Workshop (2)
- Spark Health Africa
- UNICEF (3)
- University of Sussex
- Universiti Putra Malaysia
- WHO

Knowledge Fellows have come from:

- Africa
 - Ghana (2)
 - Ethiopia
 - Kenya
 - Sierra Leone
 - South Africa
 - Zambia
- Asia
 - Bhutan
 - Bangladesh (2)
 - China
 - India (4)
 - Malaysia
 - Mongolia
 - Philippines
 - Vietnam (2)
- Americas
 - Brazil
 - Colombia (2)
 - Uruguay
 - USA (2)



Climate Fellow: Hernán Marisquirena



Project

Report detailing elements of climate services, showcasing examples of organizations in this field, and providing recommendations for integrating a focus on young children into their work

Mentored by
Gary Belkin
Billion Minds Institute

Peer Mentor: Mubarik Abdul-
Rahman



Hernán currently serves as the Programs Associate at the Education Outcomes Fund. He holds a master's degree in international development from Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

Early Childhood Development and Climate Services

Understanding Climate Services and the synergies with
ECD

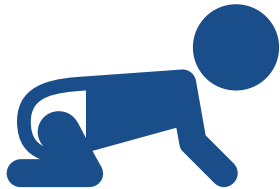
KF fellow: Hernán Marisquirena Molina

Mentor: Gary Belkin

Peer mentor: Mubarik Abdul-Rahman

9th April 2025

A severe drought is affecting this family...



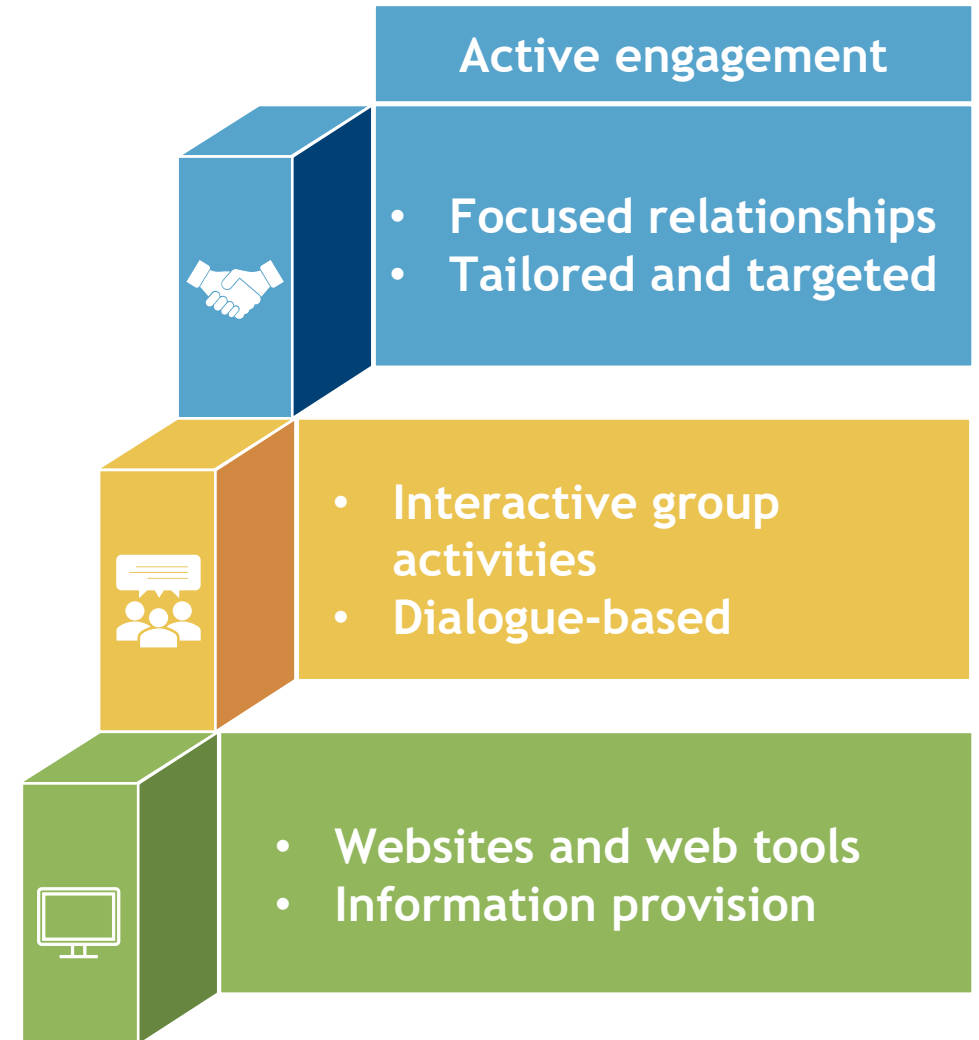
- A timely alert for a drought in their area allowed them to anticipate and adapt their crops.
- But it's not just their crops at risk. The heatwave from the drought is affecting their children.

What if this climate information didn't just warn them about crop risks, but also provided guidance on how to protect their children?

What are climate services?

- *“The provision and use of climate data, information and knowledge to assist decision-making”*
- Climate Services operates across a **broad spectrum of applications** - from raw weather data to tailored knowledge.
- The value add is **enhancing resilience** by enabling **anticipation** and **preparedness** for climate variability and extremes.
- Climate Services are evolving into **knowledge-sharing platforms that connect climate and non-climate experts**.

Objective: understand Climate Services and identify entry points to integrate ECD into them.



ECD is relevant but neglected in the climate context



Young children among the most vulnerable population to climate change. $\approx$ 90% of the disease burden falling on children under five.



While early childhood is at the frontlines of the climate crisis, **climate policies rarely account for their unique needs.**



For climate adaptation strategies to be truly **effective, equitable, and sustainable**, they must incorporate early childhood considerations.



Climate services offer an opportunity to embed ECD principles into decision-making by **facilitating transdisciplinary collaboration and providing data-driven insights** on how and why climate affects young children's development.



Within the climate ecosystem, Climate Services stand out as one of the few fields that **increasingly recognizes the importance of integrating ECD in discussions.**

5 entry points for ECD into Climate Services

Entry point		Description	Example of action point
1	Embedding ECD into Climate Services governance	Building strong partnerships around high-level policies and frameworks	Establish working groups between ECD and climate institutions (Global Framework of Climate Services /World Meteorological Organization)
2	Linking ECD and climate information systems	Linking datasets from climate and ECD to strengthen climate risk models	Develop context-specific vulnerability indexes (e.g. linking child malnutrition with drought forecasts) by age group
3	Designing climate-sensitive ECD programs	Integrating climate considerations into ECD program design ensures that services remain effective and resilient	E.g. education ministries to integrate climate preparedness into curriculums
4	Strengthening local Climate Services for families and caregivers	Climate adaptation efforts must be practical and accessible for those caring for young children	Develop localized early warnings / communication materials, designed for ECD professionals and families
5	Unlocking resources: financing ECD-Climate Services integration	Leverage climate finance mechanisms, given critical role of ECD in sustainable adaptation	Develop joint funding proposals with Climate services linked organizations (World Meteorological Org./NGOs)



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Climate Fellow: Ruoyu Li



Project
An analysis of climate action plans of the ten most populated countries for their consideration of young children

Mentored by
Joe Waters
Capita

Peer Mentor: Duong Vu



Ruoyu most recently worked as a research fellow with UNICEF Cambodia. She holds a master's degree in international social and public policy from London School of Economics and is pursuing her second master's degree in public policy at Fudan University in Shanghai, China.



Policy Planning for the Youngest Children in a Warming World

An analysis of 10 highly populated countries' climate action plans

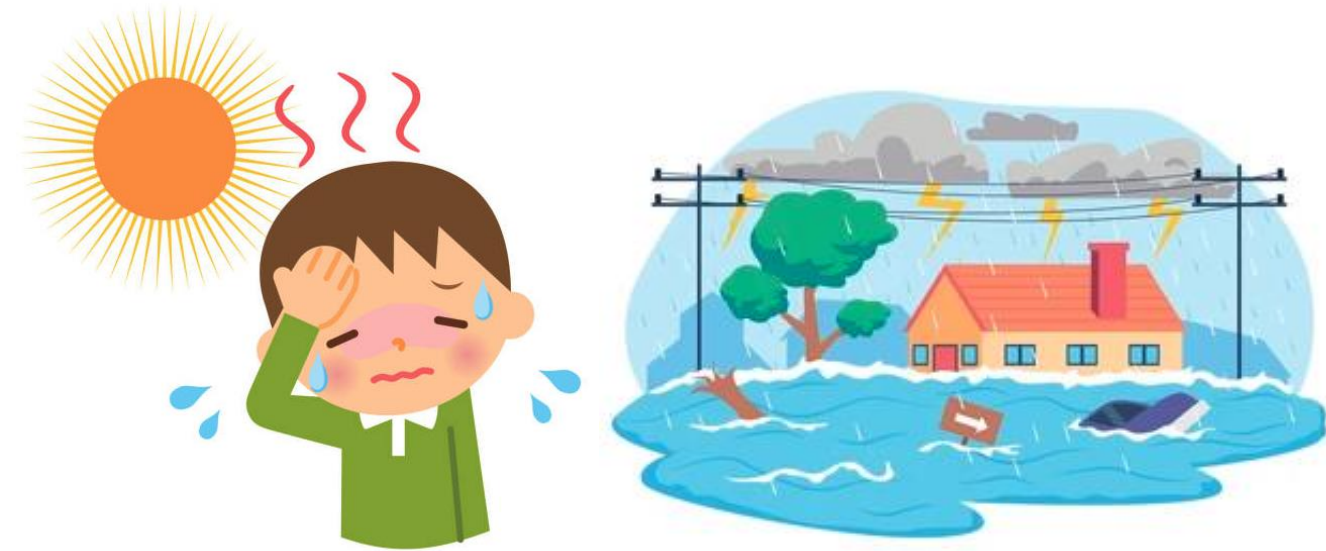
Fellow: Ruoyu LI

Mentor: Joe Waters

Peer Mentor: Duong Vu

April 9, 2025

Children & climate policies



China's Achievements, New Goals and New Measures for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)-2021

- New low-carbon development models
- Carbon peak and carbon neutrality
- Technological support
- What about **CHILDREN**?

Question: whether, to what extent, and how children, especially the youngest ones, are included in national climate action policies?

Research Scope

Top 10 countries by population by 2100¹

- Asia (5): India, China, Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh
- Africa (4): Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania
- America (1): United States

Analytical method: content analysis using a keyword list

National Climate Policies	Key Objectives
Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)	A country's formal climate action commitment under the Paris Agreement .
National Adaptation Plan (NAP)	National plan to identify medium- and long-term adaptation needs and implementation strategies.
Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategy	A policy framework guided by the Sendai Framework to systematically reduce disaster risks.

¹ Source: [United Nations World Population Prospect 2024](#)

Key Findings - Are children included?

1. Limited and Superficial Inclusion of Children

- Only 6 out of 10 countries even mention children in their NDCs
- **Broad** and **vague** references

Nigeria's updated NDC (2022)

“A **Youth Action Manual** on climate change was developed...as an accessible tool for **youth** taking climate action”

2. Systemic Neglect of ECD

- Children are grouped into one single group (children/youth)
- Only Pakistan and DR Congo included ECD, yet with **a narrow focus** on mortality rates

Pakistan's updated NDC (2021)

“Ensure and adopt measures to **improve child mortality rates** and associated women's health issues.”

Key Findings - How are children included?

1. Predominance of Passive Vulnerability Framing **Without Action**

- Lack of language of turning vulnerability into concrete actions

2. **Fragmented child-critical services** in climate policies

- Nutrition, healthcare, education, protection...

3. Inconsistent **multi-sectoral** approaches

- Children are mostly missed out in NDCs, but generally included in NAPs and DRR strategies.

DR Congo's updated NDC (2021)

“The operationalization of the NDC will only be possible through...guaranteeing...rights for...**boys and girls**, and integrating **children**, young people, indigenous peoples and **other vulnerable groups**.”

Tanzania's National Disaster Management Strategy (2022)

“**Nutrition** interventions are to be strongly integrated into disaster risk reduction ... to reducing the high risk of **children dying**...”

Recommendations for policymakers



1. Make children **visible** in national climate policies

- Explicitly mention and develop child-specific targets and indicators
- Translate recognition of children's vulnerability into actionable programs

2. Prioritize **early childhood development**

- Incorporate ECD considerations into climate mitigation and adaptation strategies
- Connect climate policies with existing ECD programs

3. Integrate child-critical services with **multi-sectoral** collaboration

- Develop and coordinate cross-sectoral policies that address children's interconnected needs



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Climate Fellow: Bashiru Turay



Project

An analysis of climate action plans of the 12 most populated cities for their consideration of young children

Mentored by
Joe Waters
Capita

Peer Mentor: Tashar
Simasiku



Bashiru is the Technical Partner and Consultant in Research, Business Development, and Partnerships at the Youth Movement for Sustainable Development in Sierra Leone. He holds a joint master's degree in geography of environmental risks and human security from the University of Bonn and the United Nations University in Germany.

YOUNG CHILDREN IN CITIES' CLIMATE ACTION PLANS

An examination of 12 cities projected to be most populated by 2100

Knowledge Fellow: Bashiru Turay (Sierra Leone)
Mentor: Joe Waters
Peer Mentor: Tashar Simasiku
April 2025

Background

- ❑ “Almost every child on earth is exposed to at least one major climate and environmental hazard and shock such as flooding, heat stress, etc.” The climate crisis is a child rights crisis (UNICEF 2021, p. 11).
- ❑ More serious in cities due to the higher population.
- ❑ “Even if emission reduction targets are reached, some impacts like sea-level rise are unavoidable by the end of the century.” (Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change, Sixth Assessment Report, 2023)
- ❑ This project examined and revealed how the Climate Action Plans (CAPs) of the following 12 cities, projected to be most populated by the end of the century consider young children: Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Bengaluru/Bangalore (India), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Dakar (Senegal), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Jakarta (Indonesia), Lagos (Nigeria), Mumbai (India), Nairobi (Kenya), New York (USA), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), and Tokyo (Japan).
- ❑ The projections are drawn from the Global Cities Institute’s projected populated cities, based on city size, population growth, and country-specific urbanization rates.

Methodology

- ❑ Systematic review approach
- ❑ MAXQDA for thematic analysis
- ❑ Plans read and assessed for “children” and synonyms, and related concepts such as parenting and caregiving, play and learning, development milestones, etc.
- ❑ Documents assessed for “actual plans” designed to be acted on

Example from Tokyo Climate Change Adaptation Plan, page 24

Promotion of disaster preparedness education

- Develop all children's ability to anticipate and avoid danger as well as their capabilities to contribute to the safety of others and society.

Project Focus

- ❑ CAPs contain goals and alternative actions to bridge the gap between the current situation and the desired future.
- ❑ Young children are part of cities. If they are not included in the plans, they are excluded!
- ❑ Themes analyzed included:



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)



Early environmental and climate change education



Food security and nutrition

Project Findings

- ❑ Currently, 1,000 children under the age of five die every day from poor sanitation, hygiene, and water.
- ❑ Only Mumbai and Rio de Janeiro included WASH planning for children.
- ❑ The early childhood stage is a key period for learning and development and a requirement to reduce risks.
- ❑ Environmental and climate change education for children was part of the plans for Dakar, Lagos, Mumbai, New York, and Tokyo.
- ❑ An estimated 161 million children under five years old are stunted due to food insecurity.
- ❑ None consider children's food security and nutrition concerns.
- ❑ None of the cities' plans reviewed presented that they included children's concerns obtained from them or their caregivers.

Recommendations

- ❑ City authorities design new or review existing CAPs to accommodate children's needs for WASH, Environmental and climate change education, nutrition, and food security.
- ❑ City authorities should collaborate with ECD professionals to provide child-sensitive expertise throughout the planning process.
- ❑ Ages 0-3: Stroller-friendly areas, accessible parks, and clean public spaces with access to healthcare and early childhood education, etc.
- ❑ Ages 3-5: Play-based education and exploration opportunities, safe routes for bicyclists and pedestrians, etc.
- ❑ Ages 6-8: Environmental education in school curricula and practical exercises.

Good examples to promote

Ages 0-3



Stroller-friendly park. Source: [parentsmap.com](https://www.parentsmap.com)

Ages 5-3



Outdoor nature play-based education.
Source: <https://www.hitchcockcenter.org/>

Ages 6-8



Environmental education and tree planting practices.
Source: [stockcake.com](https://www.stockcake.com)

Call to Action

All CAPs should promote safe outdoor and independent play for children with no/ least risks to extreme weather conditions.

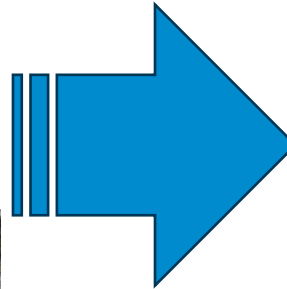
Plans should prevent and transform these environments into these examples.



Source: weforum.org



Source: unicef.org



Source: cpdonline.co.uk



Source: health.harvard.edu/blog

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION



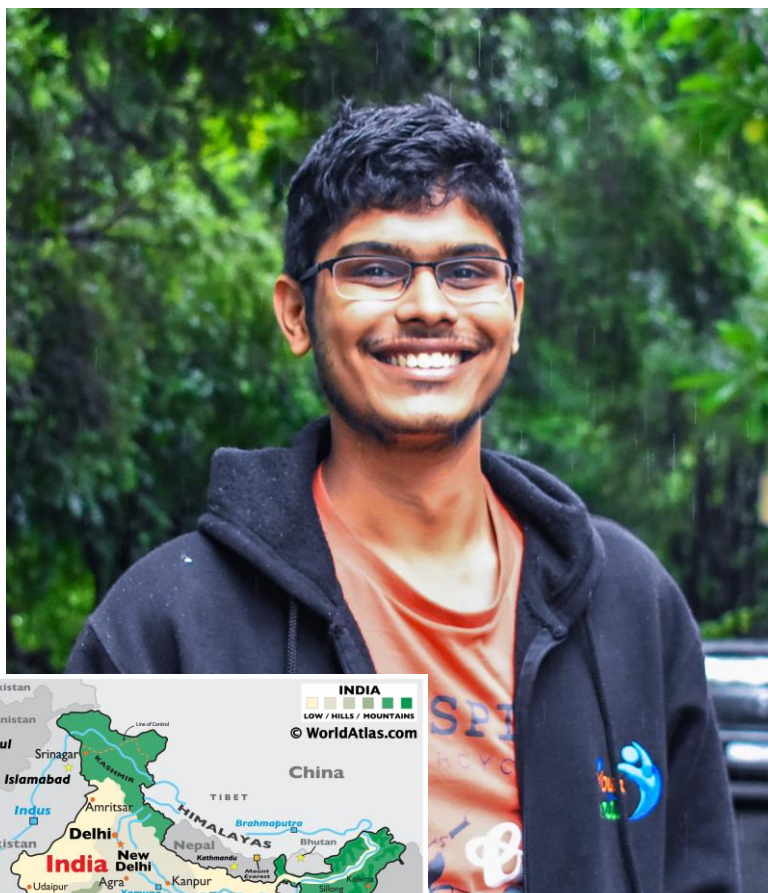
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Climate Fellow: Omkar Balel



Project

A review of seven Indian states most vulnerable to climate change to evaluate if their plans include considerations for young children, along with recommendations

Mentored by
Neelima Chopra
*Asia-Pacific Regional Network
for Early Childhood (ARNEC)*

Peer Mentor: Tanvi Sethi



Omkar currently serves as Program Lead at the Centre for Aquatic Livelihood in India. He holds master's degree in water policy and governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai.

INCLUDING YOUNG CHILDREN IN CLIMATE ACTIONS IN INDIA

A review of state's climate policies with recommendations

Knowledge Fellow: Omkar Balel (India)

Mentor: Neelima Chopra

Date: 9th April 2025

Background



India is the seventh most affected country by climate change.



In 2021, only 38% of children accessed early childhood education.



Extreme poverty and stunting contribute to poor health and nutritional deficits among children under 5.



India also has a high child population below 6 years of age, with more than 10% of the total population.



National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) are national and subnational plans addressing climate change.



XDI's Gross Domestic Climate Risk and CEEW's Climate Vulnerability Index assess climate risk at the state level.

Selection of States

	XDI Gross Domestic Climate Risk Study	CEEW's Climate Vulnerability Study	Child population density (below 6-year age)
Bihar	✓	✓	18.38 %
Rajasthan	✓	✓	15.54 %
Uttar Pradesh	✓		15.41 %
Arunachal Pradesh		✓	15.33 %
Assam	✓	✓	14.86 %
Manipur		✓	13.14 %
Gujarat	✓		12.87 %
Orissa		✓	12.56 %
Maharashtra	✓	✓	11.86 %
Karnataka		✓	11.72 %
Punjab	✓		11.09 %
Andhra Pradesh		✓	10.81 %
Sikkim		✓	10.50 %
Kerala	✓		10.40 %
Tamil Nadu	✓		10.29 %

Methodology



Literature review



Identification of vulnerable states from climate change:

1. Bihar, 2. Uttar Pradesh, 3. Assam, 4. Gujarat, 5. Maharashtra, 6. Karnataka, 7. Punjab



Review of state climate action plans through a young child-sensitive approach.

Reference of UNICEF study to evaluate NDCs of 151 countries.

Categories	No. of Indicators
Inclusivity of children	07
Reference to children	05
Holistic & multisectoral commitments related to child	09
Right-based approaches	02

Findings

Inclusivity
of children

Reference
to children

Holistic &
multisectoral
commitments
related to child

Right-based
approaches

Number of indicators fulfilled in the respective category

Total indicators

Gujarat

2

3

5

0

10

Maharashtra

2

2

2

0

06

Uttar Pradesh

1

2

2

0

05

Karnataka

1

1

0

1

03

Bihar

0

2

1

0

03

Punjab

1

1

0

0

02

Assam

0

0

1

0

01

Findings



Plans don't include age-wise separation, even though separate groups have specific needs.



No state has a dedicated section addressing young children's needs and challenges.



No state has explicitly considered sanitation, mental well-being, and social protection for young children in their plans.



Plans are geographically uniform rather than state-specific.

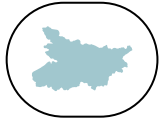
Findings



Gujarat is the only state that has included the Women and Child Development Department's secretary in its SAPCC's state-level steering committee.



Karnataka is the only state to emphasize the "Right-based approach," citing social justice through its Child Protection Policy.



Bihar is the only state that mentions a disaster management-related curriculum in the school, but its climate plan lacks age group specifics.



Uttar Pradesh's climate plan includes early climate education, annual workshops, and a health-focused curriculum to prevent climate-related diseases.

Challenges



Insignificant share of finance.



The siloed functioning of departments related to ECD and climate change.

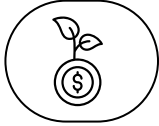


Limited involvement of ECD stakeholders in developing and implementing the policies.



Climate change events often disrupt basic social services, often overlooked in policies.

Recommendations for SAPCC policymakers



Leverage dedicated Multilateral Climate Funds like the Green Climate Fund, Global Environmental Fund, and Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, especially in the first 1000 days of the child.



Women and Child Development and Child Rights Protection representatives should be on the SAPCC steering committee.



Integrating young child schemes & policies with SAPCC, including Integrated Child Development Services, Integrated Child-Protection Scheme, and Early Child Education in National Education Policy.



Paramedical staff, Anganwadi's staff, caregivers, and teachers should be trained for climate emergencies.



Prioritize remote and digital health and education services to mitigate climate-related disruptions.



Ensure climate-proofed infrastructure for young children, with separate girls' toilets and breastfeeding spaces for emergencies.

Recommendations for ECD advocates



Act as a “bridge” between the state and the young children's community by representing them and their needs.



Leverage expertise to train policymakers, Anganwadi staff, medical workers, teachers, and caregivers for climate emergencies.



Support the state in policy advocacy for drafting, implementing, and monitoring the climate action plans.



Enhance age- and state-specific research on climate change and its impacts on young children through academic collaboration.



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Climate Fellow: Rosa Taylor



Project

An examination of how young children are impacted by climate mobility with recommendations for policymakers and practitioners

Mentored by
Anita Anastacio
BRAC International

Peer Mentor: Noellie Amon-
Kotey



Rosa currently works as a Grants Officer at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. She holds a master's degree in international relations and international economics from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

LITTLE KIDS, BIG MOVES

Early Childhood Development and Climate Mobility

Knowledge Fellow: Rosa Taylor
Technical Mentor: Anita Anastacio
Peer Mentor: Noellie Amon-Kotey

Background

Climate Mobility

Climate mobility is an umbrella term for the effects of climate change on movement, including:

- Displacement
- Migration
- Planned relocation
- Immobility

Context

- 1 Children in low-income countries will be disproportionately affected
- 2 From 2016-2023, more than 62 million children were displaced by extreme weather events
- 3 Up to 216 million people may be climate migrants by 2050

Project Overview

Objectives

1

Understand if and how practitioners and policymakers are planning for climate mobility

2

Identify gaps in current practices and policies

Methodology



Literature review of more than 100 reports

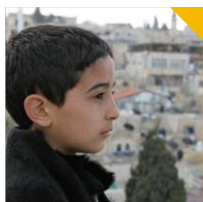


Key informant interviews with 19 experts in ECD and climate mobility

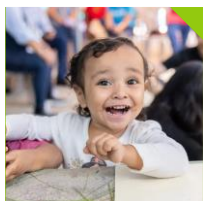
Key Findings



Most children will be immobile or move within their country



Climate mobility is expected to increase urbanization



Children experiencing climate mobility may face new risks and new opportunities



There is a lot to learn from existing programs for children on the move



Integration and belonging are critical

Promising Practices



**Facilitating family-
friendly mobility**



**Promoting child-friendly
urban growth**



**Integrating children into
communities and
systems**

Select Recommendations



Invest in high-quality, age-disaggregate data and evidence



Promote inclusive, child-friendly growth in regions expected to expand as a result of climate mobility, with a focus on urban areas



Incorporate mental health and psychosocial support in all services to children and caregivers experiencing climate mobility

We can help ensure that all children can receive the nurturing care they need to build strong foundations in early childhood, no matter where home is or where it becomes.



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Parenting Fellow: Suhany Zaimah



Project

An analysis of the impact of informal work on parenting practices, including effective strategies for reaching parents within this sector

Mentored by
Mark Tomlinson
Stellenbosch University

Peer Mentor: Sai
Durgeshwari Rajandiran



Suhany currently works as the Early Childhood Education Program Manager for the Institute of Child & Human Development (ICHD) in Bangladesh. She holds a master's degree in Early Childhood Development from BRAC University.



Parenting Support for Informal Workers

Analysis and Recommendations for Parenting Programs to Meet the Needs of Parents in the Informal Economy

Knowledge Fellow: Suhany Zaimah

Mentor: Dr. Mark Tomlinson

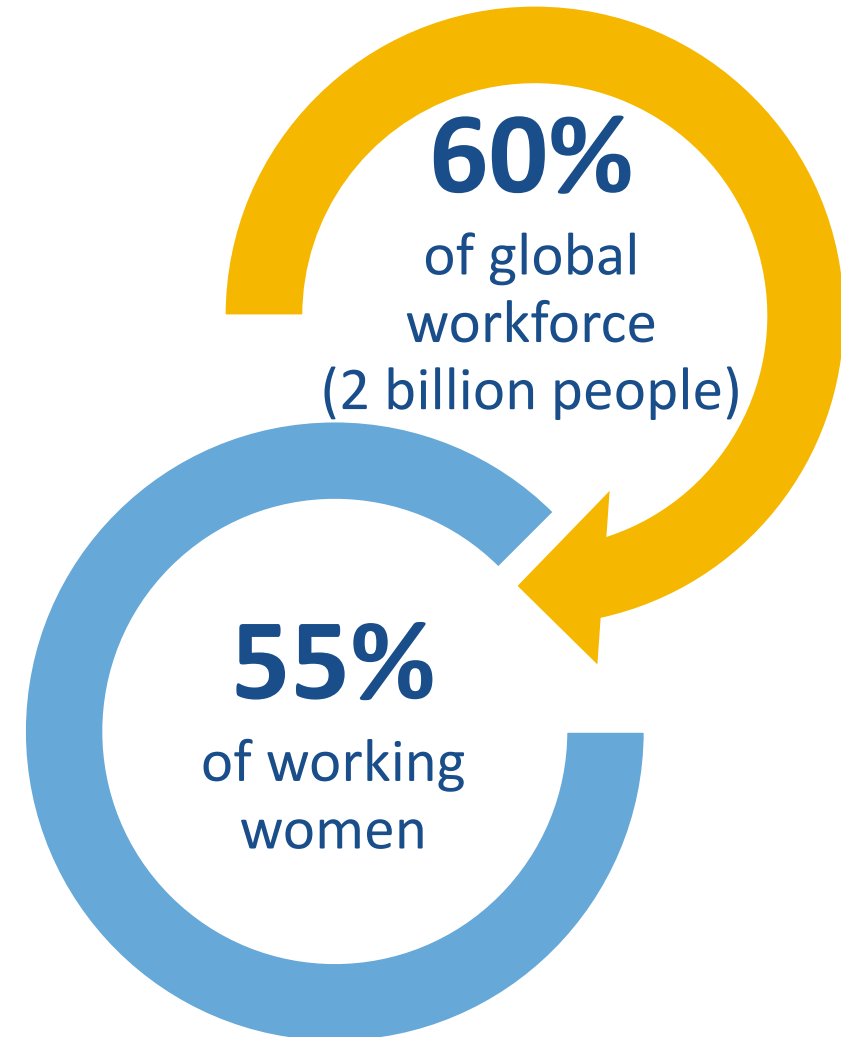
Peer Mentor: Sai Durgeshwari Rajandiran

Who Are Informal Workers?



Rationale

- Characterised by unregulated working hours, low and irregular earnings, lack of labor and social protections
- Higher concentrations of informal workers throughout Global South with limited childcare services
- Continued growth of informal economy battling growing threat of climate change



Project Scope



Objectives:

- Increase understanding of informal work and its implication on caregiving practices
- Review how parenting programs can be strengthened to meet the needs of informal workers

Research questions:

- How is informal work defined?
- What are the unique caregiving challenges faced by the parents of this particularly vulnerable group?
- What are the broader implications of their working conditions on childcare activities and responsibilities?
- What are examples of promising practices for providing parenting support to informal workers?

Informal Work and Barriers to Parenting



Types of Informal Work and Challenges

Context	Examples	Caregiving Challenges
Static customer-based	Street vendors, market traders, hairdressers, accommodation and food services workers	• Balancing customers & childcare • Inadequate shelter
Home-based	Piece-rate workers, tailors, artisans, home-based childcare providers, domestic workers (cleaners, cooks, housekeepers, gardeners, nannies)	• Decreased productivity • Lack of free play space for child • Exposure to harmful objects
Mixed-site or multi-site	Street performers, repair workers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians	• Unpredictable, inconsistent work • Travel to various worksites
Agricultural	Small farmers, seasonal workers, fishermen	• Exposure to toxic elements • Long hours of physical labor
Industrial location-based	Construction workers, mining, brick layers, day laborers, factory/garment workers, subcontracted laborers	• Hazardous work environment • Low chances of childcare nearby • Long hours of physical labor
Workers on the move	Waste pickers, scrap collectors, porters (cleaners), head loaders, delivery drivers	• Constantly moving • High unpredictability & lack of safety
Center-based	Community health workers, center-based childcare workers	• Must monitor multiple children • Age-range might not be suitable

Strategies for Supporting Informal Workers



1. Establish childcare services in locations where informal workers gather
 - Pop-up childcare crates (South Africa), Mobile Creches (India, Burkina Faso)
2. Deliver parenting education in ways that fit informal worker schedules
 - Cuna Mas (Peru), Centros de Desarrollo Infantil (Colombia)
3. Develop flexible childcare models for unpredictable worker schedules
 - Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) childcare centers (India)
4. Integrate childcare services into workplace settings
 - Mothers@Work (Bangladesh), Mobile Creches (India, Burkina Faso)
5. Expand community-based childcare solutions
 - Hogares Comunitarios de Bienestar (Community Welfare Homes), (Colombia)
 - Kidogo, Tiny Totos (Kenya)
6. Strengthen caregiver well-being and family support
 - Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) childcare centers (India)

Gaps in Support for Informal Workers

Limited coverage for highly mobile and seasonal workers

Inadequate nighttime and weekend childcare

Lack of inclusive support for domestic and home-based workers

Limited focus on fathers and male caregivers

Minimal integration of financial support for childcare

Lack of psychosocial and mental health support for parents

Recommendations for Strengthening Parenting Support for Informal Communities



Adapt to informal worker realities



Train local caregivers



Advocate for systemic change



Strengthen government and employer relationships



Keep it simple



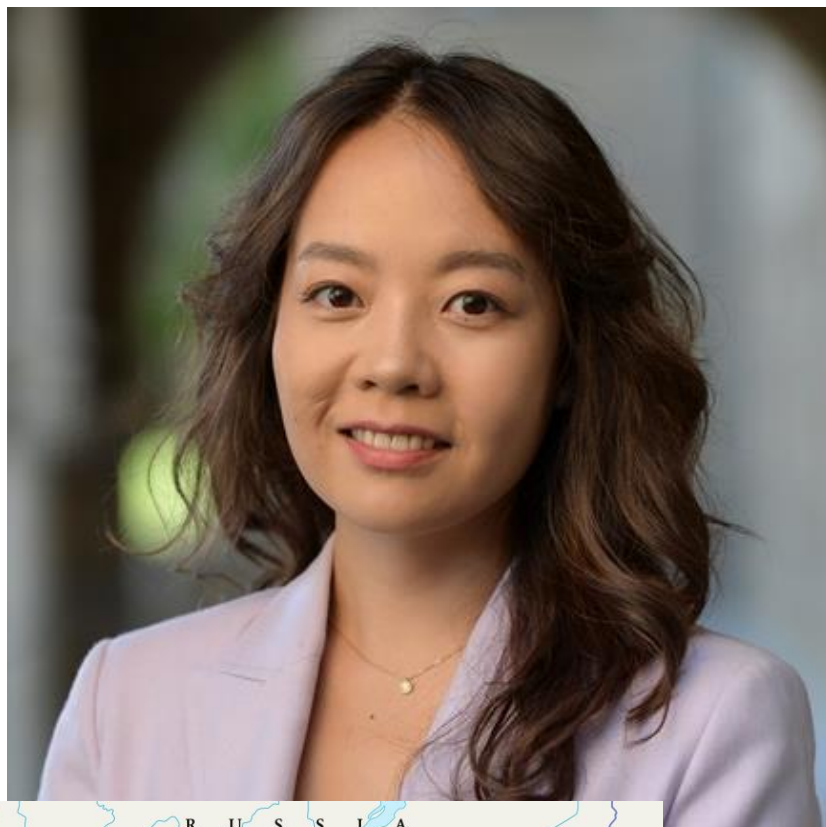
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Childcare Fellow: Dulguun Batmunkh



Project

An exploration of childcare systems in Mongolia and opportunities for impact investing

Mentored by
Richard Chivaka
Spark Health Africa

Peer Mentor: *Jaqueline F. Natal*



Dulguun most recently served as the Global Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Coordinator at OneSky. Dulguun holds a master's degree in international policy from Stanford University and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Finance and Economics in Mongolia.



Impact Investing in Childcare Systems

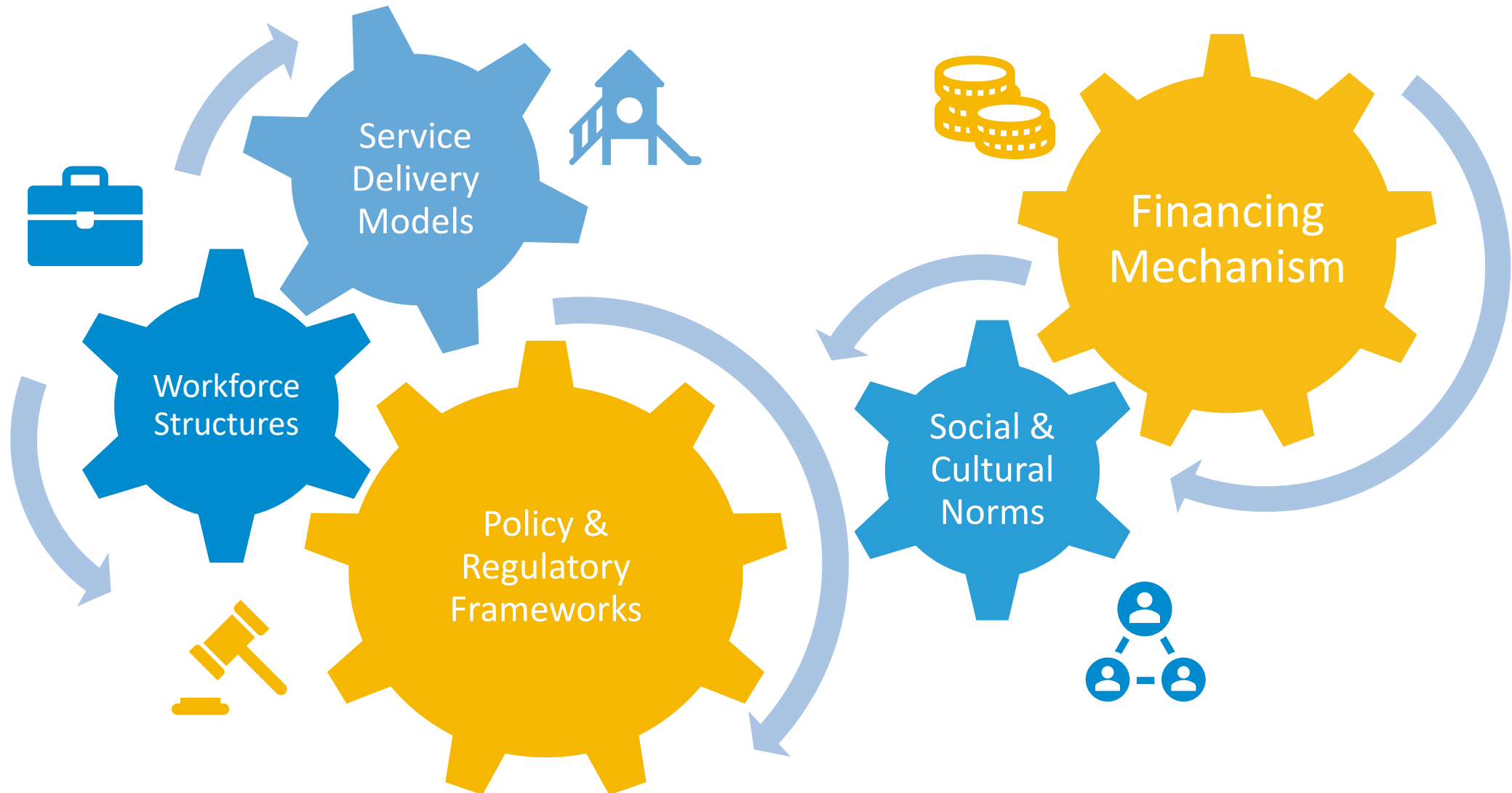
Contextualizing Childcare Systems Map of ECDAN's Systems Thinking
for ECD Initiative in Mongolia with a Focus on Impact Investing

Knowledge Fellow: Dulguun Batmunkh

Mentor: Dr. Richard Chiwaka

Peer Mentor: Jaqueline F. Natal

What's Within a Childcare System?



Enablers: Mongolia's Childcare System



Small population = Scalable policy reform

High female workforce participation = A necessity

Social welfare packages = Lower out-of-pocket expenses

Emerging private sector engagement

New corporate tax incentives to invest in social impact

Local Development Fund

Inhibitors: Mongolia's Childcare System

Fragmented governance = Weak coordination

Seen as a family responsibility

Limited access for the youngest and rural children

Reliance on public funds and development assistance

No incentives for targeted private investment

Limited expansion ecosystem for startups

Workforce constraints



Recommendations: Policymakers

Strategic Leadership

Assign one government body for system-wide coordination

Incentivize pro-childcare workplaces

Revise parental leave

Channel Investment

Define social impact investment framework

Leverage new corporate tax incentives

Introduce de-risking tools (e.g., blended finance)

Implement risk mitigation strategies

Enhanced Evidence

Enhance measuring and reporting systems

Utilize storytelling

Recommendations: Private Actors

Finance and Investment

Recognize as
a strategic investment

Utilize tax incentives

Engage proactively
in policy dialogues

Workforce and workplace Policies

Introduce more flexible
working conditions for both
mothers and fathers

Integrate workplace-based
childcare as as a core benefit

Recommendations: Caregivers

Civic Participation

Hold elected officials more accountable for systemic change

Direct local budget allocation

Shared Responsibility

Advocate for systemic support from employers

Promote active role of fathers



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Nutrition Fellow: Liezel Engelbrecht



Project

A review of early childhood programs that integrate nutrition and psychosocial stimulation to determine common elements and success factors

Mentored by
Romilla Karnati
Save the Children

Peer Mentor: Paul Otwate



Liezel currently works at the DG Murray Trust. She is a registered dietitian with a master's degree in of public health from Stellenbosch University in South Africa.



Integrating Nutrition and Stimulation in Early Childhood Development Interventions: A Scoping Review

Knowledge fellow: Liezel Engelbrecht (South Africa)

Mentor: Dr. Romilla Karnati (Director, Early Childhood Care and Development, Save the Children US)

Technical mentor: Dr. Frances E. Aboud (Professor Emerita of Psychology, McGill University)

Peer mentor: Paul Otwate (Kenya)

Why this review? Why now?

- Integrated ECD interventions are recommended by WHO (2018), but **implementation evidence is limited**.
- **Gaps** remain in understanding which delivery and implementation features are associated with success.
- Recent evidence is needed so we built on Yousafzai & Aboud (2014) and Dulal et al. (2021) by further examining **implementation processes and effectiveness** of integrated ECD interventions.
- **Goal: Translate evidence into practical guidance for integrated ECD interventions in LMICs**

“WE CANNOT LET CHILDREN DIE ON OUR WATCH” – STATEMENT FROM SAVE THE CHILDREN CEO INGER ASHING ON AID CUTS

PRESS RELEASE | OCTOBER 29, 2021

World Bank: Pandemic Threatens to Drive Unprecedented Number of Children into Learning Poverty

Post-COVID, rising poverty, malnutrition, and learning losses - potentially worsened by recent funding cuts - make effective ECD interventions more urgent than ever.

INSIDE DEVELOPMENT | DEVEX DISH

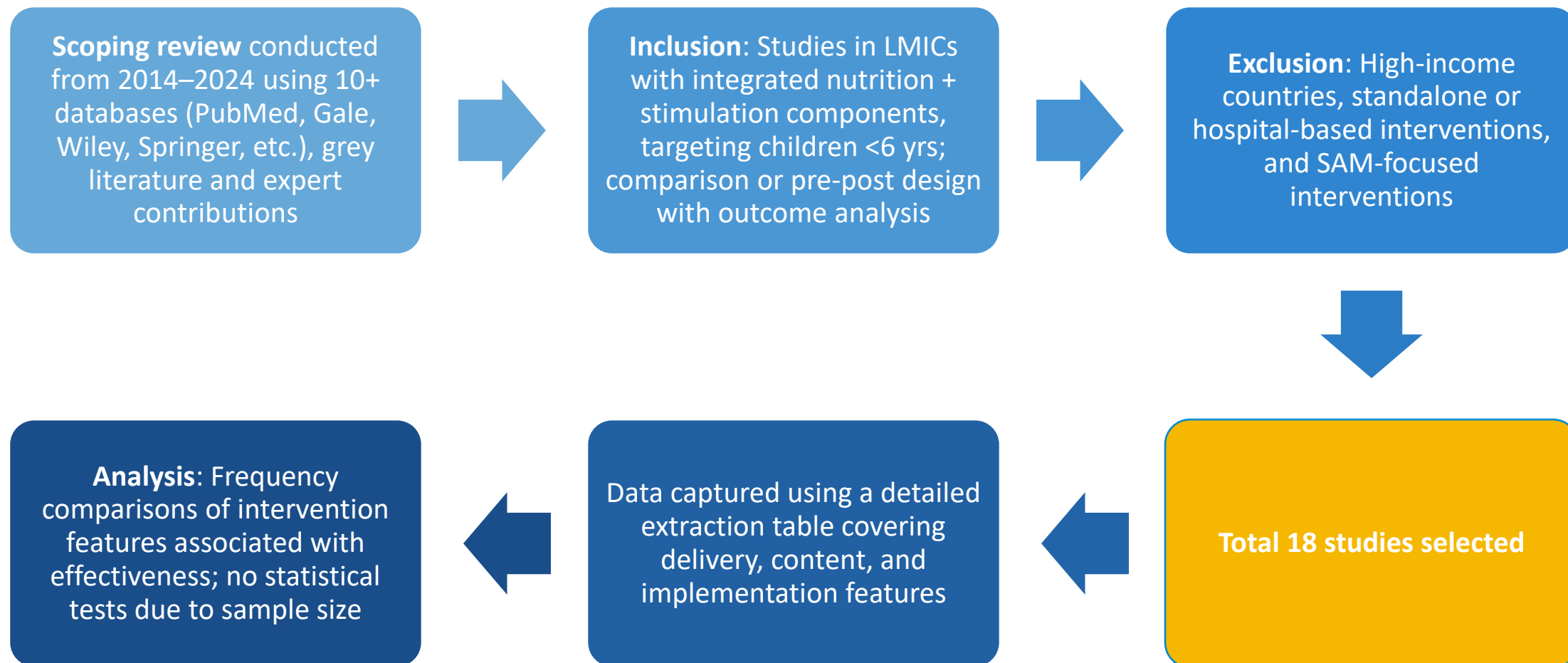
Devex Dish: US aid cuts create perfect storm for child malnutrition crisis

Article | Published: 19 July 2021

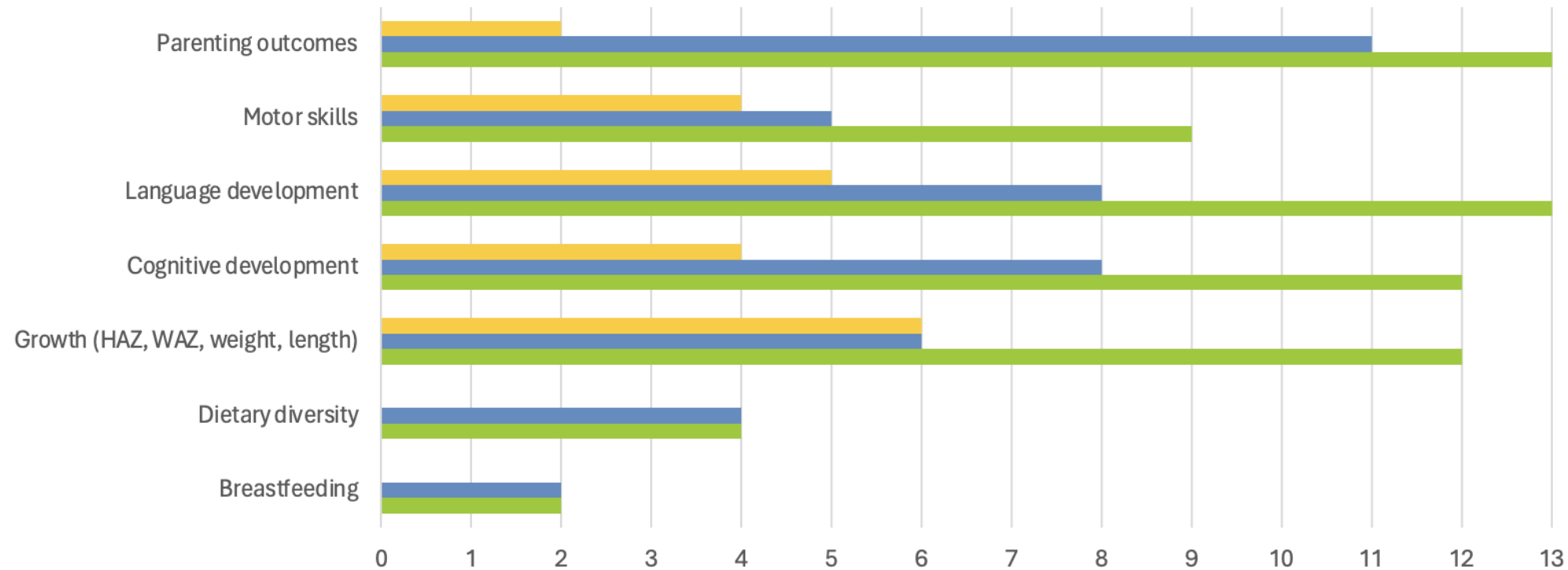
The COVID-19 crisis will exacerbate maternal and child undernutrition and child mortality in low- and middle-income countries

[Saskia Osendarp](#) ✉, [Jonathan Kweku Akuoku](#), [Robert E. Black](#), [Derek Headey](#), [Marie Ruel](#), [Nick Scott](#), [Meera Shekar](#), [Neff Walker](#), [Augustin Flory](#), [Lawrence Haddad](#), [David Laborde](#), [Angela Stegmuller](#), [Milan Thomas](#) & [Rebecca Heidkamp](#)

Methodology



Effects of measured outcomes



	Breastfeeding	Dietary diversity	Growth (HAZ, WAZ, weight, length)	Cognitive development	Language development	Motor skills	Parenting outcomes
■ No effect	0	0	6	4	5	4	2
■ Significant effect	2	4	6	8	8	5	11
■ # Studies measuring the effects	2	4	12	12	13	9	13

What was extracted?

Nutrition Content

- **Education:** dietary diversity, breastfeeding, complementary feeding, hygiene
- **Supply:** fortified foods, agricultural inputs, micronutrient supplementation
- **Practice:** food demonstrations, hygiene training, agricultural practices

Psychosocial Stimulation Content

- **Education:** communication, play, responsive care
- **Supply:** toys, books, home-based play materials
- **Practice:** Parent-child interactive activities, caregiver training sessions

Behaviour Change Techniques

- **Media:** brochures, leave behinds, radio, social media
- **Social support**
- **Job aids:** counselling cards
- **Problem-solving** exercises and practice
- **Resources/** materials supplied

Implementation Details

- **Workforce training:** duration, frequency, supervision
- **Modes of delivery:** home visits, group sessions, mixed delivery models
- **Intervention providers:** volunteers, professionals, para-professionals

Psychosocial stimulation outcomes

Outcomes improved:

Cognitive and language development improved in ~67% of studies

Common features: Use of toys/books, interactive activities, small media, problem-solving

Delivery and support strategies: home + group sessions, volunteers/para-professionals, supportive supervision, refresher training

3. Provide your child with a variety of stimulating play objects.



4. Parents talk and sing with children, watch and listen to their child's sounds.

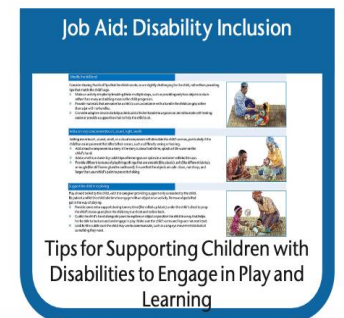
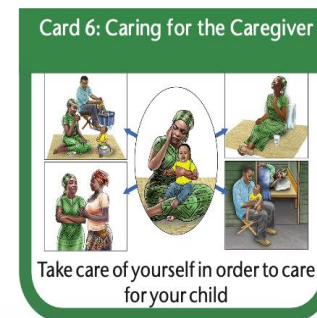
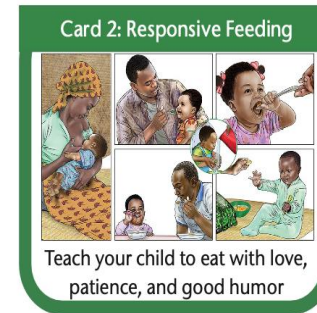
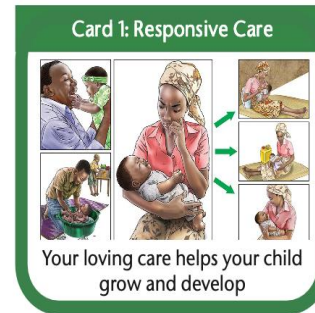


Parenting outcomes

Outcomes improved:
85% of studies improved knowledge or practices

Common features: Job aids, social support, problem-solving tools, performance-based learning

Delivery and support strategies: home + group sessions, volunteers with supervision, refresher sessions



Features associated with impact



**Nutritional supply
components**



**Play materials and
books**



**Practice-based
learning**



**Mixed delivery mode
(group + home)**



**Refresher training
and supportive
supervision**

Less effective strategies

- **Home visits (alone):** Widely used, but less effective than mixed mode (group + home).
- **Training duration:** Longer training wasn't clearly linked to better outcomes.

Limitations

Limitations of this study

- **Statistical analyses were not conducted** on the association of features with effective outcomes due to the small number of studies.

Limitations of ongoing research

- **Inconsistent reporting** across studies made direct comparisons difficult.
- **Lack of long-term follow-up data** made it difficult to assess the sustainability of outcomes, especially HAZ
- **Few studies assessed cost-effectiveness**, which is essential for scaling interventions.

Key recommendations

- Include **food provision strategies**.
- Include **psychosocial stimulation** materials and activities.
- Provide **multi-modality (group + home) delivery**.
- Encourage locally available or **low-cost play materials**.
- Incorporate **behavior change strategies** such as practice and coaching, job aids, leave-behind materials.
- Training models should include ongoing **refresher sessions and supervision**.

Policy & programmatic implementation



- Integrate **nutrition with stimulation** in all ECD programs.
- Scale only **evidence-based programs** to avoid ineffective interventions.
- Adopt **standardized reporting frameworks** (e.g., CARE*) to permit systematic reviews.
- Invest in **para-professionals and volunteers** to support human resources.

*Consolidated Advice for Reporting ECD Implementation Research, (Yousafzai et al., 2018)

Conclusion

- Stimulation alone improves minds. Food alone feeds bodies. But together, they can transform futures.
- Integrated ECD interventions need **effective design**.



Resources to access

- **Report:** Expanded findings and analysis.
- **Data extraction guide:** Can be used across various interventions for consistency and clarity of extraction.
- **Excel extraction table:** Additional detail on 18 interventions reviewed
- Opportunity for additional analysis, key informant interviews, and more rigorous evaluation.



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Question & Answer

What have these presentations made you curious about?



Congratulations, Knowledge Fellows!



Thank you, Mentors!

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